

# Beach Guidelines

An initiative of Dubai 2040  
2023





# Beach guidelines

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**GENERAL**

# GENERAL ACRONYMS

<b>BF</b>	Blue Flag
<b>CPTED</b>	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
<b>DBC</b>	Dubai Building Code
<b>DET</b>	Department of Economy and Tourism
<b>DM</b>	Dubai Municipality
<b>DMCA</b>	Dubai Maritime City Authority
<b>DM-HS</b>	Dubai Municipality - Health & Safety Department
<b>DM-PBWD</b>	Dubai Municipality - Public Beaches & Waterways management Department
<b>Dubai 2040</b>	Dubai 2040 Spatial Structure Plan
<b>ECAT</b>	Environmental Centre for Arab Towns
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>EIS</b>	Environmental Impact Study
<b>ILSF</b>	International Life Saving Federation
<b>RTA</b>	Roads and Transport Authority



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Term	In-Term	Definition
<b>Accessibility</b>	1. Public	Space that is available for use by the public in addition to the owner/ operator.
	2. Private	Spaces whose use is restricted to the owner/ operator.
<b>Backshore</b>		The part of the beach behind the foreshore (see below), that is usually dry, being reached only by the highest tides
<b>Entry</b>	1. Open to all	Spaces that allow admission by all; residents, guests or visitors - whether free or paid.
	2. Open to some	Spaces that are limited to the use of either residents or guests, whether free or paid.
	3. Open to none	Spaces that are limited to the exclusive use of the owners or invited guests, whether free or paid.
<b>Fees</b>	1. Free	When no charge is paid by user, irrespective of its entry status, to access the space.
	2. Paid	When payment is made by the user, irrespective of its entry status, to access the space.
<b>Foreshore</b>		The part of shore which lies between high and low water mark at ordinary tide i.e., between Mean High Water (MHW) and Mean Low Water (MLW)
<b>Height</b>		The upper boundary of the building envelope for a given zone or parcel.
<b>Management</b>	1. Owner-operated	Managed by the owner of the asset.
	2. Tenant-operated	Managed by the leasee authorized by the owner.
<b>Near shore</b>		The zone from the foreshore to the lower shoreface. The nearshore usually extends offshore, typically to water depths of the order of 20m.
<b>Ownership</b>	1. Government	Owned by either a local or federal public sector authority.
	2. Developer	Owned by a private sector body.
<b>Permitted use</b>		The use allowed under the parcel's affection plan or planning regulation that meets all the requirements of that particular zoning.
<b>Respective Authority</b>		A government agency that has the legal authority to execute its respective mandate and associated services within its domain.
	1. Urban Planning	Dubai Municipality (DM), Trakhees (PCFC), Dubai Development Authority (DDA), Dubai Airport Freezone (DAFZ), and Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO).
	2. Transport and mobility	Roads and Transport Authority.

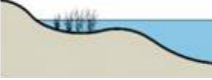

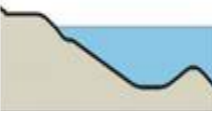






## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Term	In-Term	Definition
<b>Setback</b>		<b>A prescribed distance to a (coastal) feature within which all or certain types of development is subject to conditions.</b>
<b>Shoreline</b>		<b>Intersection of the mean high water mark plane with the beach.</b>
<b>Waterfront</b>		<b>Land, man-made or natural, fronting or abutting a large body of water.</b>
<b>Waterfront types</b>	1. Beach	<b>Natural/ man-made land fronting a water body covered by sand.</b>
	2. Promenade	<b>A hardscaped public route adjacent to water that can be used for movement or commercial activity.</b>
	3. Pier	<b>A structure extending into water for use as a promenade or a landing place for boats.</b>
	4. Breakwater/ groyne	<b>Offshore structures that protect the beach, harbor or inlet from the force of the open water or the movement of sediment.</b>
	5. Marina	<b>A basin that provides secure moorings for boats and often offers repair and other facilities.</b>
<b>Waterfront edge</b>	1. Soft	<b>A natural or man-made edge that includes mangroves, sandy beaches etc. that is usually subject to erosion.</b>
	2. Hard	<b>A structure, such as a breakwater, groyne, seawall, revetment, jetty or similar that is designed as a response to erosion.</b>
	<i>(See adjoining diagram for relationship of edge types with natural or manmade)</i>	
<b>Waterfront hotel</b>	1. Beachside	<b>A hotel located at a maximum walking distance of 500 meters from the beach.</b>
	2. Beachfront	<b>A hotel located on and/or with at least one direct access to the beach.</b>
<b>Waterfront locations</b>	1. Islands	<b>Waterfronts on land surrounded by open water.</b>
	2. Coastal	<b>Waterfronts located along the shore facing the open water.</b>
	3. Inland	<b>Waterfronts that are located away from the coast. This can include lakes, canals, creeks, watercourses, inlets, and bays. (See Appendix - Map for locations.)</b>

