



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

*The Lifeguarding Experts*

Lifesaving Society - BC & Yukon Branch  
**Guide to Waterfront  
Instructional Programs**

Revised May 2020

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*Lifesaving Society - BC & Yukon Branch*

## **Guide to Waterfront Instructional Programs**

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The Lifesaving Society is Canada's lifeguarding expert. The Society works to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education, drowning research, safety management services and lifesaving sport.

The Society establishes aquatic safety standards and consults widely on aquatic safety issues for aquatic facility owners and operators, governments, agencies, and the judicial system.

Annually, over 1.2 million Canadians participate in the Society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard, and leadership training programs. The Society certifies all of Canada's National Lifeguards.

The Society is an independent, charitable organization educating Canadian lifesavers since the first Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion was earned in 1896.

The Society represents Canada internationally as an active member of the Commonwealth Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) and the International Life Saving Federation (ILS). The Society is the Canadian governing body for lifesaving sport – a sport recognized by the International Olympic Committee and the Commonwealth Games Federation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Planning to add recreation programs to your waterfront can be exciting and challenging, we suggest you start small and aim to grow opportunities for your community.

Many factors determine the feasibility of implementing a summer recreation program and swimming lessons. Take into consideration the waterfront's layout, signage, supervision, equipment and other aspects needed to provide a safe and successful program.

The Lifesaving Society has developed *BC & Yukon Waterfront Safety Standards* to provide guidelines for owners and operators of public waterfront operations. There are currently no regulations in British Columbia or Yukon governing safety supervision for public recreation on a waterfront therefore it is the responsibility of owners and operators to ensure that the setting and operations are safe.

The Lifesaving Society would be pleased to provide advice in working toward implementing the *Waterfront Safety Standards* and to answer any questions you may have. We are available to assist in reviewing proposed waterfront locations and working with your team in developing waterfront safety plans and operational procedures.

Start by determining the appropriate location for a designated swimming<sup>1</sup> area where swimming lessons and recreation programs will be based. Ensure there will be adequate staff available for all aspects of the operation including safety supervision. It is important to be aware that at no time should there be fewer than two lifeguards on duty in the swimming area during the hours of operation. Obtain appropriate lifeguard/instructor insurance coverage before the start of onsite training. Train and equip lifeguards and instructional staff to effectively supervise the safety of program participants.

Staffing should include recreation personnel with a specific role and responsibilities to ensure the success of the program from a customer service and safety perspective. Ensure appropriate lifeguard/instructor insurance coverage is in place prior to the start of on-site training.

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<sup>1</sup> Lifesaving Society Waterfront Safety Standards Section 4 General Requirement for Equipped, Patrolled & Lifeguard-supervised Waterfronts - 2019

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## DEFINITIONS

**Aquatic facility:** any swimming pool, wading pool, waterpark, waterfront or similar location that is used for aquatic activities such as swimming, wading, diving or aquatic sports.

**Aquatic Instructor or Coach:** one who holds a current National Lifeguard certification together with a recognized aquatic instructor certification.

**Aquatic sports:** may include scuba diving and snorkeling, competitive swimming, lifesaving sport, diving, synchronized swimming, water polo etc.

**Assistant Lifeguard:** a person appointed by the owner or operator to assist a National Lifeguard in the supervision of bather safety at a swimming pool.

**Current:** an award dated not more than two years from the date of certification, the exception being First Aid certifications which are 3 years from the date of certification.

**Lifeguard:** a person with a current Lifesaving Society National Lifeguard certification appointed by the owner or operator to maintain bather surveillance.

**Operator:** the trained individual designated by the owner to be responsible for the day to day operation of an aquatic facility.

**Owner:** the person or corporation who is the owner of an aquatic facility.

**Recreational swim:** any period where bather activities in the pool are unstructured and where bathers are not under the direction or supervision of a coach or instructor. These times may include, but are not limited to events such as birthday parties, day camps, free swims, lane swims, open swims, public swims, rentals, teen swims, etc.

**Recreational toys and games:** floating puzzle, floating mat, tube, sea serpent, ball, etc.

**Rope swing:** a rope connected to a structure over the water that is designed to swing users from a starting point out over a designated landing zone in the water, where the user releases and enters the water.

