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Water And Pool Safety Begins With PRM

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(PREVENTION • RECOGNITION • MANAGEMENT)

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Since water and pool safety is such a huge issue for camps that provide aquatic recreation for their campers it's important to understand that the primary responsibilities of management and lifeguards are:

- A. To Prevent incidents;
- B. To Recognize incidents or their potential; and
- C. To Manage incidents or their potential.

PREVENTION

In order to prevent incidents, management and staff should develop a series of prevention strategies to include the development and appropriate posting of rules and regulations, and the enforcement of these rules and regulations by lifeguards and management personnel.

A comprehensive risk management program should be developed and implemented which involves input by all lifeguard and management personnel to (A) identify physical hazards and to remove those hazards or warn campers of them; and (B) to identify activities which place campers at risk and to either prohibit these activities or safeguard the camper while he or she is engaged in those activities.

The risk management program should include a public education component, a hazard and risk assessment, development of prevention strategies, implementation guidelines, etc.

If lifeguard services are not provided, sufficient notice must be given as follows:

- No Lifeguard On Duty
- Swim At Your Own Risk
- Children Must Be Carefully Supervised At All Times
- No Swimming Without Another Adult In Attendance
- No Diving (in less than 9' of water)
- Children Under The Age of 15 May Not Use The Pool Unattended Without An Adult Providing Supervision

It is the responsibility of management to develop Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which guide or govern lifeguards and other staff (like swimming pool or facility operators, maintenance personnel, managerial personnel, etc.) in their actions. These SOGs or SOPs

would include operational expectations, policies and procedures.

Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) should be developed and implemented, and all lifeguards, management, and other personnel affiliated with the facility need to participate in emergency response drills prior to the season and throughout the season to assure their ability to respond to emergency crises situations when or should they occur.

The development of the ERPs should include every conceivable contingency. Also, as a result of conducting emergency response drills, lifeguards and other personnel develop a greater appreciation for the need to prevent the incident from occurring in the first place, and are better prepared to respond to the emergency should one occur.

Managers/operators of any aquatic facility must develop and administer an appropriate risk management program and all personnel involved in the operation of the facility must participate in this program. The scope of a risk management program is to eliminate danger associated with the use of the aquatic facility.

A comprehensive threat analysis should be conducted to:

- Assess the physical facility for hazards;
- Remove the hazards or safeguard the public by warning them of the hazards;
- Assess activities that place patrons at risk; and
- Prohibit those activities or develop and implement appropriate safeguards to protect patrons engaged in those activities.

RECOGNITION

Lifeguard personnel must be instructed in effective surveillance procedures and techniques that are specific to the facility they are protecting.

The 30-Second Rule and the 10/20 Rule should be adhered to by all personnel and it is the responsibility of management to guarantee the lifeguards' ability to adhere to these standards.

The 30-Second Rule implies that lifeguards must be able to provide effective surveillance of their entire area of responsibility and must be able to effectively supervise their area from the furthest extremes from one side to the opposite side and back within a 30-second period.

If this cannot be accomplished due to the size of the area, or the number of people within the assigned area, then the area must be confined, or additional lifeguards must be positioned.

The 10/20 Rule implies that lifeguards, while providing continuous and effective surveillance, must be able to assess the potential victim's distress and must be able to determine whether or not intervention is required within a period of 10 seconds.

And, if intervention is required, the lifeguard must be able to effect the rescue within 20 seconds. In order for this to be accomplished, the lifeguard must be appropriately positioned to be able to respond anywhere within his/her area of responsibility within the 20-second time period.

Lifeguards must be vigilant in their duties while positioned at their assigned stations and must provide continuous and effective surveillance. They must anticipate the rescue and must remain alert to recognize

distress victims in, on, and around the water, including victims at the surface as well as victims submerged below the surface of the water.

When groups are using the facility, it is the responsibility of the group leadership to provide additional supervision of participants in, on and around the water to supplement the lifeguards' surveillance capabilities.

If no lifeguard service is available, it is the responsibility of management to advise the group there are no lifeguards on duty, and to provide stringent supervisory and safety guidelines that must be adhered to while the aquatic facility is in use.

When an incident occurs at a "supervised" facility that is not immediately recognized by supervisory personnel, it is typically due to one of three factors. These factors are referred to as the RID Factors.

R = Recognition

Supervisory personnel fail to recognize the victim's distress or the potential for the incident.

I = Intrusion

Supervisory personnel fail to identify and recognize the incident or its potential because they are engaged in activities which intrude upon their ability to provide effective surveillance.

D = Distraction

Supervisory personnel fail to recognize the incident or its potential because they are engaged in activities which distract from their level of attention and vigilance.

Lifeguard personnel are taught general surveillance principles and procedures within their lifeguard training course. However, it is the responsibility of management to instruct lifeguards on the procedures which must be used and adhered to within their specific facility in order to supervise the campers in all activities when in, on, and around the water.

The principles and procedures for each facility are based on the design of the facility, the number of campers, the number of lifeguards, the activities the campers are engaged in, environmental factors, etc.

Lifeguards must understand the principles which impact the Standard of Care as it relates to their ability to prevent, recognize, and manage incidents or their potential.

Management must continuously assess the activities and numbers of campers in, on, and around the water in order to determine the number of lifeguards or other supervisory personnel that are required to assure safety.

If lifeguard services are provided, lifeguards must never be allowed to be "off duty" and should always be positioned appropriately to provide surveillance and to provide the protective services required of the patrons.

Any other duties assigned to lifeguards must never be allowed to intrude upon their ability to provide effective surveillance, and lifeguards should never be allowed to talk to other lifeguards or anyone else in order to prevent the lifeguards from getting distracted from their surveillance responsibilities.

MANAGEMENT

Management of the incident or the potential for incident refers not only to the activation of an Emergency Response Plan in the rescue of patrons, but also in the enforcement of rules and regulations.

Facility rules and regulations must be consistently and appropriately enforced in order to prevent incidents. An active and continuous assessment of physical hazards must take place and the mechanisms must be developed to identify these hazards and to either remove them or warn patrons of them.

A continuous assessment must also be made of the activities campers are engaged in within the facility in order to determine their level of risk.

When the potential for an incident is recognized due to a physical hazard, or the activities campers are engaged in, lifeguards or management personnel must remove the hazard(s). They must enforce rules and regulations and prohibit activities or appropriately safeguard any activities which place campers at risk.

Lifeguards and supervisory personnel must recognize the incident at its inception and effect a rescue in order to prevent the progression of the incident and the deterioration of the victim's condition.

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