

Myrtle Beach resort to pay \$26 million after 3-year-old suffered chemical burns in pool

By Terri Richardson January 29, 2024 12:48 PM

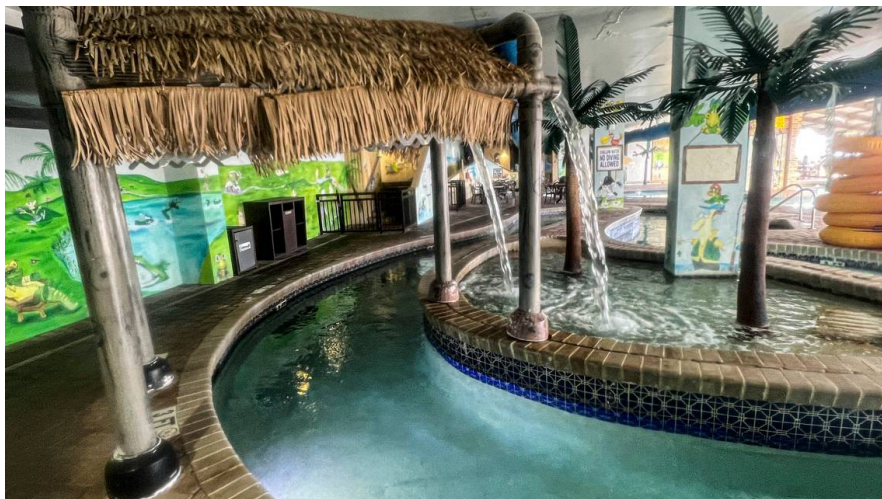
The Caribbean Resort and Villas on North Ocean Boulevard features more than 14 pools, including a lazy river, according to its website.

A Myrtle Beach resort has agreed to pay \$26 million to the family of a 6-year-old boy who received chemical burns while swimming in the hotel's lazy river. Brittain Resorts and its insurance companies have agreed to the payment in exchange for a dismissal of a federal lawsuit filed in 2021 by the family and to avoid an upcoming jury trial, according to a press release from Trial Lawyers for Justice, one of the attorney firms representing the family.

Alicia Noel Bolyard, an attorney representing Brittain Resorts, declined to comment.

"I am relieved that justice has been served for my son, who endured unimaginable pain and suffering. No amount of money can erase the trauma he and my family experienced, or erase the permanent scarring, but this victory provides accountability and most importantly, closure and protection for other children," said Heather Douglas, mother of the toddler in a news release. "My hope is that this serves as a wake-up call for all resorts to prioritize the safety of their guests, especially children, so that no other child or family has to endure such a horrifying ordeal."

The injuries were the result of chemical burns from one the swimming pools at Caribbean Resort and Villas, 3000 N. Ocean Blvd. The pool had dangerous high levels of chlorine. The North Carolina family was on vacation in Myrtle Beach over Memorial Day in 2020, staying at the resort.



Mother claims child burned by chemicals at a Myrtle Beach resort.

The injury resulted in the closure of two of the resort's pools, as well as the arrest of the pool operator for falsifying the pools' records. The lawsuit alleged that the chlorine level records of the pool to state regulators had been falsified for years, according to the release.

According to DHEC's report, two separate tests of Caribbean Resort's lazy river and a spa on that day showed chlorine levels of greater than 10. Tests also showed that the pH level at the lazy river was at 8.10, which is greater than the state's regulatory range of 7 to 7.8. DHEC closed both facilities until corrections were made.

State law requires chlorine levels to be under 8 ppm.

In March, DHEC's Office of Criminal Investigations arrested Juan Arocho Rivera on charges of forgery for falsifying chlorine and pH levels written on pool inspection logs at the resort. Rivera was employed as a pool operator for the Caribbean Resort and Spa, according to the arrest warrant.

The boy, who was three at the time, suffered serious physical and psychological injuries to his groin area, the lawsuit said.

The toddler was injured after swimming in the lazy river with family members. Family noticed the burns after they returned home from vacation, according to the release. His mother, Heather Douglas, discovered the burns after the boy began screaming and crying uncontrollably, noticing redness around his groin area. Over the course of several hours, the burns got worse. Douglas took the boy to the doctor and eventually he was admitted to the University of North Carolina burn center where he was treated for chemical burns, the release said.

The family then contacted the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, which checked the chemical levels at the resort's pool.

Read more at:

<https://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article284818101.html#storylink=cpy>