**Safety supervision:** the lifeguard is actively scanning their zone to ensure that bathers in the swimming pool remain free from harm. While providing safety supervision lifeguards must be on the pool deck, vigilant, at their station and performing no other duty than pool surveillance.

**Swimming pool:** an artificially constructed basin, whether indoor or outdoor, lined with concrete, fiberglass, vinyl, or similar material in which persons can swim, wade, or dive.

**Training accessories:** accessories used for learning or training including paddles, kickboard, pull buoy.

**Waterfront:** an outdoor, artificial or natural shoreline alongside a body of water that may include docks or piers and may be used for aquatic activities such as swimming, wading, diving, aquatic sports or instructional programs.

## Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards are developed using Coroners' recommendations, the latest evidence-based research, and reflect the aquatics industry's best practices at the time the publication was approved.

The purpose of these standards is to encourage swimming pool, waterpark and waterfront owners, managers, operators and regulators to adopt these standards, in order to prevent drownings in aquatic environments.

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards do not replace or supersede local, provincial/territorial or federal legislation or regulations, but they are considered the standard to which aquatic facility operators should work towards, in order to enhance safety within their operations and to prevent drowning.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Note:** *Appropriate lifeguard/instructor insurance coverage should be in place.*

Designate a **Waterfront Director** and a **Lesson Coordinator** whose responsibilities could include but are not limited to:

1. Provide preseason training including:<sup>2</sup>
  - COVID-19 specific protocols
  - Waterfront safety plans
  - Safety education and rule enforcement practices
  - In-water rescue protocols
  - In-water searches
  - First aid and resuscitation protocols
  - A Rescue Ready Assessment of safety supervision staff
  - Document all training
2. Develop programming for:
  - Red Cross lessons (Pre-School/Swim Kids)
  - Private lessons
  - Lifesaving Society Bronze programs
  - Junior Lifeguard Club
  - Swim to Survive
3. Develop staff schedules
4. Interact with parents and children
5. Monitor time (beginning and end of each lesson)
6. Ensure required equipment is in place
7. Ensure security of equipment and site
8. Public relations
9. Decision on weather (cancellations due to lightning)
10. Lifeguard and instructor support (equipment, first aid, back-up, etc.)

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<sup>2</sup> Lifesaving Information Bulletin Recommendations for Staff Training for the progressive reopening of Aquatic Facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Supervisor Responsibilities:**

The Head Guard/Head Instructor/Lesson Coordinator are responsible for safeguarding bathers and participants within their designated areas, including but not limited to:

- ❑ Ensure each staff member understands all matters relating to the waterfront and its operations.
  - Ensure daily that all Lifeguards/Instructors are aware of the water conditions, air and water temperatures before the start of their shift.
- ❑ Ensure the waterfront and bathing areas are checked for debris and hazards daily including:
  - All signage and beach flags are correctly in place
  - Site and staff are ready by at least 15 minutes before the start of operations
  - All equipment is secure at the end of the operational day and staff are signed out.
  - Lifeguards and instructors are rescue ready, prepared and able to respond to emergencies.
  - Lifeguards and instructors have all rescue, instructional equipment and personal equipment required for their duties.
  - Provide performance evaluation and coaching to staff to ensure individual and team development.
  - Lifeguards use the proper lifeguarding techniques as per their training, the available equipment, water conditions, and patron load, ability, and dispersal.
  - Staff are assigned to positions across the waterfront to best cover the current bather load and the programs within the designated swim area.
  - Staff comply with established policies and procedures.
  - Lifeguards adhere to the scanning charts showing lifeguard supervised zones, and the positioning of lifeguards within those zones
- ❑ Ensure that all staff receive one half-hour break after 5 hours of work, in addition to two fifteen-minute eye-strain relief breaks and that no lifeguard is actively scanning for more than two hours.
- ❑ Complete all administrative duties related to the operation of the waterfront (logbook, accident reports, statistics, training record, etc.).
  - Maintain an inventory of all equipment
  - Report all deficiencies or required repairs

- ❑ Ensure that all program instructors have their lesson plans ready before the start of each class and have all required equipment ready and easily accessible during the lesson.
- ❑ Ensure Instructors take attendance.
  - Check participants in and out of their classes
  - Ensure children transition from the class to the parent/guardian's care after each class
  - Supervise all participants in each class

