



## **Considerations for Single Lifeguard Staffing**

Many aquatic facilities provide the supervision of pool and aquatic features through the use of single lifeguard staffing. However, current trends in the aquatic industry suggest that single-guard coverage is becoming a thing of the past.

Several states have implemented a requirement for staffing pools and aquatic facilities with multiple lifeguards. Some nationally recognized lifeguard training agencies either implicitly recommend or emphasize a team approach to care. The YMCA of the USA Aquatic Safety Guidelines encourages facilities to make it a priority to have multiple lifeguards on duty whenever pools are available for use. The American Red Cross implies the need for multiple lifeguards by teaching that certain emergency response strategies require more than one rescuer.

### **Advantages of Multiple Lifeguard Staffing:**

Staffing with multiple lifeguards allows guards to apply their rescue skills as they were trained. There are several reasons why aquatic facilities should begin working toward the use of multiple lifeguard supervision. Increased staff provides:

- Better visual coverage of the entire pool
- Improved patron interactions without jeopardizing patron surveillance
- The ability to conduct swimmer testing without jeopardizing patron surveillance
- Adequate breaks and rotations for lifeguards
- More efficient communication during emergency response
- Enhanced ability to conduct non-surveillance tasks such as moving lane lines and testing pool chemicals
- More effective CPR and backboard extraction

*(Continued on next page)*

## **Managing Risks in Single Lifeguard Staffing:**

Staffing with multiple lifeguards may not be immediately financially feasible. However, there are considerations and practical strategies that can be used to improve lifeguard coverage as well as reduce risk as facilities plan for multiple lifeguard staffing.

Operators with single lifeguard staffing should consider:

- The effectiveness of initiating the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) including an efficient method of summoning non-lifeguard support staff such as a push button pool alarm
- That activation systems are inspected daily through documented checks that are completed as part of the facility opening procedures
- That regularly documented drills and in-service trainings are conducted
- That drills include non-lifeguard support staff so they may understand their role as essential emergency support
- Ensuring that lifeguards who guard alone are prepared to rescue and extricate a victim without second rescuer assistance
- Training non-lifeguard support staff in CPR/AED for the Professional Rescuer so they can serve as a second rescuer on deck
- Ensuring that lifeguards have the ability to effectively respond to a victim within 20 seconds
- Ensuring that lifeguards have regular breaks from surveillance duty through cross-training of staff, managing pool schedules and/or implementing the practice of hourly safety breaks where the pool temporarily closes
- Certifying senior directors, wellness staff or camp counselors as lifeguards to assist during peak times
- Moving toward multiple lifeguard staffing during peak usage and high-risk times initially as part of a long-term plan for increased coverage like pool rentals, camp and recreational swims. Starting small during these specific times, can save lives without adding substantial cost.

Your Safe-Wise consultant is available to discuss specific strategies and tactics for your organization. Safe-Wise Consulting can provide guidance to your organization in order to reduce the risks associated with aquatic operations and single lifeguard coverage.