

As one of our valued customers, we want to provide you with some important information.

Due to a shortage of lifeguards early in the hiring season, we will need to adjust our open swim schedule at Valley View and Holiday Aquatic Centers **during the first 2-3 weeks of the season**. Since your safety and the safety of your children is our top priority, we will not open the pools if we do not have enough lifeguards to provide a safe environment for open swimming.

The following Q & A will help you understand the changes we are making to our schedules at the start of the season. However, for the most up-to-date information on aquatic center schedules, call the WDM Aquatics Hotline at 273-0700.

- **What will the modified schedule be at the West Des Moines aquatic centers?**

Valley View Aquatic Center – Open regular hours on Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Sunday

Holiday Aquatic Center – Open regular hours on Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday

- **Will the hours on these days also be adjusted?**

No. We anticipate that the hours will remain the same as scheduled. Only the number of days that each aquatic center is open are being reduced.

Valley View

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

12:00 (noon) – 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Holiday

Tuesday, Thursday: 11:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. (11:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. during evening swim lessons)

Saturday: 11:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

- **Will the first day of the season be adjusted?**

Holiday will open as scheduled on Saturday, June 3. Valley View will open on Sunday, June 4 (just one day later than originally scheduled).

- **Will the modified schedule be in place all summer?**

The modified schedule will be in place for the first 2-3 weeks of the season. Fortunately, we had a recent influx of lifeguard applicants. Once these late applicants can be hired, fully trained and certified, we are hoping to have both aquatic centers open 7 days a week. As more lifeguards are brought on, additional days will be added to our schedule. We also may be able to gradually open portions of our aquatic centers. For example, the Holiday pool basin may be open on an additional day without one or more waterslides being open. We will investigate every option to add open days/hours to the modified schedule as quickly as possible.

The WDM Aquatics Hotline (273-0700) will be updated regularly with any changes to the schedule.

- **Will swimming lessons be affected?**

No. We currently have an adequate number of WSI certified instructors. We anticipate that all swimming lessons will continue as planned at both Holiday and Valley View.

- **Will Family Nights at Valley View still be offered?**

Yes! Our popular Family Nights on Wednesday and Sunday evenings will still be offered at Valley View Aquatic Center.

- **Can WDM season passes be used at the Clive Aquatic Center?**

Yes! The Clive Aquatic Center is not changing their schedule. Clive needs fewer lifeguards than West Des Moines, and the Clive Aquatic Center staff currently has enough lifeguards to safely staff their center.

- **Are refunds being issued to season pass holders?**

Since one of our two aquatic centers will be open on any given day and this is expected to only impact the first 2-3 weeks of the season, no refunds will be issued.

- **Will any of this compromise safety at the aquatic centers?**

Absolutely nothing will be done to negatively impact the safe environment that we offer to our customers! Your safety is our highest priority. No aquatic center will be open if we cannot ensure that all safety requirements are being met. Please keep in mind that maximum capacity may be reached more quickly since only one aquatic center is open on any given day. Following maximum capacity limits is important for your safety.

- **How many lifeguards are needed? How many lifeguards do you have now?**

To meet the state requirements and minimum standards of the Iowa Swimming Pool and Spa program, 641 IAC Chapter 15, we need **100-115 lifeguards** between the two aquatic centers. This is the minimum needed to provide a safe and healthy aquatic environment. We currently have **72 lifeguards hired** with an additional **33 in the process** of being hired.

- **Are other cities experiencing a lifeguard shortage?**

Yes. Other cities with aquatics programs comparable in size to ours are experiencing a shortage.

- **What have you done to recruit lifeguards?**

Aquatics positions were first posted on the City's website on January 16 and reposted on April 21. A job announcement was sent to approximately 35 different Iowa universities and colleges. Communication also occurred with Valley High School and Dowling Catholic High School. Posts have been made on social media, including paid boosted posts. Our most recent posts have reached nearly 12,900 people and been shared 98 times. A referral program also is in place for returning lifeguards to make up to \$100 per year for referring a new lifeguard. Finally, pay rates for aquatics staff were increased by \$1.00 per hour. At the new rate, a first year lifeguard is paid \$10.14 per hour which is higher than the metro average of \$8.93 per hour. The City is also planning on covering the cost of lifeguard training that previously had been paid by the individual.

- **Are later sessions of lifeguard training being offered to help address the shortage?**

Yes. Certified trainers were hired and additional training is being conducted. With only one of the two aquatic centers open on any given day at the start of the season, we'll use the center that is not in use for our training (even after the season starts on June 3). Using the closed aquatic center will allow us to hire, train and certify late applicants.

- **Can more lifeguard training sessions be offered before the season starts?**

Lifeguard training takes a total of 27-28 hours. The lack of indoor aquatic space and the high demand for that space makes it difficult to conduct lifeguard training classes during the school year. The busy schedules of potential lifeguards also makes it hard for them to set aside time. We work closely with Valley High School and Dowling Catholic High School to schedule as many training classes as possible.

- **Why aren't more people applying to be a lifeguard?**

This is difficult to answer as the decision to be a lifeguard depends on each person's willingness, interest and availability. Young people who would typically apply for this position lead very busy scheduled lives or may not need or want to work. Many young people are also finding jobs that they feel apply to building a resume for their future career path. We also are seeing more competition from other municipalities and private aquatics facilities.

We hope this answers questions you may have about the need for our modified schedule at the beginning of the season, and we appreciate your understanding as we work to ensure your safety at our aquatic centers.

Please feel free to contact us at the Parks and Recreation Department if you have any questions!

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