## TYPICAL WATERFRONT EDGE TYPES

Type	Definition	
Natural	1. Mangrove <b>An intertidal shallow saltwater forest characterized by a dense network of vegetation with arched roots. Mangroves are not just a natural way of helping the coastline withstand continuous wave action, they are also an effective means of carbon sequestration.</b>	
	2. Sandy beach <b>A stretch of coastline covered by loose organic deposits of sand, tiny grains of rocks/ minerals and shells. Natural beaches protect the inland ecosystems from storm surges and are a haven for marine life. Such beaches also provide recreational value but their physical and visual nature can be inconsistent, as it is not recommended to disturb their natural form.</b>	
Man made	1. Sandy beach <b>A stretch of coastline covered by loose organic deposits of sand, tiny grains of rocks/minerals and shells. Man-made beaches are designed to cater to a variety of activities and can be flat, shallow or steep depending on their use. They are subject to pollution and waste due to intense human activities and so must be actively maintained to provide amenity.</b>	
	2. Rip rap <b>Natural looking but man-made rock or similar materials that are carefully placed to protect the coast from scour and erosion. Rip raps are used where there is continuous rushing water and it is not safe for any water activity. The space behind, called the promenade, can be used for many recreational and commercial activities and is often fenced to protect users from falling.</b>	
	3. Vertical edge <b>Vertical walls made of concrete near deep waters or where there may not be enough space - such as in a canal or marina. The walls are used to anchor vessels, access boats, and load ships. The promenade in such a design is the widest and can be used for a variety of recreational and commercial activities.</b>	







**BACKGROUND**

## Section 2: BACKGROUND

### INTRODUCTION

These guidelines have been prepared in line with Dubai 2040's objective to provide high-quality and publicly accessible beaches.

It builds on Dubai Municipality's Coastal Development Guidelines for Dubai Coast (2010) a key principle of which is to ensure that 'private coastal and offshore schemes should be environmentally optimized and occupy minimum beach frontage.

These guidelines establish a consistent basis for development, based on Admin Order No.1 (2021), so that there is harmony between the design and provision of public and private beaches in the city.

#### VISION



To have the highest quality in publicly accessible continuous waterfronts

#### OBJECTIVES



- 1- To increase the length of publicly accessible continuous waterfronts in the Emirate.
- 2- To match the global design, safety and environmental quality standards for all waterfronts.
- 3- To simplify and maintain consistency in the process of planning, designing and monitoring waterfronts.

## Section 2: BACKGROUND

### WATERFRONT PRINCIPLES



#### PRESERVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE OF THE COASTAL WATERFRONT

- 1- Address climate change
- 2- Address environmental quality in line with the federal and local legislations.



#### CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

- 1- Allow easy and continuous movement across waterfront areas, through clear pathways etc.
- 2- Support universal design through proper planning and placement of public realm elements.
- 3- Promote easy access to the waterfront from the land and sea connections.
- 4- Maintain visual access to and from the waterfronts.



