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Gatchalian: Assign qualified lifeguards in all public pools

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian is pushing for the mandatory assignment of qualified lifeguards in all public swimming pools and bathing facilities in the country.

“Of the 56 deaths that occurred this past Holy Week, 80 percent or 45 cases were due to drowning. This only emphasizes the need to have lifeguards in swimming and bathing facilities,” Gatchalian said, citing data from the Philippine National Police.

Gatchalian said his Senate Bill No. 997 addresses the often-disregarded essential requirement of the presence of a lifeguard in swimming pools and bathing areas by establishing a formula, based on World Health Organization standards, for the number of lifeguards required to be on duty.

The measure requires each public swimming pool to have at least one qualified lifeguard for every 250 meters of pool area during operating hours.

The lifeguard must be certified by any nationally-recognized organization accredited by the Department of Health.

The proposed legislation also mandates the DOH to strictly impose the lifeguard requirement and increases the criminal liabilities of pool operators who fail to comply.

It also requires pool operators to provide the appropriate local government unit with a certification and supporting documents to prove that they have hired and are currently employing the required number of lifeguards.

The LGUs, meanwhile, are tasked to ensure compliance of all public swimming pools through periodic inspections coordinated by local health officers.

“Taon-taon na lang may mga nalulunod at namamatay dahil kulang o walang kakayanan ang mga pool facilities na sagipin at iligtas ang mga biktima. It is high time that these very preventable deaths are stopped,” Gatchalian said.