**Life at swimming pools has changed, mainly due to the shortage of trained lifeguards.**

In the past times, during the warn/hot summer months, most of us who learned to swim, learned at local swimming pools with sufficient lifeguard staffs to keep our swimming pools open and safe for non-swimmers to become swimmers. This was a real phenomenon that many of us Seniors may recall as part of our normal life of growing up in America.

That’s no longer possible as there is an acute shortage of lifeguards. Lifeguards served as swimming teachers, part of the day, and life guards - the remainder of the day for all of us who used public swimming pools for becoming good swimmers and enjoying summer fun.

Those days are now gone.

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**SOURCE:**

**Heat wave meets lifeguard shortage, reduced hours at Bay Area pools and beaches**

Pool hours shrink and children wait months for classes

**NADIA LATHAN** | nlathan@bayareanewsgroup.com | ***Bay Area News Group***, **July 14, 2023**

Beach time, pool sessions and swimming lessons are in hot demand as temperatures soar across the Bay Area, but **shorter hours and lengthy waitlists are creating challenges for families eager to beat the heat by jumping into cool waters.**

For novice swimmers, learning to float and blow bubbles may prove especially difficult this summer.

More than three years after the world closed down, the pandemic continues to impact us in unexpected ways, including at public swimming pools and parks where **last year’s lifeguard shortage has been joined by a swimming instructor shortfall.**

An excessive heat warning for the Bay Area over the weekend and inland temperatures expected to veer into triple digits in the East Bay are creating fresh demand that just can’t be met.

**In San Francisco, lifeguard rosters were**[**only 77% full**](https://www.axios.com/local/san-francisco/2023/06/09/san-francisco-swim-season-lifeguard-shortage)**as summer kicked off. In Los Angeles County,**[**pool hours have been cut in half**](https://www.dailynews.com/2023/06/13/lifeguard-shortages-have-cut-la-county-pool-hours-in-half-this-summer/). And in the East Bay, recreation centers that typically lose half their employees each year started this swim season with just three-quarters of their typical workforces.

The issue is a multifaceted one, according to Pete DeQuincy, aquatic manager at the East Bay Regional Park District, which includes swimming pools, lagoons and lakeside beaches. The one- to three-year attrition rate for swim instructors, combined with the strong labor market for low-wage workers, has created an unstable staffing situation that he expects pools will need to manage for some time.

“I think for a lot of agencies, it’s going to take several years before they’re at full capacity again,” he said.

Young people are choosing jobs elsewhere, where they’ll make more money, DeQuincy said. And the pandemic’s impact on school facilities, especially early on, means many high school and college students have been out of practice, which further diminishes the appeal of a poolside job, especially in a field where recertification is required every two years.

“If you haven’t swum for three years, you’re probably not going to take a chance on being a swim instructor,” he said.

Lifeguards undergo 28 hours of coursework, swim tests and practice sessions for American Red Cross certification, and it’s common for lifeguards to teach private lessons to augment their income. So **when there’s a lifeguard shortage, it impacts everything from pool hours to swim lesson availability**.

At Pleasant Hill Aquatic Park, where the staff completes two-hour trainings every week to supplement their certification education, Sarah Philson sits tall in the lifeguard chair. The soon-to-be high school junior comes from a long line of lifeguards. Swim meets were part of her childhood. So spending summer’s drawn-out dog days by the water wasn’t so much a decision for her as an inevitability. And like many lifeguards, she teaches children to swim when she’s not on pool deck duty.

“It seemed like a good job that paid,” Philson said, echoing a common refrain at the Pleasant Hill pool, where several fellow lifeguards, including Harry Disney, teach, too.

Juggling competing schedules is challenging, said Disney, who swims for his high school team, and “there have been times when instructors needed to have people fill in for them.”