#### HIGH QUALITY AND CONSISTENT DESIGN

- 1- Maintain, where possible, or improve the natural quality of the waterfront edges.
- 2- Keep the needs and privacy of different user groups, by separating these areas through zoning or landscaped screen as necessary.
- 3- Create attraction points that attract and allow users to enjoy the environmental, built and social activities associated with the water.



#### USER FOCUSED SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- 1- Provide the full suite of public health and hygiene facilities (including gender-specific toilets where applicable)
- 2- Keep safety of all users in mind when designing and providing services in land and water.
- 3- Provide a wide range of recreational facilities for the different users.
- 4 - Adopt CPTED techniques to ensure the safety of all users.
- 5- Avoid any kind of clutter or obstruction when placing elements to avoid visual pollution.

## Section 2: BACKGROUND

### SCOPE

These guidelines cover all waterfronts in the emirate of Dubai including islands, coastal and inland waterways in the mainland, freehold, and freezone areas.

- Islands
- Mainland
- Inland



Map 2.1: Map of Dubai's waterfronts based on typology  
Note: Subject to update, based on information received up to January 2022

# GUIDELINES

**GUIDELINES**

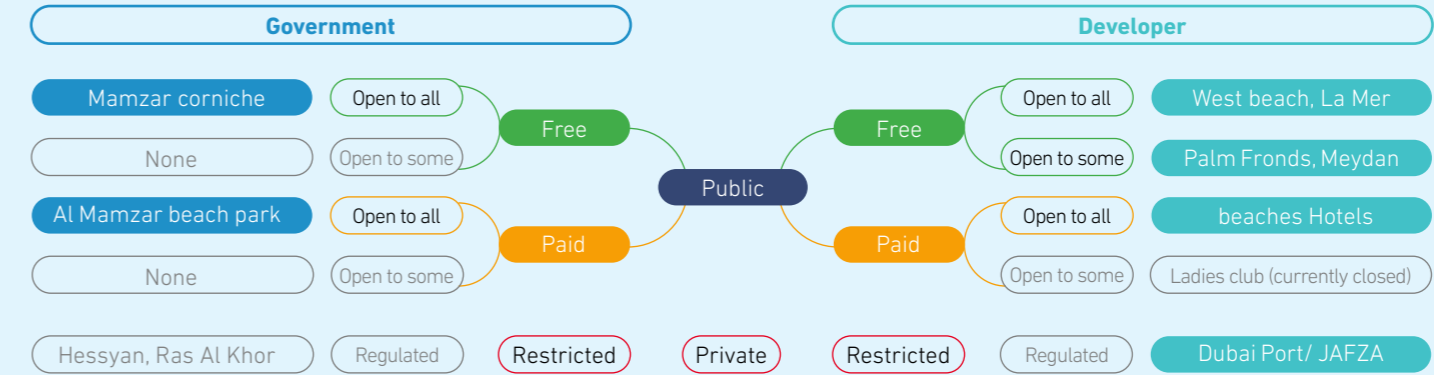
**BEACHES**

**3.1 General beach planning and design guidelines**

- When allocating beaches, allow sufficient water surface and land area for each bather.
- Clearly mark the areas for different activities on the water-side and land side of the beach. This includes craft navigation, swimming and land-side activities.
- No permanent or temporary structures are allowed within the beach without the approval and written consent of respective authority. Once approval is granted, the structure must be based on Dubai Building Code (DBC) specifications.
  - All construction in the backshore must be designed in a way so it can be easily dismantled.
- Visitors must be allowed to walk, cycle or swim along all of the designated beachside areas.
  - If certain locations are restricted, this must be approved with the respective authority at the time of planning or operations.
  - Signs must be provided, to inform visitors of any restrictions.
- The respective authority should be allowed to use any part of the beach in the event it needs to provide its services in the interest of public health and safety and environment. This should be done in coordination with the owner/ operator of the beach.
- Free open to all public beaches must be provided wherever possible along the waterfront.

If a paid open to all public beach is provided, the beach access fee must be agreed with the concerned authority and set in accordance with the types of services provided to ensure the affordability of beach access to the maximum range of users.

