



Summer Aquatic Safety Reminder

Memorial Day Weekend traditionally marks the start of the busy summer swim season. Many pools, beaches, lakes and programs will see high rates of use over the summer weeks. It's time for all aquatic leaders to be alert and prepared by orienting and regularly training seasonal lifeguard staffs.

National statistics show that drowning victims are initially identified by someone other than the guard in 75% of all drownings where a lifeguard was present and 88% of children who drown in the US are under supervision. Remember to prepare for the summer cautiously and ensure that lifeguards are well prepared and vigilant through the implementation of effective practices and procedures. Training lifeguards adequately for the effective recognition of submerged victims is extremely important.

Leaders must also recognize that many kids who visit their pools may not have adequate swimming skills. In fact, many recent drowning deaths have involved non-swimmers at special events like birthday parties, overnights and community festivals. Operations should work to eliminate the risk of drowning for these children by swim-testing all swimmers and by requiring specific protections for non-swimmers before they enter the water.

The following recommendations will help strengthen your aquatic safety efforts.

Lifeguards:

- Follow the 10 x10 reaction, [lifeguards](#) should strive to cover their scan [zone](#) every 10 seconds and respond to distress within 10 seconds. (*no other responsibilities while on lifeguard duty*)
- Position them to provide clear observation of their [zone](#) and actively scan the bottom, middle and surface of the water.
- Implement a [safety swim test](#) program for all youth participants and any adult that gives concern.
- Wear a rescue tube, whistle and have their personal protection equipment including mask, and gloves with them at all times while on duty.
- Wear apparel that designates them as lifeguards and is appropriate for lifeguarding.

Swimmer Management:

- Provide a [swim test](#) for all participants that qualifies their ability into deep-water, shallow-only and non-swimmer levels.
- Use [Buddy Checks](#) and Buddy Boards to support safety efforts and encourage youth responsibility
- Non-swimmers must stay in water that is armpit deep or less, require an adult within arms reach at all times and the use of a Coast Guard approved PFD.

Preparation:

- A [pre-hire lifeguard test](#) with water skills, emergency preparedness and written portions.
- Regularly practicing the site-specific [emergency action plan](#) (EAP) from start to finish as one fluid training
- Including the non-aquatic staff (emergency response team) in all EAP drills.
- Weekly in-service scenario-based EAP drills; complimented with frequent quick checks and [scanning drills](#).
- Pools equipped with the appropriate rescue equipment such as a rescue tube for each lifeguard on duty, reaching poles, back board (head restraint, cervical collar, 4 straps), oxygen, AED, bag valve mask, suction, first aid supplies, phone/radio, emergency alarm, ring buoy, all equipment is checked weekly.
- All aquatic facilities have a [plan](#) in place for clearing the water in the event of thunderstorms or lightning activity.
- Ensure that all pools comply with the [Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act](#).

Support Lifeguards:

- Observing lifeguards on duty and documented [quick checks](#) –best completed hourly.
- Following regular lifeguard rotations and breaks for lifeguards to help keep lifeguards vigilant (Indoor: 15 minutes every two hours, Outdoor: every hour, more often in high temperatures and humidity.)
- Adhere to appropriate [lifeguard to swimmer ratios](#) for each zone and each activity – rule of thumb is 1:25. Due to many factors (size/shape of pool, bather load, skills of swimmers, glare, high use areas) 1:25 may not be enough.
- During recreation swims, a planned safety rest period (5-10 minutes) occurs each hour during which the pool is cleared giving time for children to rest and use restrooms (proven to reduce fecal accidents and [RWI](#))
- Providing [sun and weather protection](#), and plenty of water for lifeguards.
- Equipping facilities with proper lighting of indoor and outdoor facilities, elevated guard stand (seat height of 5 foot minimum) and remote or water activated alarm devices will speed emergency action plan.

More safety materials are available in the [Safe-Wise Consulting Online Library](#)