

Choosing Your Pool Furniture

By Joe Griffin

President

Contract Furnishings International, Inc.

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Now that it's spring again, you may be thinking about how to beautify and modernize your association's outdoor furniture. Many condominiums today want to achieve a resort look at their properties, and the choices and styles seem endless. Here are some tips and observations to help you make the best choices for your outdoor furnishings, based on safety and durability as well as style and cost.

Low maintenance or high style?.

You might think resort quality furnishings must be high style and expensive. Indeed, the opposite is often true. Several high profile resorts use relatively inexpensive commercial grade resin furniture on their pool decks and other common areas. These resorts are interested in low maintenance, reliable furniture that looks good, is safe, and is easy on the budget. The key is to choose furniture made to modern commercial use specifications, with a focus on safety features.

At the other end of the scale are high style resorts that purchase expensive, fancy furniture for their pool decks and common areas. Often, this type of furniture is not appropriate for the typical homeowner association, due to its delicate nature, high maintenance, high cost, and potential safety issues.

Where should you look for commercial pool furniture? Typically, you won't find modern commercial grade furniture at your neighborhood drug store or discount chain store, which most often sell residential quality furniture. Such products are often made out of the country, with unclear specifications and questionable durability in commercial applications. Repairs and warranty issues may be difficult to resolve, and replacement parts may be impossible to find. More importantly, if the furniture fails and a resident or guest is injured, your association's liability exposure may be greatly increased an investigation determines that the furniture was residential rather than commercial quality.

What should you look for when shopping for commercial quality furniture? Pay close attention to the details:

- **Is the furniture manufactured in the USA, or in a foreign country?**
- **What are the specifications?** Does the furniture have sufficient bracing and design to withstand hard, commercial use? Does it have definite safety features, especially at the moving parts of chaise lounges? A knowledgeable and reputable commercial furnishings company will provide the specifications and safety features of its products in writing.
- **What are the materials?** Are the frames and parts made of heavy duty commercial grade materials? Is all the hardware stainless steel? Do sled base style chaise lounges have adequate skid plates to protect the sled bases from damage due to dragging? Do chaises and chairs made with legs have high quality nylon glides.

- **What is the warranty, and is it a commercial use warranty?** What are the exclusions? Read the warranty carefully. Often, the fine print makes the warranty useless. Standard commercial warranties typically run from one to five years, and are prorated. If coverage for a given item is not clearly spelled out, then it is likely not warranted.

By choosing carefully, you can be sure that your association members will be able to enjoy their pool, spa and deck furniture for years to come.

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