An explanation of the types of beaches and representative examples is shown below:



**Open to all :** No restrictions on type of people who can visit  
**Open to some :** Some restrictions based on gender, ownership etc

Diagram 3.1: Existing classification of beaches in Dubai

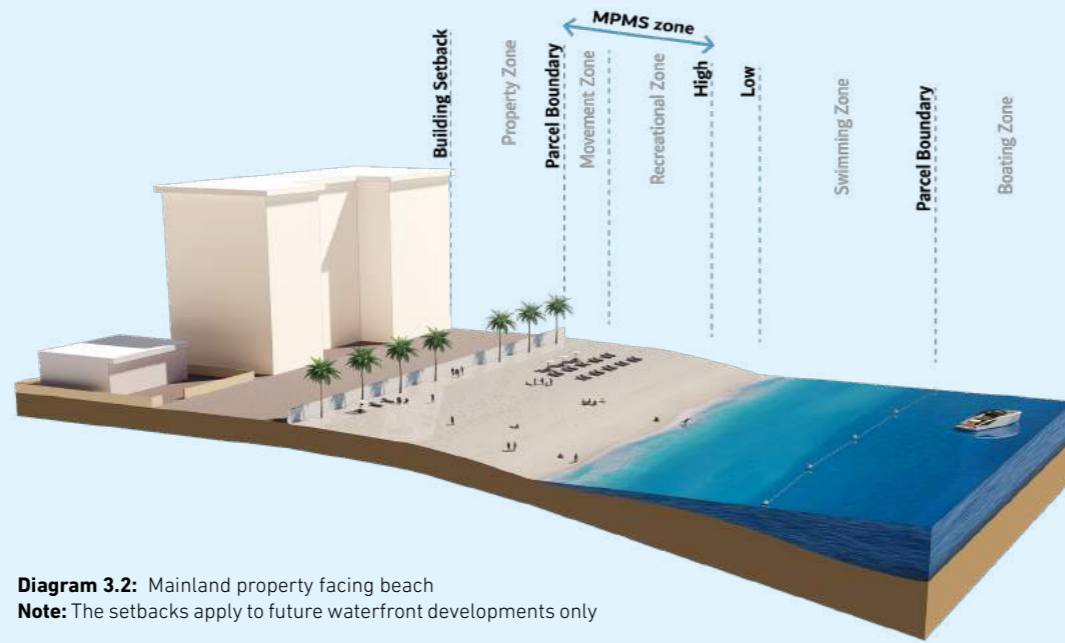
- As coastal conditions change continuously with the introduction of new offshore developments and coastal schemes, all new development should consider such anthropogenic impacts in their studies.
- Ensure that open to sea exposed beaches are appropriately shielded to prevent dangerous rip currents.
- Considerations such as sea level rise and wave run up etc. must be clearly highlighted in the design of beaches when submitting for a design no objection certificate.
- Beach risk assessments must be performed by the owner/ operator for approval by the respective authority.

**GUIDELINES**

**BEACHES**

**3.2 Key planning guidelines (uses, minimum width and setback)**

**Scenario 1: Mainland property facing beach**



**Diagram 3.2:** Mainland property facing beach  
**Note:** The setbacks apply to future waterfront developments only

Part of Beach	Zones	Permitted activities/ development	Minimum Dimension (m)
	Property zone	As per Zoning/ Land use	-
Backshore	Public movement zone	Walking, jogging, cycling	6m width "7.5m maximum where possible and the movement zone is less than 15% of the MPMS Zone."
	Recreational zone	Screens no taller than 1.5m, toilet, showers, lifeguard and rescue facilities, restaurant pavilions, kiosks, sports facilities (no permanent stands/ platform) and temporary stage for festivals	Width calculated from highest astronomical tide. It is the owner/ operator's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate studies are completed to ensure the safety of the beach from waves/ inundation etc.
Foreshore		Walking, jogging	Based on beach slope
Swimming zone		Swimming, paddling	-2.0m DMD depth
Near Shore	Boating zone	Boating as per DMCA regulations	-
MPMS Zone	Mandatory Public Movement Setback Zone	As per the zones above	40m width

