Water slides—are safety standards sliding?

Sir

We were very interested to read the above study. A safety in leisure research unit was set up to look into this in 1986 although the main research programme only started in September 1988. The unit consists of representatives of the Sports Council, Health and Safety Executive, slide manufacturers and operators and other interested organizations.

A survey of water slides around the country is in progress and we hope to target some representative ones to study in detail. We would be most grateful for any information on injuries treated in accident and emergency departments.

We are not convinced that the statutory enforcement of the current safety regulations will have any great effect.

For example the design feature which was associated with the high proportion of splashpool accidents in Swansea (Moody-Jones, 1986) and pool A in current study is specifically allowed for use in existing-pools by these regulations (Health & Safety Commission).

Though these standards are meant to be based on the DIN they make no mention of speed (Sports Council). The other pool (B) in Dr Stevens study would therefore be within these regulations, but outside the DIN standards (DIN).

The volume of water flow which has a profound effect on safety by reducing relative speeds of heavier and lighter sliders and also washing people away from the end of the flume (Turner, 1988) is not even mentioned in the guidelines. However increased water flow can increase turbidity of water thereby increasing the need for more lifeguards in the splash pool.

Many factors are involved in designing and running a safe slide and altering one variable in the slide may have profound effects on safety.

We therefore believe that more research is needed to draw up a code of practice for the design and running of waterslides as any legal standard may be difficult to enforce and overtaken by changes in design.

We hope to issue interim recommendations in May–June 1989 and full recommendations in September–November 1989.

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