

Safety stressed in Xi'an after drowning

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By Ma Lie in Xi'an (China Daily)



The pipe through which a boy was sucked into and killed is seen after staff members have drained the water playground on Monday in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. Zhang Jie / for China Daily

Safety inspections are being carried out at swimming pools in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, after a boy drowned at a water playground.

The 12-year-old was at a spa hotel in the city's Chang'an district with his mother on Sunday when he was sucked into a water circulation pipe.

The monthlong series of checks will focus on pool facilities, the qualifications of lifeguards and management structures, said Wang Qingchuan, deputy director of the city's administrative bureau of sports.

The operation will be carried out jointly with the health and public security departments.

"Children like to play in pools during the summer vacation in the hot weather, so we should further strengthen our efforts to ensure safety and reduce the risk of drowning," said Wang.

After Sunday's fatal accident, a team made up of staff from eight government departments inspected the privately owned hotel, and the pool was closed.

Wang Hongqi, deputy director of the Chang'an district safety supervision bureau, said he could not discuss the investigation as it is continuing.

Li Yadong, a lawyer representing the hotel, said the water playground had opened on May 1 and was still in a trial period when the tragedy happened.

"The water circulation system was designed and built by a company in Guangdong province, and its manager is in Xi'an to help the investigation," Li added. "We are responsible for the accident."

He said the hotel had reached an agreement with the victim's family over compensation but declined to give details.

The pipe in which the boy died is 33 cm in diameter and has no protective grille. It is connected to a pump that supplies a waterfall at the top of a six-meter high rockery.

Xi'an has been experiencing a heatwave over the past few weeks with temperatures reaching 38 C, and many people have been cooling off in water.

Between July 1 and 22 Xi'an's emergency center received 23 reports of drownings, and on Tuesday three people died in a river in the city's eastern suburb.

The sports bureau has urged residents to swim only in well-run pools with lifeguards and proper safety procedures.

malie@chinadaily.com.cn