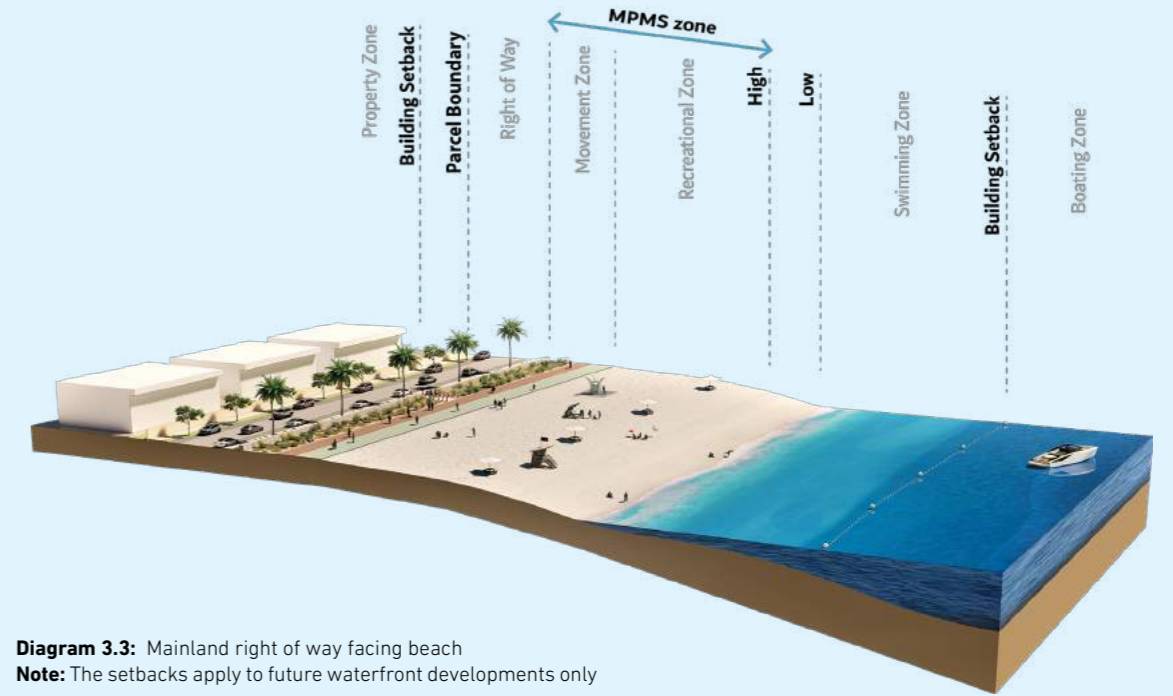
Minimal and only necessary signage and street furniture should be placed within the backshore to avoid clutter, obstruction to movement and visual clutter.

**GUIDELINES**

**BEACHES**

**3.2 Key planning guidelines (uses, minimum width and setback)**

**Scenario 2: Mainland Right-of-Way facing beach**



**Diagram 3.3:** Mainland right of way facing beach  
**Note:** The setbacks apply to future waterfront developments only

Part of Beach	Zones	Permitted activities/ development	Minimum Dimension (m)
	Property zone	As per Zoning/ Land use	-
	Right-of-Way Zone	Transport infrastructure, kiosks	As per road hierarchy
Backshore	Public movement zone	Walking, jogging, cycling	6m width "7.5m maximum where possible and the movement zone is less than 15% of the MPMS Zone."
	Recreational zone	Screens no taller than 1.5m, toilet, showers, lifeguard and rescue facilities, restaurant pavilions, kiosks, sports facilities (no permanent stands/ platform) and temporary stage for festivals	Width calculated from highest astronomical tide. It is the owner/ operator's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate studies are completed to ensure the safety of the beach from waves/ inundation etc.
Foreshore		Walking, jogging	Based on beach slope
Swimming zone		Swimming, paddling	-2.0m DMD depth
Near Shore	Boating zone	Boating as per DMCA regulations	-
MPMS Zone	Mandatory Public Movement Setback Zone	As per the zones above	40m width

