



2019 Summer Aquatics Safety Reminder

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 staff. 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. Prepare for the summer cautiously and ensure that lifeguards are well prepared and vigilant, with effective practices and procedures. Leaders must recognize that many youths who visit their pools may not have adequate swimming skills and should work to eliminate the risk of drowning for these children by swim-testing all swimmers, requiring specific protections for non-swimmers and offering swim instruction when possible.

These recommendations will help strengthen your aquatic safety efforts: [\(blue text link to resources\)](#)

Training:

- A [pre-hire lifeguard test](#) should include: water skills, emergency preparedness and written test
- Lifeguard orientation and [in-service training](#) should include a heavy emphasis on the prevention of drowning
- Lifeguard orientation should include practice of the [emergency action plan](#) (EAP)
- Conduct regular [drills](#) that review the site-specific, full scenario, EAP; including non-aquatic emergency response staff. Seasonal facilities should consider running drills bi-weekly
- Involve your local EMS and Fire Department in full scenario-based drills on a yearly basis to ensure proper coordination in emergencies
- Perform documented tests of phones, radios and hardwired or wireless emergency pool alarm systems at the beginning of each day
- [Plan](#) for thunderstorms and ensure a lightning warning system is in place
- Facilities with [water park](#) features should be staffed by certified water park lifeguards

Lifeguards:

- The **primary** responsibility of a lifeguard is to **prevent** drownings
- Implement a [safety swim test](#) and swim-level identification (bands, caps, etc.) protocols. All poor and non-swimmers should be restricted to chest-deep water or less
- Lifeguards should be positioned so they can effectively scan the bottom, middle and surface of all their assigned water area ([zone](#))
- Lifeguards should have no other responsibilities than to scan and watch swimmers
- Lifeguards should change/rotate posture (sit, stand, rove) every 5 minutes to maintain vigilance and adjust for variations in bather load, water agitation and surface glare

- 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
- Lifeguards should wear appropriate apparel that identifies them as a lifeguard

Drowning Prevention:

- Provide a [swim test](#) for all participants; inability to swim is the **primary cause** of drowning
- Encourage parental responsibility: parents should remain in the pool area and supervise all children 12 years old and under; Parents should remain in the water within reach of all children 6 years and under; lifeguards **are not** babysitters
- Encourage the use of USCG approved personal flotation devices ([PFDs](#)) for poor and non-swimmers; the majority of pool incidents occur in shallow water, many children may be out of their depth in the deeper sections of the shallow water
- All dark-water/open water facilities should use [buddy checks](#) and buddy boards (tag boards)
- Implement and enforce a [No Breath Holding](#) activity policy

Management Support Practices:

- Schedule an annual independent [assessment](#) of the [aquatic facility operations](#). Independent assessments provide an unbiased, objective review of the aquatic safety operations and identify areas for improvement, especially for lifeguard operations.
- If staffing with single guard coverage, there are [considerations and practical strategies](#) that can be used to improve lifeguard coverage as well as reduce risk as you plan for multiple lifeguard staffing.
- Observe lifeguard behavior by conducting and documenting hourly [quick checks](#)
- Implement lifeguard rotations, for multiple guards, every 20 to 30 minutes and ensure all lifeguards are provided with guard-duty break at least once every hour.
- Adhere to appropriate [lifeguard to swimmer ratios](#) for each zone and activity – max. of 1:25
- Assign dedicated lifeguards to high risk areas such as diving areas and slide splash zones
- Implement hourly planned safety rest periods (5-10 minutes) during recreation swims
- Provide [sun](#) and [weather protection](#) along with plenty of water for lifeguards; including but not limited to polarized sunglasses, skin protection, hats and umbrellas
- Equip pools with elevated guard stand (seat height of 5 foot minimum) and emergency communication alarm systems
- Conduct weekly [in-service](#) visual awareness [training drills](#); red ball drills, silhouette manikin drills, bottom and surface scanning drills and scenario-based EAP drills
- Conduct an electrical inspection every three to five years to identify potential shock hazards to staff and patrons

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