



Summer Aquatic Safety Reminder

YMCAs are now preparing for the busy summer swim season by training and orienting their seasonal lifeguard staffs. Many associations will see high rates of use in outdoor facilities, over the next few weeks.

National statistics show 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. YMCAs must prepare for the summer cautiously and ensure that their 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.

YMCAs must also recognize that many kids who visit their pools may not have adequate swimming skills. In fact, in the past five years, 60% of all YMCA drowning deaths have involved non-swimmers at special events like birthday parties, overnights and community festivals. YMCAs can virtually eliminate the risk of drowning for these children by swim-testing all unknown swimmers and by requiring specific protections for non-swimmers before they enter the water.

The following recommendations have been prepared in conjunction with Y-USA Aquatics and will help strengthen your association's aquatic safety efforts.

Do 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 themselves 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.

Does Preparation include:

- A pre-hire test with water skills, emergency preparedness and written portions.
- Practicing the site-specific emergency action plan from start to finish as one fluid training
- Including the non-aquatic staff (emergency response team) in all drills.
- Weekly in-service drills are best, rehearsed emergency procedures at least every two weeks in peak season.
- 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.

Does the YMCA support lifeguards by:

- Observing lifeguards on duty and document the Aquatic 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 ratio 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)
- Providing sun and weather protection, and plenty of water for lifeguards.
- Equipping facilities with proper lighting of indoor and outdoor facilities, elevated stand (seat height of 5 foot minimum) and remote or water activated alarm devices will speed emergency action plan.