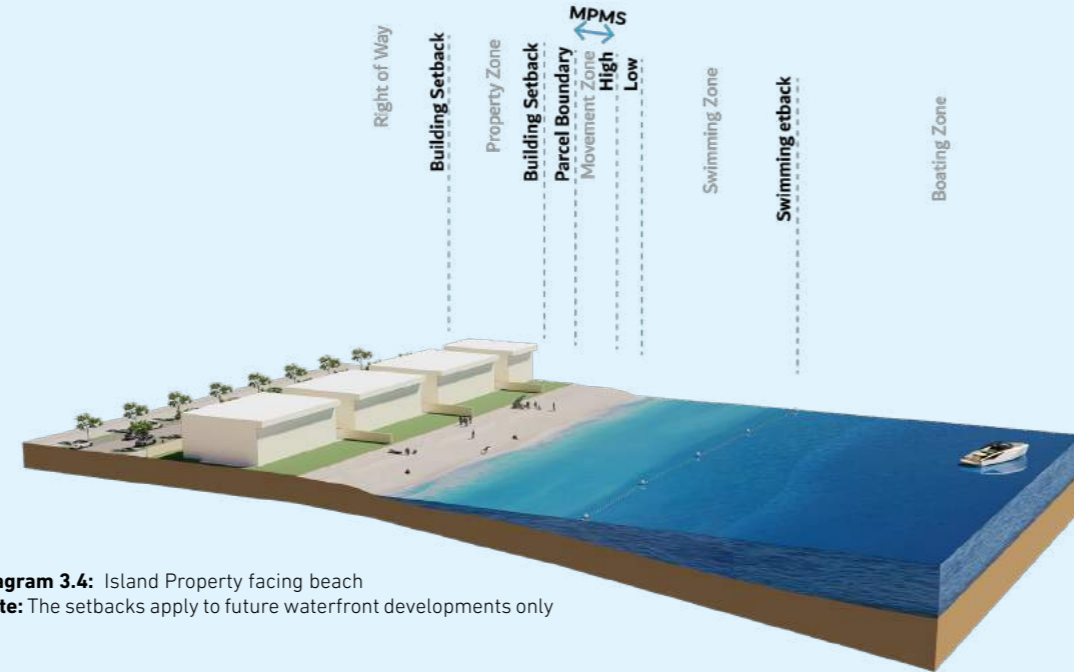
Minimal and only necessary signage and street furniture should be placed within the backshore to avoid clutter, obstruction to movement and visual clutter.

## GUIDELINES

# BEACHES

## 3.2 Key planning guidelines (uses, minimum width and setback)

### Scenario 3: Island property facing beach



**Diagram 3.4:** Island Property facing beach  
**Note:** The setbacks apply to future waterfront developments only

Part of Beach	Zones	Permitted activities/ development	Minimum Dimension (m)
	Property zone	As per Zoning/ Land use	-
	Right-of-Way Zone	Transport infrastructure, kiosks	As per road hierarchy
MSPM Zone	Mandatory Semi-Public Movement Zone	Walking, jogging, Activities (where applicable)	10m width Width calculated from highest astronomical tide to parcel boundary.
Foreshore		Walking, jogging	Based on beach slope
Swimming zone		Swimming, paddling	-2.0m DMD depth
Near Shore	Boating zone	Boating as per DMCA regulations	-

## GUIDELINES

# BEACHES

## 3.3 Waterfront foreshore access

- Provide an easement between building to facilitate clear and easy movement for pedestrians and emergency vehicles to the beach. Scenarios are shown in diagrams 3.5 and 3.6.
- Clearly mark, identify and segregate each movement path.
- Coordinate with the Dubai Civil Defence and Dubai Police for the appropriate type of vehicle that may be using the foreshore access to determine the minimum setbacks:
  - Left and right side from the extreme edge of the building (whichever is greater)  
Beach access Minimum 6m or 1/3 of the height of the adjoining building.
  - Left and right side from the extreme edge of the building (whichever is greater)  
Promenade access Minimum 3m or 1/3 of the height of the adjoining building.

