

Who is ready to open post COVID-19?

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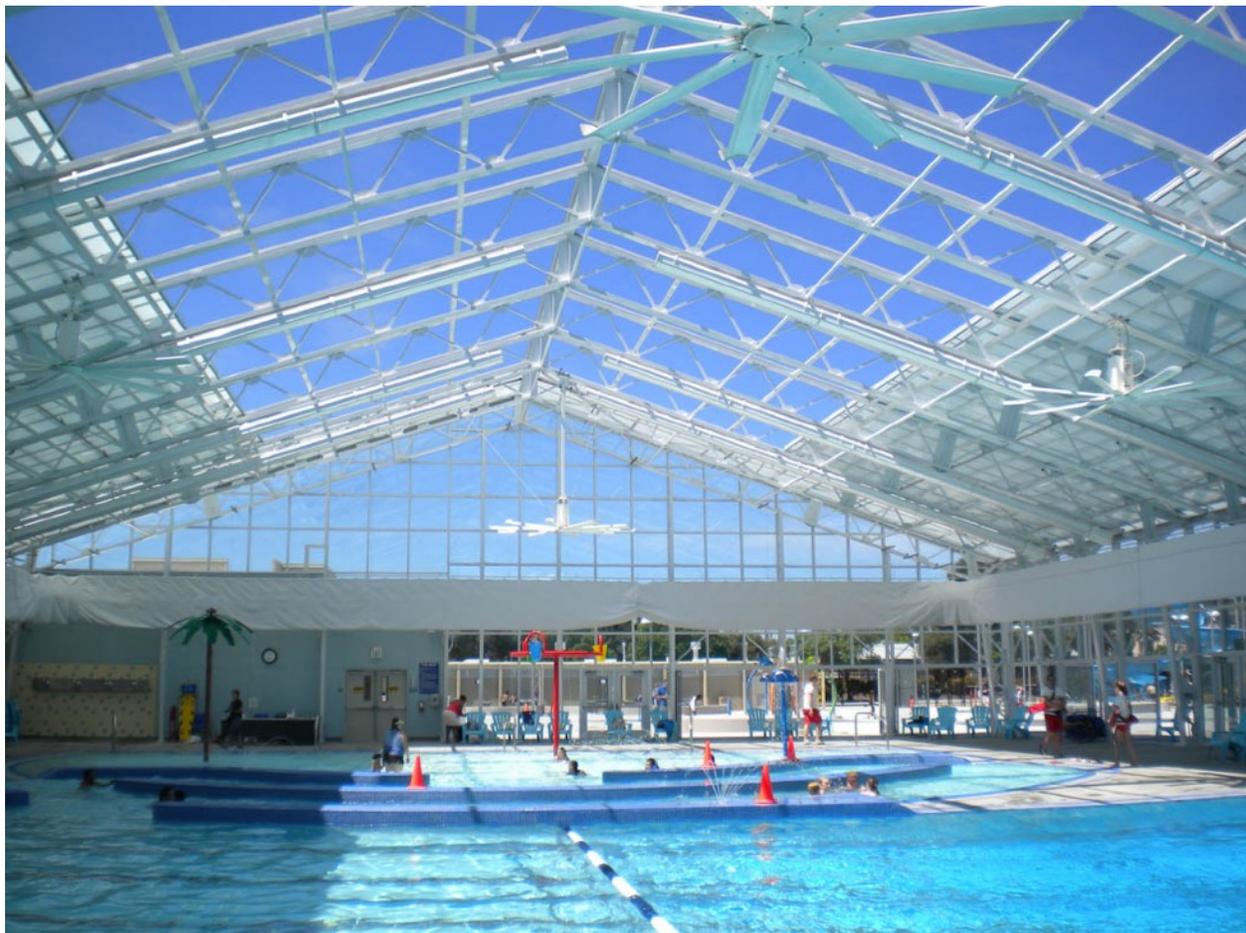


Indoor / Outdoor Pools for the win.

