



**DALLAS COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION**

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**Senator West Introduces Bill (SB 968) to Regulate Spray Parks &
Interactive Water Parks**

Bill is the result of DCHHS investigation into a community-wide Crypto outbreak last Summer

February 20, 2009 (Dallas) - In an effort to prevent outbreaks of water borne illnesses associated with interactive aquatic facilities, State Senator Royce West has filed Senate Bill 968 to set standards for these facilities. Senator West has worked in tandem with the Dallas County Department of Health and Human Services (DCHHS) to create this bill after an investigation last summer.

"Swimming pools, spas, and wading pools currently are regulated by the Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 341. During the investigation of a wide-spread outbreak of cryptosporidium (crypto) linked to aquatic facilities in Dallas and surrounding counties, DCHHS discovered that stand-alone spray parks and interactive fountains were not regulated under statute. Senate Bill 968, which I filed today, seeks to apply the same level of standards, currently required for pools and spas to spray fountain parks and interactive water features," said West

"We want to thank Senator West for spearheading the efforts to include this important piece of legislation to the Texas State Health and Safety Code," said Zachary Thompson, DCHHS Director. "If passed, municipalities and local health departments will have the tools necessary to better protect the health and safety of our citizens by extending existing pool and spa regulations to spray parks and other aquatic facilities currently not included in state Statutes."

Recreational spray fountain parks have become popular attractions particularly in urban cities throughout the United States. More than 12 of these facilities are currently operating in Dallas County, and there are many more throughout the State of Texas. More interactive water features are being added monthly. When these types of facilities were first created in the 1970's, they utilized only fresh water to supply the fountains; however, water recirculation and filtration techniques have been used particularly in the last 10 years to minimize water costs. While water circulation and filtration techniques are similar to the systems used in swimming pools, spas, and wading pools, these facilities do not have similar regulatory requirements to monitor water quality and safety.

"Dallas County Department of Health and Human Services recognized during this past summer's Crypto Outbreak that patronage to these facilities were often by younger individuals, including non-toilet trained persons," said Dr. John Carlo, DCHHS Medical Director. "As such, an enhanced transmission can occur when



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one person who is sick with an infection enters and uses these facilities. While chlorination to the current level of standards as spas, swimming pools, and wading pools will not remove the risk of disease transmission completely, inadequate chlorination has been shown to significantly enhance disease transmission,” Dr. Carlo continued.

Several outbreaks of infectious diseases including *Shigella sonnei*, *Legionella anisa*, *Escherichia coli* (O1:157), and *Cryptosporidia parvum* have been associated elsewhere in the United States when these facilities were not properly maintained. Without proper chemical control measures, such as chlorination, contamination of spray water with infectious pathogens can result in large numbers of persons becoming ill with symptoms including diarrhea.

“Inspections of the spray pools will benefit the citizens of Dallas by ensuring minimum requirements for chlorine levels and disinfection are met, in accordance with the existing rules which already apply for pools and spas,” said Dr. Wendy Chung, DCHHS Chief Epidemiologist. “The fast-growing number of interactive water fountain constructions nationwide has created the potential for waterborne-disease outbreaks. Only proper design, operation, and maintenance can reduce the risk of illness,” Chung continued.

During 2008, DCHHS received 458 reports of laboratory confirmed cases of crypto, most of which were associated with the use of recreational water facilities.