



PWTAG SPTO SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

What makes the PWTAG Swimming Pool Technical Operator qualification and training different from all the others?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advises that there are no swimming pool health and safety laws specific to swimming pools. Nevertheless, swimming pool operators must comply with their general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the associated regulations.

Operators must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the health and safety risks to workers and users to help decide what they must do to make their pool safe. This is known as risk assessment. Again, the law does not state what safety measures an operator must put in place. Such judgments must be made by each operator, based on the particular risks in their pool.

That is where the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG) comes in. PWTAG has for over 30 years produced detailed guidance on swimming pool water quality and treatment. This includes Swimming Pool Water: treatment and quality standards for pools and spas – the definitive book on the subject, and a shorter, practical Code of Practice.

HSE recognises this guidance as an important resource for pool operators when drawing up their operating procedures. Enforcing authorities (HSE and local authorities) consider this guidance as the standard to be achieved in effectively managed swimming pools.

PWTAG's work in the training sphere flows naturally from all that.

PWTAG training

Trained staff are fundamental to providing healthy and safe pools. The necessary elements for the training of swimming pool technical staff are defined in the PWTAG Code of Practice (CoP).

The CoP provides pool operators with a structured plan for the technical operation of their pool. It ensures that its technical operation meets quality standards that provide a healthy experience for swimmers, using recognised and established practices, techniques, engineering and design. For this reason all UK pools are encouraged to follow it.

The code provides a model of operation based on the authority of PWTAG good practice. Following the code gives an assurance to operators and to the public that the pool meets essential healthy pool



operational standards. The code is designed, among other things, to meet the health challenge that the sector has to deal with including covid and the chlorine-resistant pathogen, *Cryptosporidium*.

The CoP is based on the PWTAG book *Swimming Pool Water* (and technical notes). But it does not replace the book: operators should still refer to it. The CoP is freely available to all SPTO qualifiers and students to download and use and *Swimming Pool Water* can be purchased at discounted rates. It provides the authoritative, thorough, and unique text upon which the SPTO is based

COVID-19

The covid pandemic is an example of how PWTAG training works in practice. When the threat of became evident, PWTAG and its authoritative industry partners, including the Health Protection Agency and a world-wide group of pool authorities and experts, produced guidance to operators on a range of essential topics. These included closing pools down when deemed unsafe, mothballing the pools operation, preparing pools for reopening, new standards to operate pools by, how to make pools safe for the future. These topics were immediately introduced into the training course syllabuses and now, with pools reopened, the lessons we learned have now been implanted permanently.

European and world standards

In a similar way PWTAG training also reflects the developments in pool standards in Europe and across world through ISO. PWTAG is a key player in the development of these standards, contributing expertise and helping to shape them and ensure their quality. This includes:

- swimming pool equipment (the BS EN 13451 series)
- design and pool safe operation (BS EN 15288 1 and 2)
- sport and recreational facilities and equipment (ISO 83)
- computer vision systems for drowning protection (ISO TC 83 WG4)
- floating leisure articles (ISO TC83 WG9)
- sports eye and face protection including swimming goggles (ISO TC94 SC6).

The qualifications

To meet the needs of both full-time technical operation and onsite supervision where there are arrangements in place for a visiting technical operator, PWTAG has stipulated two qualifications:

- swimming pool technical operator
- onsite designated supervisor.

PWTAG does not deliver training and qualifications; these are provided by PWTAG accredited training organisations.



Trained staff

To show the training required, PWTAG provides training guidance and a course syllabus – which is free to download. The syllabus defines the knowledge and onsite skills that lead to the qualification. Pools can use the syllabus to assess their own staff knowledge, or it can be used as the basis of a training programme.

PWTAG accredited training – who they are

To become an accredited training provider, organisations must demonstrate to PWTAG that they have the ability to deliver the syllabus, including assessment to a quality standard. The standard required for prospective training organisations is assured by a vigorous intensive review of the materials and methods used. These must in every detail comply with the PWTAG Code of Practice.

Registered staff

Candidates who become SPTO qualified are entitled to become listed on a SPTO register held on the PWTAG website for all to view. Registered SPTOs will be reminded prior to the end of their three-year term that they must update the currency of their qualification. The accredited training organisation, and not PWTAG, will provide updates.

A similar registration process and publicly available register is to be introduced for the onsite designated supervisor (ODS) qualification.