**Supervisor qualifications:**

- NL Pool Option (current)
- NL Waterfront Option (preferred)
- Standard First Aid (current)
- Advanced Leadership qualifications (for example, Instructor Trainer, National Lifeguard Instructor and First Aid Instructor, AST)
- Current Instructor certifications
- Lesson Coordination experience (minimum one year)
- Other qualifications as required by the owner/operator

**Swim Instructor Responsibilities:**

- Daily inspection of the swim area.
- Program set-up and take-down
- Lesson preparation, instruction and participant evaluations
- Completes all administrative duties related to the instructional program
  - Safe and appropriate use of all equipment.
  - Reports all deficiencies or required repairs
- Has lesson plans ready before the start of each class, including equipment.
- Evaluate participants appropriately.
- Creates and maintains a safe and enjoyable learning environment
- Takes attendance.
  - Checks participants in and out of their classes
  - Ensure each child transitions from classes to their parents/guardian's care after each class
  - Supervises all participants in each class

**Swim Instructor qualifications:**

- Current Instructor certification(s) (current) determined by programs being offered
- Other Instructor qualification(s)
- Other qualifications as preferred or required by the owner/operator

**Lifeguard Responsibilities** during swim lessons could include:

- Safety supervision of the designated lesson area during lessons
- Control public access in the designated swim lesson zone
- Provide supervision of participants waiting for programs and meeting parents/guardians at the end of each class
- Support instructors by responding to all first aid and rescues

**Lifeguard** qualifications:

- NL Pool Option (current)
- NL Waterfront Option (preferred)
- Standard First Aid (current)
- Other qualifications as preferred or required by the owner/operator

**PROGRAM EQUIPMENT FOR SWIMMING LESSONS**

Provide safety equipment<sup>3</sup>, equip staff with the appropriate personal protection and provide training in their use. (For a list of Safety and First Aid equipment please consult the *Lifesaving Society - BC & Yukon Waterfront Safety Standards*.)

- ❑ Program equipment for staff:  
The list includes but is not limited to:
  - Whistle (one for each staff member)
  - Rescue aid (one for each staff member)
  - Personal first aid kits (i.e. fanny packs)
  
- ❑ PPE & Environmental Protection<sup>4</sup>  
Provide equipment to support a safe work environment and encourage staff to obtain personal self-protection items. Staff should not be sharing personal equipment.

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<sup>3</sup> Lifesaving Society Waterfront Safety Standards Section 4 page 10

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for Reopening BC's Swimming Pools and Waterfronts

The list includes but is not limited to the following:

- Hat
  - Sunglasses
  - Sunscreen
  - Beach appropriate footwear\*
  - Rash-guard, wetsuit and warm clothing
  - Umbrella or sunshade tent
  - Appropriate PPE
  - Level 2 First Aid Kit
  - Buddy Board– a waterfront tool to ensure accurate awareness of waterfront program participants<sup>5</sup>.
- ❑ Lesson Equipment
- Lesson equipment for a waterfront must be appropriate to age, skill and program. Sufficient onsite storage is a must, as is securing portable containers to prevent equipment from wandering in the wind or waves.

### **PROGRAM PROMOTION AND PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

Provide the public information on your waterfront programs on your website and social media platforms. and at the program venue. Ensure the public, program participants, parents and guardians are aware of you rules and program guidelines at the time of registration. The more information you provide before your operations begin the better.

Provide information on sun-safety, suggestions for swimming in cold water (rash-guards, sun-suits), pre and post-class supervision and site safety.

At the venue, ensure program information and safety signs are prominently displayed. Establish notice boards to keep participants and the public aware of up-to-date information on water and air temperature, lesson information, registration information and waterfront operations.

Install 'Child Supervision' signage<sup>6</sup> at the lesson control points and marshalling areas. In order to provide a reminder to parents and guardians as to their responsibility, signage emphasizing the need for supervision of children both in and around the water is needed.

Suggested wording:

“All children under seven (7) years of age must be closely supervised within arm’s reach at all times by a responsible person of at least sixteen (16) years of age. One responsible person should be supervising no more than three (3) children under seven (7) years of age at one time.”

