

# Safe-Wise<sup>SM</sup>

Experience • Knowledge • Insight

## *Safety Reminder Series*

### **Summer Aquatics**

The busy summer swim season is upon us; many aquatic venues 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. Safe-Wise has produced this updated version of our annual summer aquatics preparation resource in order to help aquatic professionals prepare for a safe and enjoyable summer swim season. 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 distressed swimmers is extremely important. Leaders must also recognize that many youth who visit their pools may not have adequate swimming skills. 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:

*[\(Hyperlinked resources in blue connect to available resources\)](#)*

#### **Lifeguards:**

- Follow the 10 x10 protocol; [lifeguards](#) should strive to scan their [zone](#) every 10 seconds and respond to distress within 10 seconds. *(no other responsibilities while guarding)*
- Position lifeguards to provide clear observation of their [zone](#) and actively scan the bottom, middle and surface of the water. Management should qualify all assigned zones.
- Implement a [safety swim test](#) and swim-level identification (bands, caps, etc.) program for all youth participants and any adult that gives concern. All non-swimmers and poor swimmers should be restricted to shallow (chest-deep or below) water.
- Lifeguards should wear a rescue tube, whistle and have their personal protection equipment including mask, and gloves attached to them at all times while on duty.
- Wear apparel that designates lifeguards and is appropriate for lifeguarding.

#### **Swimmer Management:**

- Provide a [swim test](#) for all participants.
- All dark-water facilities should use [Buddy Checks](#) and Buddy Boards to support safety efforts and encourage youth responsibility. Clear water swimming pools should use modified buddy systems where the pool is cleared at least every 10 to 15 minutes.
- Encourage parental responsibility. Parents should remain in the pool area and supervise all children 12 years old and under; maximum of two children per parent/guardian.
- Provide the availability of US Coast Guard approved PFDs for all non-swimmers and poor swimmers. Recommend the use of PFDs for all non-swimmers and poor swimmers who cannot stand chest deep in the deepest section of the shallow area of the pool.
- Parents or guardians should remain in the water within arm's reach of all non-swimmers and poor swimmers who cannot stand chest deep in the deepest section of the shallow area of the pool, regardless of the use of PFDs.

### **Preparation:**

- A [pre-hire lifeguard test](#) with water skills, emergency preparedness and written portions.
- Lifeguard orientation should include: an in-water, full scenario, EAP with CPR and AED resuscitation protocol and a review of scanning with association scanning protocols.
- Drill, Drill, Drill the site-specific [emergency action plan](#) (EAP) in full scenario including non-aquatic staff (emergency response team) in all EAP drills.
- Conduct weekly in-service sessions, silhouette manikin and scenario-based EAP drills.
- Conduct daily drills that encourage bottom-to-top scanning for all lifeguards.
- Conduct and document weekly inspections on all rescue and emergency equipment: Rescue Tube for each lifeguard on duty, reaching poles, Oxygen, AED, backboard w/ head restraint, cervical collar & 4 straps, bag-valve-mask, suction, first-aid supplies, phone/radio, emergency alarm.
- All aquatic facilities must 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](#).
- Prepare staff at facilities with water-park components with newer training programs (both the YMCA and the American Red Cross now have water-park training); use these materials in your staff orientations and in-service trainings.

### **Support Lifeguards:**

- Observe lifeguard behavior by conducting and documenting hourly [quick checks](#).
- Following regular rotations and breaks for lifeguards to help keep lifeguards vigilant (Indoor: 15 minute break every two hours, Outdoor: 15 minute break every hour; more often in high temperatures and humidity).
- Adhere to appropriate [lifeguard to swimmer ratios](#) for each zone and each activity – minimum of 1:25; lower ratios may be appropriate due to factors such as size/shape of pool, bather load, skills of swimmers, glare, high use areas, etc.
- Implement an hourly planned safety rest period (5-10 minutes) during recreation swims where the pool is cleared giving time for children to rest and use restrooms; helping to reduce fecal accidents and incidence of recreational water illnesses ([RWIs](#)).
- Provide [sun and weather protection](#) along with plenty of water for lifeguards.
- Equip locations 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 aquatic safety materials are available in the [Safe-Wise Consulting Online Library](#) including [Strategies for Effective Management of Group Swimming](#), [Safely Handling Pool Chemicals](#), [Considerations for Operating Backyard Swim Lesson Programs](#), [Ocean Swimming Safety](#), [Use and Care for Personal Flotation Devices](#), [Use of Aquatic Inflatables](#), (Webinar) and more.