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## Pool Management

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### *Eight Steps To a Safer Facility*

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Aquatic activities have become very popular forms of recreation in this country, not only during the summer, but all year long. Aquatic recreational activities take many forms: lap swimming, springboard diving, social bathing, tubing, water skiing, boating, sailing, and paddling. As a result, drowning has become the third leading cause of accidental death in this country for persons of all ages, and the second leading cause of accidental death for persons between the ages of one and 44.

Besides the normal facility management responsibilities for drowning prevention, aquatic facility managers need to be aware of the many causes of injury that occur in an aquatic environment, and must do everything possible to eliminate them. This includes establishing preventive strategies and standard rescue operations and procedures to handle an emergency situation, should it occur. It is critical that all lifeguard personnel are aware of these procedures.

To assist facility managers to protect their patrons from accidents and injury, as well as implement the most effective aquatics emergency response plan should an accident occur, Lifesaving Resources has developed the following "Eight-Point Plan for Safe Aquatic Facility Management."

### SPINAL IMMOBILIZATION EQUIPMENT

Always have spinal immobilization devices (SIDs) readily available for emergency handling of suspected spinal injuries. The device must be sinkable in order to transfer the victim onto it. These devices should also be sufficiently long and rigid to immobilize the victim from head to foot and prevent any bending of the victim's body when the device is lifted from the water. Also, the device must be wide enough to prevent any lateral movement, but not so wide as to prevent its use in an ambulance. Finally, the device must have enough handholds and openings to accommodate lifting and the use of bandages and/or straps to immobilize the victim on it.

In addition to the SID, you should have cervical collars of various sizes to accommodate the various neck sizes of victims. These collars can prevent or reduce the chance of any neck movement.

Bandages and/or commercial straps for immobilizing the victim on this SID, must be strong and non-elastic. A total of 8 to 10 bandages, or four straps plus bandages for the head and feet, are required.

You can use several rolled towels or a rolled blanket placed on both sides of the victim's head to prevent any lateral movement of the head and neck.

## EMERGENCY FIRST AID

You must have emergency first aid supplies, equipment, and facilities to handle any trauma associated with falls on slippery decks, ladders, and diving boards, as well as to handle non-traumatic medical emergencies (such as heart attack, heat stroke, and so forth).

If possible, organize a permanent facility where a victim can be assessed and treated. This facility should afford privacy for the patient, as well as environmental control. The facility should have several chairs plus a cot. A sink with running water would also be helpful. Keep an inventory of restockable supplies in this facility. Maintain a bound first-aid book, logging all emergency first aid care for future reference as well as for statistical information regarding accidents, injuries, and illnesses at the facility.

## LIFEGUARD RESCUE EQUIPMENT

Have reaching and extension poles (shepherd's crooks), ring buoys, and rescue buoys readily available for emergency use. Ring buoys should be U.S. Coast Guard approved type IV Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and should have 50'-60' of line attached. The line should be thin enough and of appropriate material to permit flight of the buoy when thrown, yet strong enough to tow a victim to safety.

Equip open water facilities with rescue paddle boards or rescue boats for patrol and rescue. In addition, you should have snorkeling or scuba equipment for search and rescue operations. If scuba equipment is available, certify personnel in its proper use.

## RESPIRATORY EMERGENCIES

If your facility uses chlorine gas for water treatment, have self contained breathing apparatus available for general maintenance in and around the chlorine room, as well as for rescue and evacuation purposes. This apparatus should be worn any time tanks are being changed or when leaks are suspected. Train all lifeguard and maintenance personnel in its use, as well as in emergency rescue procedures.

Provide oxygen administration and adjunct equipment to handle any respiratory or cardiac emergencies that could occur as a result of heart attack, drowning, toxic gas, and so forth. This includes oxygen liter floor units and masks. Lifeguards will need supplementary training in the use of oxygen equipment and resuscitation masks since this training is not within the normal lifeguard training curriculum.

## LIFEGUARD CERTIFICATIONS

Be sure all lifeguards are trained and certified in lifesaving/lifeguarding, first aid, and CPR. This training is available through the American Red Cross, the YMCA, and other training agencies. They will need supplementary training in the use of oxygen administration, resuscitation masks, self-contained breathing apparatus, and scuba if this equipment is available.

## HIRING AND SUPERVISION OF LIFEGUARDS

Regardless of the lifeguard's level of certification, carefully screen all lifeguard candidates prior to hiring. Evaluate their knowledge and skill proficiency, and require certification in lifesaving/lifeguarding, first aid, and CPR.

Once you have hired a lifeguard, plan and implement in-service training programs before the season begins

and maintain the training throughout the season. Many communities have sponsored lifeguard competitions as a means to increase the lifeguards' motivation for participation in in-service training programs and to serve as a goal for which the lifeguards can strive.

## LIFEGUARD UNIFORMS

Issue appropriate uniforms to lifeguards so that they can be readily identified. Uniforms can consist of an appropriate styled shirt or jacket, a bathing suit, and a suitable hat to protect them from the sun's rays. They should wear appropriate sunglasses at all times to protect their eyes from the sun, as well as to assist them in carrying out their supervisory responsibilities. Finally, lifeguards should have an appropriate whistle to gain patrons' attention and to alert other lifeguards during emergencies.

## LIFEGUARD OPERATIONS

Plan operational procedures for emergency rescue and first aid response, lost bather and missing person situations, and chlorine or other chemical emergencies. Telephones should be available to alert EMS, fire, and law enforcement agencies during these emergencies and all personnel should know how to properly communicate with emergency dispatchers.

Clearly post rules and regulations for all patrons to read. This will also help the lifeguard when trying to enforce the facility rules and regulations.

Determine operational procedures in advance as to how employees should respond to thunder and lightning storms, including clearing the facility and prohibiting patrons and staff from congregating under umbrellas, trees, and so forth. The operational procedures plan should also include procedures to be followed once the storm has passed.

Finally, aquatic staff should communicate with emergency agencies and coordinate their efforts with lifeguard personnel so that the EMS, fire, and police personnel are familiar with the facility.

A lifeguard's primary responsibilities include prevention of accidents and emergency situations, rescue, and emergency care. The "Eight-Point Plan" prepares facility managers and lifeguards to prevent emergencies from occurring, as well as to deal with rescue and first aid emergencies should that be necessary.

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