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<sup>5</sup> See attached in this document Appendix B. Buddy Boards & Safety Checks

<sup>6</sup> Lifesaving Society Waterfront Safety Standards Section 4 page 7

## MANAGEMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

The primary responsibility of all aquatic staff is safety supervision. Some things to consider when developing an instructional program on a waterfront:

1. Pre and Post-meeting area for Learn-to-Swim programs.
  - Parent supervision pre and post lessons
  - Orientation for parents and participants including written safety rules, tips to on attire, sun safety, lesson cancellation policies.
  - Buddy Board Check-in (See Appendix A Buddy Boards)
    - This method ensures all lesson participants are out of the water and picked up by appropriately authorized parent/guardian.
2. Follow established instructor to participant ratios based on age and ability.
3. Lesson evaluations and swim tests for groups.
4. Environmental conditions will affect the fun and safety of staff and participants established protocols for.
  - Thunder and Lightning<sup>7</sup> (inclement weather)
  - Waves and rough water
  - Safe water temperatures
5. Staff Communication:
  - Staff should have a set of communication tools to use in a variety of scenarios including an emergency, clearing the water and for the end of swim lessons.
  - All staff must be familiar with and practice each signal.
  - Establish an Emergency Communications protocol and ensure staff and participants know the signals and respond appropriately for example.
    - Children should return to the meeting area
    - The team leaders gather their class at the meeting area and take attendance.
6. Safety Supervision during lessons
  - Missing Person Procedures (in-water and on-land)
  - Site evacuations
  - First-Aid and emergency care
7. Establish Facility Operation protocols to support the program and ensure site safety including:

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<sup>7</sup> Lifesaving Society National Standards - Extreme Weather - Lightning Standard

- Opening and Closing Checklist (Alert p. 167)
- Waterfront inspection
- Water inspection (to include temperature)
- Equipment inspection
- Equipment set-up
- Staff sign-in/sign-out forms
- Waterfront operations record keeping
  - Weather
  - Water temperature

### STAFF TRAINING

Inservice training is a vital part of preparing for a safe and effective waterfront instructional program.

- ❑ Use a blended learning approach to train staff before in-person training.
- ❑ Use on-line learning for specific protocols developed to manage your facility and its operations<sup>8</sup>.
- ❑ Each in-water session should be developed so as to ensure that all staff have an opportunity to practice and review new information and skills to gain familiarity with the waterfront.
  - Ensure that all staff are trained on the waterfront-specific policies and procedures.
  - Ensure all staff are trained in (in-water and on -land) searches.
  - Ensure that all staff are trained in the current Waterfront Safety Plan<sup>9</sup>.
- ❑ Staff orientation is essential for all staff required to respond to emergencies:
  - All staff should be familiar with the job responsibilities as well as the amenities, risks, activities, and design that makes the facility unique, and all emergency procedures. This allows staff to respond more efficiently and effectively should a situation arise during any programs on the waterfront.
  - At a minimum, a facility orientation training should include:
    - Information about the employer (mission, vision, policies, procedures, etc.) and general facility policies and procedures (i.e. reporting to work, use of computers or cell phones, facility usage, breaks, etc.)
    - Information about the job (description, expectations, role, schedule, pay procedures, etc.)
    - Legislated and/or regulated training (i.e. health and safety, Sun Smart accessibility, WHMIS, etc.)

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<sup>8</sup> Guidelines for Reopening BC's Swimming Pools and Waterfronts