As we all now know - times have changed, likely forever, with the introduction of COVID-19. This spreadable virus, regardless of a vaccine, has changed the way we look at the space and people around us. We now look around and know that outdoor is better than indoor, farther is better than closer etc. But for how long, as pandemic fatigue sets in, we are relaxing and returning to our old behaviour.

However, if and when a second outbreak occurs, or the next pandemic hits, are we ready? Are the spaces we live, work and play in prepared? No.

Is your facility ready to adapt? From here on out, new “norms” aren’t temporary, they’re rewriting the future of health & building codes.



During a global pandemic, operators and owners of indoor pools are wondering where do we go from here? You may be asking yourself questions like:



“What changes do we need to make to open in the future?” or

“How are we going to make the new normal financially viable?”

Teams are now actively discussing how to address these very issues, and where a pivot will be necessary.

Some outdoor pools have opted to remain closed for the summer of 2020, due to the inherent cost in ramping up for the season with training/staffing. Others will only operate at minimal capacity for the foreseeable season. For municipalities and YMCAs and private clubs located in northern climates with a short season, it may simply not be “worth it” this year to open at all... a sad but fiscally conservative decision where needed.

However, indoor pools and health clubs and recreation centers employ their staff year-round. Staff count may expand and contract due to demand, but with the versatility to adapt their facilities regardless of season, indoor pools are riding on a decision of WHEN and HOW to reopen, and not IF.

Locally mandated social distancing guidelines and capacity guidelines will be a key part of every aquatic centers reopening plan. Like most businesses, owners and operators know that their viability to keep going is reliant on sales, so at some point, the doors must re-open.

Is your natatorium ready? Or are there vital upgrades needed before you open to the public or to ensure future viability?

What are the items to consider as part of emerging recreation renovation or for future health club design/operation? What are the top priorities and considerations? Most importantly, what actions need to be made in order to put these aquatic centers ahead of the curve as they facilitate a reopening?

Here are a few of the top things that come to mind:

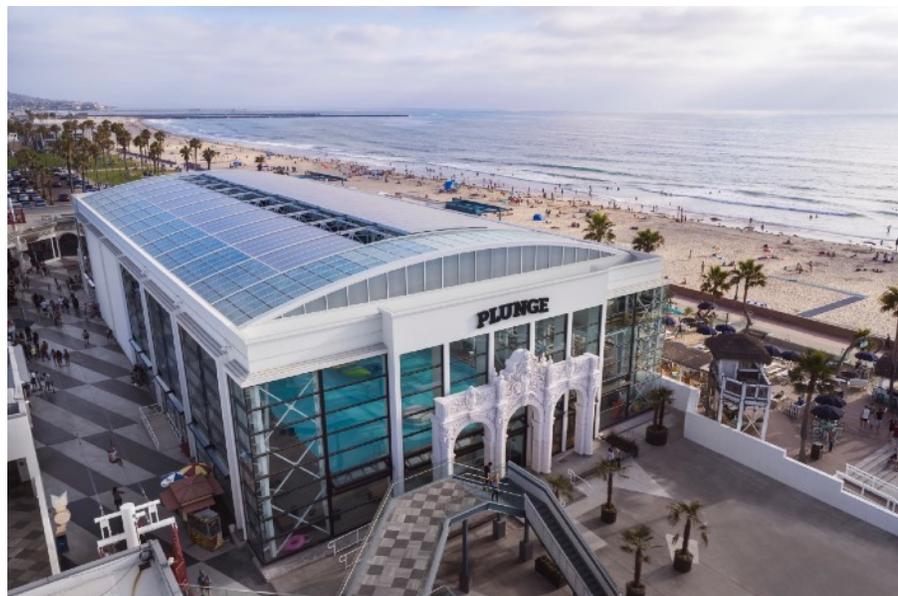
1. **Cleanliness & Materials:** Global public health strategies now say frequent disinfection of surfaces and objects that are touched by multiple people is important to reduce the spread of infection. Easily cleanable materials are recommended.¹
2. **Ventilation:** Typical indoor pool ventilation standards are still not enough for large natatoriums to reduce chloramine related illness due to the density of guests and splashing water². During this pandemic, perhaps more than ever, natural ventilation and the use of fresh air are recommended to reduce the spread of airborne viruses.³
3. **Daylight:** There is undeniable evidence that day-lit spaces hold the potential to yield substantial benefits, including increased energy savings, increased revenue in retail applications, and improvements to human health and productivity.⁴

Where do we go from here?