## 3.4 Beach slope and swimming

- Adopt suitable slopes for swimming and non-swimming beaches based on the depth.
- Swimming areas must be clearly designated with buoys and marked as suitable for experienced or beginners.
  - Areas for non-swimmers or beginners should have a maximum depth of 1.2metres.
- Marine sports (e.g. boating, water skiing, etc.), fishing, or netting of fish are not allowed within designated swimming areas.

## 3.4 Beach slope and swimming

- As per DM Environmental Sustainability and Public Beaches and Water Canals and Departments.

## 3.5 Environmental responsibilities

- As per DM Environmental Sustainability and Public Beaches and Water Canals and Departments.

### 3.6 Parking (Vehicular, cycling e-bikes, scooters ...etc.) and Rights of Way guidelines

As per RTA's current requirements

### 3.7 Coastal Structures and construction

As per DM-PBWC requirements and restrictions  
As per Dubai Building Code (2021) specifications

- Section C.5.10: Accessibility Part C: For Temporary Structures on the beach
- Section C.10.2.7: Facilities, services, and urban furniture on the beach
- Section C.8: Toilets on the beach measures

### 3.8 Health and safety

As per the respective authority's current requirements

### 3.9 Operations

#### Lifeguard facilities

- Provide lifeguard facilities with first aid facilities, locker rooms and showers, and storage space.
- Locate lookout towers at appropriate locations based on the beach design to have a complete unobstructed view of the beach and water area. The towers should be away from public facilities to avoid interference with emergency operations.
- Water hazard level flagpoles, minimum height = 3 meters above ground level, must be located at appropriate locations based on design of the beach. Follow the hazard level guidelines from International Life Saving Federation (ILSF).

#### Beach operations and maintenance

All beaches must have management plans. This must include:

- Zoning for land and water side users including swimmers, surfers, wind surfers and craft.
- Waste management.
- Safety and security.

## GUIDELINES

# BEACH TEMPORARY ACTIVITIES GUIDELINES

### 3.10 Planning

- Prior to organizing temporary activities on public beaches and waterways, such as sport activities, amphitheaters, pavilions and stages for festivals, an NOC must be submitted to respective authority at least 3 weeks prior to the beach occupation date and prior to advertising the event/activity.
- Events are permitted on public and private beaches subject to respective authorities.
- All events must be held completely within the designated event space. This includes front of house, back of house and dedicated routes (if any). The permit does not give exclusive rights to the site. The beach must remain open to the public.
- The event must start and end at the agreed time. Set up and dismantling must be completed as per the time schedule to avoid inconvenience to others.
- Minimal directional signage may be provided to guide visitors to the event space. Avoid obstruction, overcrowding and visual pollution.

### 3.11 Pre-activity

- All planning, environmental, infrastructure, setup and traffic management plans, drawings, and NOCs must be submitted prior to the event. This should include the names of all contractors.
- Applications must include at a letter from the respective authority supporting the event, number of attendees, location (private or public beach), event requirements, event management prior and post event, safety and security measures and other necessary requirements.
- Power requirements will be limited to existing power available. If generators are needed, written permission must be obtained.
- An insurance Certificate along with the endorsement from the production company naming the respective authority must be on-file prior to event set up.
- No digging or cutting of shrubbery or trees.
- All safety requirements of the event to be maintained including any needed tests from third party if applicable.
- Depending on the event's complexity/ size an initial walk through maybe necessary. Public safety, access and resource protection will be discussed with the respective authority.
- Any activity that isn't permitted and is not specifically mentioned on the permit, will not be allowed for the event.