<sup>9</sup> SEE Appendix C – Sample Waterfront Safety Plan - Table of contents

- ❑ **The Facility**
  - A tour of the waterfront and the surrounding area – access points, pathways and any building attached to the operations.
  - Specific features of the waterfront, including natural features and hazards, currents, tides, bottom conditions, etc.
  - Facility operating procedures (i.e. daily check sheets, documentation requirements, duties, maintenance, program descriptions, patrons, etc.)
- ❑ **Safety and Supervision Plan**
  - All staff must be trained in the safety procedures and the established protocols for the waterfront at which they work.
  - Include specific protocols for all programs, swim lessons, day camps, etc.
- ❑ **Pre-Season & Ongoing Training**
  1. Practicing rescue skills is necessary to develop an understanding of how to apply knowledge in an emergency.
  2. Lifeguards and Instructors should be competent in lifesaving skills, swimming, and the most current methods of resuscitation<sup>10</sup>.
  3. Practice instruction emergencies to ensure the team can work effective together in an emergency.
  4. At a minimum include the following:
    - a. Practical application of waterfront safety and supervision plan including.
      - The use of formations as an effective management tool to maximize learning and safety.
      - Use of and care for instructional and lifesaving equipment.
    - b. Procedures (emergency, minor/major incident, instructional and emergencies, site evacuation, communication, missing person (in-water and on-land) procedures
    - c. Policies and practices for of groups of children<sup>11</sup> – i.e. group leaders' responsibilities, safety educations and participant behaviour.
    - d. Self-rescue/self-care to include the ability to escape from grips, sun exposure awareness, heat and cold emergencies and Incident Stress Management.
    - e. Ongoing in-service training improves proficiency and helps to ensure that all staff maintains the judgement, knowledge, skills and physical capability required to perform their duties.

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<sup>10</sup> Lifesaving Society - Appendix D. COVID-19 First Aid and Resuscitation Protocols

<sup>11</sup> Lifesaving Society - Safe Supervision Standards for Aquatic Facility User Groups

- ❑ **Record Keeping<sup>12</sup>**  
Keep records of training and include:
  - Content of training
  - Date of training
  - Attendance
  - Duration of training
  - Name of the instructor(s)
  - Demonstration of test-ready skills for each trainee

Following the preceding guidelines will assist waterfront owner/operators in providing safe and enjoyable waterfront instructional programs.

Please contact the Lifesaving Society if further clarification is required. We are prepared to provide follow-up assistance as requested.

## RESOURCES

- ❑ COVID-19 Recommendation for Reopening BC & Yukon's Swimming Pools and Waterfronts
- ❑ Lifesaving Society BC & Yukon Waterfront Standards 2019
- ❑ Lifesaving Society National Standards - Extreme Weather - Lightning Standard
- ❑ Lifesaving Society National Standard - Assistant Lifeguard for Swimming Pools
- ❑ Royal Life Saving Society Canada. (2016). Alert: Lifeguarding in Action (2nd Edition). Royal Life Saving Society Canada.

## APPENDIX

- A. Waterfront Admission Standards
- B. Buddy Boards & Safety Checks
- C. Sample Waterfront Operations Manual & Safety Plan

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<sup>12</sup> Lifesaving Society - Record keeping Standard 2019

*Lifesaving Society - BC & Yukon Branch*  
Guide to Waterfront Instructional Programs

## **Appendix A. Waterfront Admission Standards**

The swimming standards established for your waterfront operation should be applied to all instructional and recreational swimming, group activities including, but not limited to, lessons, 'free swims', day camps and special swimming events.

Ensure that all protocols established for your Waterfront Admission Standards are included in your Waterfront Safety Plan.

- Deep water is a relative term; 4 feet of water is deep to a child that is only 3½ feet tall
- Swimming areas should be separated into a deep and shallow area with a secure buoy line.
- Dark water in lakes, ponds and at seaside facilities should be divided by secure buoy lines into the following areas:
  - Shallow area - less than 0.9m (3ft) - non-swimmers
  - Green area - less than 1.5m (5ft) - passed the swim test and competent
  - Blue area – greater than 1.5m (5ft) - deep water swimmers
- Diving boards, slides and other aquatic equipment should be separated from the swimming area by a secure buoy line
- Additional Lifeguard(s) should be assigned to manage inflatables, diving and slide areas.

### **1. Establish lifeguard to swimmer ratios.**

- All children are supervised by a lifeguard while swimming, wading or playing near the water
- At least two lifeguards (or one lifeguard and one assistant lifeguard<sup>13</sup>) must be on duty before opening the designated swim area.

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<sup>13</sup> Lifesaving Society - Assistant Lifeguard Standard

- At least two lifeguards providing safety supervision if there are more than 30 swimmers; and the maximum swimmer/lifeguard ratio is 40:1.
- When non-swimmers take part in recreational swimming, adhere to the minimum standard of adults (in water) to non-swimmers ratios (4:1 without PFDs or 8:1 with PFDs), in addition to the lifeguard requirements.

