



Lifeguard Shortage Expected to Affect Memorial Day Pool Openings



Most pool service operators rely heavily on seasonal employees, many of whom are recruited using the U.S. Department of State's Summer Work and Travel (SWT) Visa Program.

Unfortunately, the lingering effects of the pandemic are still impacting operations at U.S. embassies and have affected the ability of pool service providers to recruit SWT participants and process their visa applications in a timely manner – which is causing major labor shortages. This issue is further complicated by a patchwork of travel restrictions and requirements for COVID testing prior to any flights to the US.

Additionally, generous unemployment benefit assistance programs coupled with the fact that many potential U.S. employees are reluctant to seek jobs that require direct interaction with the public have further complicated the labor shortage. This issue is not exclusive to the pool and hot tub industry; it is being seen in all sectors of the hospitality industry – including employers with year-round operations, such as restaurants, hotels, and retail.

As a result of these issues, U.S. pool operators – particularly those in the Mid-Atlantic region – will be faced with acute labor shortages this summer. The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) and our membership regret that this may delay the opening of community pools and other aquatic venues this Memorial Day.

As PHTA continues to engage Congress and the White House to expedite visa processing to allow for additional SWT participants this season, its members are working around the clock to recruit and certify workers to fulfill the state and local government requirements which are necessary in order for pools to open.

These global and domestic issues are far beyond the control of any one trade group or employer, but our government relations team is working closely with other impacted economic sectors to mitigate and shorten the time frame of these disruptions. Like all Americans, we hope to return to normal operation as soon as possible and enjoy the benefits of aquatic recreational opportunities.

About the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA), a non-profit organization with nearly 3,500 members from around the world, was established in 1956 to support, promote, and protect the common interests of the \$36.5B pool, hot tub and spa industry. PHTA provides education, advocacy, standards development, research, and market growth to increase our members' professionalism, knowledge and profitability. Additionally, PHTA facilitates the expansion of swimming, water safety and related research and outreach activities aimed at introducing more people to swimming, making swimming environments safer and keeping pools open to serve communities. For more information, visit www.phta.org.

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