Indoor pools built with non-corrosive materials like aluminum have a significant advantage both from a strength and durability perspective, plus from a cleanliness one. A bright, open space that ventilates naturally, and one that isn't corroded makes these natatoriums not only seem cleaner, but they will also be cleaner if proper procedures are implemented.

And, per the experts, using natural ventilation saves owners money and allows operators to provide guests and staff with a safer and healthier environment which may reduce the risk of virus transmission.

This is a win-win for owners and operators.



Recreation Centers of the Future.

The concepts of what constitutes good indoor rec center are now different, and they won't default back to what was once acceptable. This pandemic highlights that designers and owners who have already seen these trends are in fact, ahead of the curve.

Facilities that opt for these choices use less energy and are cheaper to operate and maintain every year.

And now, it turns out these rec centers may in fact be safer for guests!



New studies demonstrate the correlation between the transmission of COVID-19 in closed environments vs. open air circulation. In a recent Japan study, the odds of a primary case transmitting COVID-19 in a closed environment was 18.7x greater compared to an open-air environment.⁵

Directors and owners, municipal and private, that shifted to modern principles early on have long been reaping the benefits of daylight, fresh air, and a clean structure, while sharing these benefits with their staff and guests. These pools are not only ahead of the curve, but they'll have the privilege of opening with more ease amidst "new normal" demands from this global pandemic.



OpenAire has had the pleasure of building aquatic centers around the globe, challenging the stereotypes of traditional indoor natatoriums. Our aluminum retractable roof enclosures cover commercial pools from spas to retirement communities, to municipal parks and recreation facilities, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, to hotels, cruise ships and private Health Clubs. We also have an extensive portfolio of waterparks.

01 - Who is ahead of the curve?

No matter what the sector is, the issues around corrosion for indoor pools are the same.

A small sample of our aquatic centers include:

- Scheu Family YMCA of Upland, California
- The Fit at Plunge Fitness Center, San Diego, California
- The Cove at Lakefront, Morrisville Aquatic & Fitness Center, North Carolina
- Saarland Therme Resort, Fitness, Spa, Rilchingen, Germany
- Grand Cascades Lodge - Crystal Springs Resort, New Jersey
- Heritage El Dorado Hills Retirement, El Dorado Hills, California
- The Granite Club: Private Members Club, Toronto, Ontario
- Ivybridge Leisure Center, Ivybridge, UK

For expanded portfolios of projects in all sectors, please reach out and contact us to see how we can support your future aquatic center dreams, or assist in modifying your existing facility to accommodate the future of improved daylight, hygiene, ventilation, and cleanliness.



Footnotes:

¹ CDC Workplace Safety and Health; Investigation of Employee Symptoms at an Indoor Waterpark, Lilia Chen MS, Health Hazard Evaluation Report HETA 2007-0163-3062, Great Wolf Lodge, Mason, Ohio, June 2008.

² *ibid.*

³ Study: Restaurant Outbreak In China Suggests Limits To Airborne Transmission of COVID-19, 22 APRIL 2020, SF NEWS, Jay Barmann, <https://sfist.com/2020/04/22/study-restaurant-covid-19-outbreak-in-china/>

⁴ The Benefits of Natural Light: Research supports daylighting's positive effect on building performance and human health. Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg. architecturallighting.com; March 19, 2014

⁵ Closed environments facilitate secondary transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Hiroshi Nishiura, Hitoshi Oshitani, Tetsuro Kobayashi, Tomoya Saito, Tomimasa Sunagawa, Tamano Matsui, Takaji Wakita, MHLW COVID-19 Response Team, Motoi Suzuki, *medRxiv* 2020.02.28.20029272; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.02.28.20029272>,