### 3.12 Operational

- The respective authority reserves the right to have the final say on amplified and/or entertainment volume levels at all times during the event. Permits will be needed for noise over 55dB in the morning and 45dB at night.
- Maintain a fire lane throughout the duration of the event.
- No dumping of any gray water and/or left over drinks anywhere on the beach.
- Overnight camping is permitted only on certain beaches.
- No overnight camping is allowed on DM's public beaches.
- Pre-approvals are mandatory for overnight camping using caravans.
- Motor vehicles are not permitted on the beach, except for emergency and maintenance vehicles.
- Attaching hammocks to trees, showers or structures is prohibited.
- No person shall discharge any fireworks on any portion of the beach unless done as part of a special event authorized and approved by the authorities.
- Fishing or netting of fish is not allowed within designated swimming areas.

### 3.13 Post activity

- Any event setting up/breaking down before or after regular beach hours will require the presence of a monitor.
- The Permit holder will be responsible for clean-up and segregating waste.





# APPROVALS

## APPROVALS

### GENERAL

Any information or activity not listed below must comply with the responsible authority's regulations. The request must be submitted to the concern authority for case-by-case evaluation and approval.

Additional services related to individual, business or government can be found on respective authorities websites.

The following is a list of key activities for reference:

#### PLANNING AND DESIGN APPROVALS

Activity	Responsible authority
Adding/modifying any waterfront element for use/ protection	DM-PBWC
Master plan new, and modification (land-use, zoning, ...)*	Respective Authority
Master plan minor modification to existing (land-use, zoning, ...)*	Respective Authority
Waterfront building related changes and additions *	Respective Authority
Coastal and marine EIA/ EIS approvals	DM-ESD

#### DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

Activity	Responsible authority
Construction of water side facilities/ wall/ protection/ fences	Respective Authority
Construction of buildings/ facilities/ fences with permitted uses	Respective Authority

#### OPERATIONAL APPROVALS

Activity	Responsible authority
Renting an area in a beach	Respective Authority
Obtaining Blue Flag certification	Enviro Care
Hosting or organizing events (temporary)	Respective Authority
Adding water taxi/ water vehicle stop	DMCA, RTA



# APPENDIX 1

## APPENDIX 1

### BLUE FLAG CRITERIA

The national operator for Blue Flags in the UAE is the Enviro Care.

Enviro Care follows the same criteria set out by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. The criteria are categorized in the following four areas:

1. Water quality
2. Environmental management
3. Environmental education
4. Safety

Contact the blue flag operator at [blueflaguae@gmail.com](mailto:blueflaguae@gmail.com) following for the most recent criteria and assistance regarding Blue Flag accreditation.

Other useful sites include:

- 1 Blue Flag <https://www.blueflag.global/>
- 2 FEE <https://www.fee.global/>
- 3 Enviro Care <https://www.ecat.ae/en>

# APPENDIX 2

## APPENDIX 2

### HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

Beach operators must comply with DM Health & Safety guidelines for beach design, planning, and activities

#### The following activities constitute a violation:

- Failure to provide adequate supervision and life-saving equipment on the beach.
- Unclear swimming rules and timings.
- Using polluted or water sources for washing or drinking, and not conforming to the approved water quality standards.
- The presence of sewage discharge or traces of oil residues deposited on the beach waters.
- Not providing directional signs on the beach and in multiple and clear places for beachgoers.
- Bathing in the beach at night or during electrical thunderstorms or unfavorable weather conditions.
- Depth markings must be provided and clearly visible in all diving places, platforms, and floating berths.

#### Prohibitions apply to public-free and public-paid beaches:

- Existence of electrical connections to operate devices and equipment such as portable advertising systems or radios ... etc., at a distance of less than 6 meters from the beach, taking into account obtaining the necessary permits and approvals from the competent authority.
- It is prohibited to use loud music or noise that causes disturbance to beach-goers.
- Commercial photography is prohibited unless prior written permission has been obtained from the competent authority.
- Any other conditions determined by the relevant authority/department that pose a threat to public health.



# 2040 دبي DUBAI

Beach  
guidelines  
Version (1)

CONFIDENTIAL  
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