



Media Release

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For immediate release

Lifeguard shortage to affect pool hours

Nelson, BC: A nation wide shortage of lifeguards and swimming instructors is having a notable impact at the local level. The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) has had to make the difficult decision to continue to operate our Castlegar, Creston and Nelson pools with reduced hours.

“Public safety is our number-one priority and unfortunately with staff leaving to pursue other career paths and on leave, we do not have adequate experienced staff to operate our regional pools at full capacity, for the time being,” said Joe Chirico, RDCK General Manager of Community Services. “We have been playing catch-up in our succession of experienced staff, due to the interruption in training and development for future lifeguards and swim instructors. Our goal is to get back to pre-pandemic service delivery, and without more staff, including aquatics leadership at all our pools, the hours will continue to be limited and will continue to fluctuate.”

The lifeguard shortage has its origins in the pandemic, when pools across the RDCK were shut down and training and certification programs were put on hold. Even though the RDCK continues to offer these programs and have developed other opportunities to fast track training for existing staff, new lifeguards need time and supervision to build their skills. With the industry average for a lifeguard or swim instructor to work in the field being two and a half years, many pools across the province are still trying to get ahead of the time lost due to the pandemic.

“To ensure the RDCK can grow its experienced and qualified staff, we are applying a regional approach to training to provide opportunities throughout the RDCK region,” said Amanda Beavers, RDCK Regional Programmer. “We are utilizing qualified staff to deliver courses as needed or contracting to external instructors when the qualification or capacity is not held in house.”

The RDCK is committed to offering courses to support the continued growth and succession of lifeguards and swim instructors in the region. Beavers was even recently recognized by the Lifesaving Society for teaching the most lifesaving/lifeguarding candidates in the Kootenay’s in 2022. Such lifesaving courses taught by Beavers are the prerequisites for lifeguard courses.

Anybody who is interested in pursuing their lifeguard or swim instructor certification can contact any of our RDCK facilities or visit rdck.ca/recreation for information about training opportunities and potential support at all RDCK facilities.

The RDCK is looking for responsible individuals with lifeguarding and/or supervisory experience - especially those who are able to work throughout the week and during the day. All RDCK aquatics and recreation job opportunities are posted at www.rdck.ca/jobs.

Before you visit one of our recreation facilities, please double-check the schedule, since information may change quickly. Any changes to hours of operation will be shared on the facility's recorded phone greeting, on facility signs, on social media, and on our website.

Incorporated in 1965, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is a local government that serves 60,000 residents in 11 electoral areas and nine member municipalities. The RDCK provides more than 160 services, including community facilities, fire protection and emergency services, grants, planning and land use, regional parks, resource recovery and handling, transit, water services and much more. For more information about the RDCK, visit www.rdck.ca.

-30-

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