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City pool may be unsafe

Children burned by chemicals in water

When you take your children to the municipal swimming pool, attired in a new swimming suit, it should not come home bleached out.

But, in addition to eye irritation and signs of chemical burns on the sensitive areas of their children's skin, that was the evidence Cheyenne parents had that the city swimming pool in Lions Park had problems with the chemicals used in the pool on that day after the Fourth of July.

There are standards for the safe levels of chlorine and the pH level to be found in public swimming pools - whether owned by the city or privately-held.

In Wyoming, the department of agriculture on the state level and the city/county health department on the local level, are responsible for compliance with maintaining pools available to the public in a safe operating condition.

There are many parents - and some employees - who use both the municipal pool and the pool on F.E. Warren Air Force Base regularly. So, there is a basis of comparison, even though the base pool is much smaller and has many fewer users.

A former employee of the city pool told the Cheyenne Herald that her bathing suits discolor (fade) twice as fast in the city pool as the base pool as a result of the chemicals used.

Frequency of testing the chlorine and pH levels in a public pool vary but most guidelines recommend hourly for an adult pool and less frequently for "baby" or wading pools.

Very serious diseases result from improper cleanliness in public pools. Bodily fluids such as sweat, saliva, urine, etc., contaminate the water and that is the role of chlorine - to rid water of them.

A Cheyenne family whose two young children are proverbial "water rats" because of their enjoyment of swimming, contacted the Cheyenne Herald about chemical burns the children had suffered on July 5, 2005 and to share their experiences in bringing the problem to the attention of those responsible for the operation of the municipal pool.

The children had suffered burns to the sensitive areas of their bodies - to the extent that they could not sleep without some sort of treatment - which included oatmeal baths at the direction of a doctor. And the girl's suit bleached out.

The parents are aware of other persons who have been similarly burned and the Herald talked with one. The family also acquired the "Pool Water Records" for the days in question and pool personnel's posting confirms that the pH level exceeded what most studies advise are safe. Included on the log is what the parents said was an altered measurement in the middle of pH levels which themselves were too high.

This pool accepts pH levels as safe which exceed what public pool experts set as the upper limit. The pH level of the human body is 7.2-7.8 and that is what is recommended for pool levels for comfort and safety. Writing after writing state those are the appropriate levels. The chlorine used for disinfectant or "sanitizing" pool water is negatively impacted with pH levels too high. On the day in question, the pool log reflected consecutive pH level tests of 8.2, 8.0, 8.0 and 8.0. From testing at 12:56 pm and later, the pH levels were what experts consider too high. That is the time that the children received what were diagnosed as chemical burns from the pool.

Other problems at the city pool were brought to my attention and we will deal with those extensively in future issues.

Sells family hires investigator

Witnesses brought forward

Over a hundred days after an incident at the Outlaw Saloon on Cheyenne's eastside left Cheyenne ABATE leader Dwayne Sells severely injured, two critical eyewitnesses have finally had their statements accepted by the Cheyenne police department.

Both witnesses were introduced to the Cheyenne police department by an independent investigator hired by the Sells family.

Even though the Cheyenne Herald has repeatedly offered to put the police investigators in contact with the young man who accompanied Dwayne Sells to the Outlaw that night, that offer was never accepted.

As has been related on these pages previously, that young man had moved to Tennessee three days after the incident - a move he had planned well before that fateful night. Three times, I have spoken with him by telephone - never having had a problem in making the connection.

Each time he told me that no police investigator had yet contacted him. Finally, he called Cheyenne (the police department) and offered to make a statement - being the only one who had been at the side of Dwayne Sells throughout the buildup to the incident. When he felt the police officer was being rude and indifferent to him, he terminated the call.

At the end of July, that witness returned to Cheyenne and plans to remain here until at least after the coroner's inquest, scheduled for August 23rd.

The Sells family's investigator went with this witness to the Cheyenne police department on August 2nd. When offered up to make a statement, the department said they already had his statement. When requested to produce such a statement, they could not. Finally, a single

page of paper was found. It contained notes from a police officer who had been approached by the witness at the Eagle's Nest Bar on Sunday, the day after the Outlaw Saloon incident. The witness had told me previously that when he wanted to tell an officer that day what he had seen, the officer made some perfunctory notes on a small tablet.

The single sheet "statement" was incomplete and was inconsistent with what the witness said he had told that police officer. It was also unsigned and unacknowledged by the witness.

On August 2nd, the witness provided a four-page, handwritten formal statement to the Cheyenne police department. On a fifth page, he drew a diagram of the floorplan of the Outlaw Saloon, including where the fight had taken place.

On every page of this formal statement, the witness has signed and numbered the pages. *The Cheyenne Herald has a copy of this witness statement.*

The first time I spoke with this witness, when he was already in Tennessee, he told me there was a woman who was "covered" in blood who had been with Dwayne when he was loaded into an ambulance. He thought she may have ridden in the same ambulance to the emergency room. Others (friends of Dwayne) told me that such a person had gone through admitting in the emergency room and should be contacted for a statement. The Sells investigator found the woman, a Registered Nurse, and also provided her to the police department to have a statement made. She (the RN) told the Sells investigator that she had called the department several times and they never responded to her messages. Her statement was given to police on August 4th. *I do not have a copy of that statement.* A story about the upcoming coroner's inquest appears on page 3.

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(307) 637-2879 ♦ e-mail ... CheyenneHerald@bresnan.net
P.O. Box 2208 ♦ Cheyenne WY 82003

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