



Iowa Department of Public Health

(Updated 4/6/17)

Iowa Swimming Pool and Spa Rules

Guidance on Climbing Walls

Iowa Swimming Pool and Spa Rules (641 IAC Chapter 15) require under section 15.4(4)“k”(3) that:

There shall be no underwater or overhead projections or obstructions which would endanger swimmer safety or interfere with proper swimming pool operation.

Climbing walls could introduce hazards to patrons if not properly installed and operated. While there are not specific requirements within the rules relating climbing walls, the installation of the wall will require compliance with other aspects of the rules. For example, the climbing wall will obstruct a portion of the deck but the required minimum deck clearances must be maintained. Also, the climbing wall must be properly tied into the swimming pools' equipotential bonding system.

Climbing walls introduce additional hazards to the pool that may endanger swimmer safety if additional steps are not taken to mitigate the hazards. For example, a climber could fall from the wall onto other swimmers; a climber could fall from a height and in a position that could cause injuries upon impact with the water; a climber could tire while climbing the wall or become disoriented after impact from falling from the wall and have difficulty swimming to safety.

Adding a climbing wall to a facility is classified as reconstruction. Reconstruction of a registered swimming pool including adding a climbing wall requires submission of a completed construction permit application, plans and specifications sealed and certified by an engineer or architect licensed in Iowa, and submission of the plan review fee (\$250.00).

Along with the construction permit application, submit sufficient information in the application to demonstrate to the department that the climbing wall and associated drop zone can be operated safely. These items include:

1. A letter from the manufacturer indicating that they have reviewed the design and use of the facility and that it is an appropriate application of their product. The letter shall include any specific procedures (i.e. specific rules, weight limits, restrictions, and direct supervision, etc.) necessary for the safe operation of the installed product. In addition, provide a copy of the manufacturer's installation instructions and a copy of the manufacturer's operation and maintenance manual including all operating procedures, maintenance, and any safety and warning information necessary for the safe use of their product.
2. A letter from the engineer of record for the project reviewing the impact of the climbing wall on the operation of other features in the deep water within the design including intended queuing areas for each of the features and path of enter and egress from each feature and supervision staffing required for the safe operation of each feature as well as any other restrictions or rules required.
3. A letter from the owner acknowledging their agreement to provide the minimum rules, restrictions, supervision, etc. as noted in the letters from the manufacture and engineer of record at all times that the facility is in use to mitigate the hazards associated with the climbing wall.

For additional information, please contact the Swimming Pool & Spa program at 515-281-3548.