**2. Establish a swim test(s) for all participants and for all program leaders who are not certified Lifeguards and Swim Instructors.**

Knowledge of participant and staff swimming ability will help to ensure safe participation in all aquatic areas. Swim tests will help determine the swimming ability of an individual in the program and help determine where and when they can swim. A swim test can be used as a screening tool to determine who can use certain amenities or equipment and participate in specific programs.

- Swim tests should be developed by the owner and operator based on the size, scope and type of aquatic program(s) being offered.
- It is important that swimmers and staff know that there are boundaries on their activity based on ability levels.
- Swimmers and non-instructional or lifeguarding staff should be assessed for their swimming ability before participating in swimming or boating activities.

**3. The swim test results must be clearly recorded, kept on file, and must be accessible to program Instructors and Lifeguards.**

- Only those not engaged in safety supervision should conduct the swim test (Lifeguards must be free of all other duties while lifeguarding).
- Lifeguard and Instructors must be familiar with their participants' swimming abilities.

- Knowledge of their participants' swimming abilities should obtain before programs begin by reviewing the written record completed by the staff member who conducted the swim test onsite or through a designated staff member who can convey this information.
- Instructional staff must be aware of any physical, psychological, emotional, and/or medical limitations of swimmers that could affect their safety in the water.

#### 4. **Develop a means of identifying non-swimmers**

Consider using two levels of swim bands. The purpose of the swim band is for lifeguards to quickly identify a swimmer's abilities and to ensure the swimmer is:

- Directly supervised if required
- In water depth appropriate for the swimmer's skill level
- Accessing waterfront amenities that are appropriate for the swimmer's skill level

The Lifeguard or Swim Instructor administering the assessment determines whether the swimmer has earned a band. If the swimmer is participating in ongoing programs at the site, record the band allocated to the swimmer. Encourage swimmers to "try again" whenever they feel ready.

For example:

- A **GREEN/BAND** is earned when a swimmer can confidently complete the swim test.
- A **RED BAND** for those who are unable or unwilling to complete the swim test.
- Swimmers and staff who cannot confidently complete the established swim test should be required to wear a life jacket or confined to shallow water.
- Once assessed, swimmers wear a swim band indicating where they are allowed in the swim area.

## 5. Swim Test

Lifeguards and Swim Instructors use swim tests to evaluate skill, comfort, confidence and competency of swimmers in their facilities and programs. This practice increases safety and allows for effective supervision. Waterfront facilities use a wide variety of means to establish swimming skill competency, the swim test implemented should meet each waterfront's unique needs.

**Note:** *Swim tests not to be conducted in water colder than 15 degrees Celsius.*

- Designate location within designated swim area where swim test is conducted.
- Swim tests should start in shallow water and wherever possible, run parallel to the shore, a dock, or a float line. If not possible, the evaluator should swim alongside the swimmer.
- Swimmers should be individually tested, not in a group, with a Lifeguard or Instructor "within arm's reach" at all times during the test and equipped with a rescue aid.
- Anyone participating in open and deep-water programs should pass a designated swim test designed to show competency before participating. For these participants, consider the Swim to Survive standard as a minimum requirement.

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### Examples:

**#1.** The Swim Test is performed as a sequence of skills:

- Safe entry into shallow water
- Swim 25 metres without stopping or resting, any style
- Tread water in deep water/or chest deep water for 1 minute

**#2.** The Swim Test is performed as a sequence of skills:

- Safe entry into shallow water
- Swim (any style) 1 width of the swim area without stopping
- At the halfway mark, tread water for one minute
- Return to the starting point all without stopping

**#3.** Swim to Survive Standard is performed as a sequence of skills

- ROLL into deep water
- TREAD water for one minute
- SWIM 50 metres any style

## 6. Groups (Day Camps, Sport Camps, Community Groups Etc.)

Group Leaders should be informed of the waterfront’s policies and protocols before they arrive on site. Group leaders should be aware of their participant’s ability to take part in specific programs. Each activity should be geared to the age, ability and the limitations of the swimmers and staff participating.

- Whenever possible a copy of the waterfront facility’s rules as well as written expectations of group leaders should be provided in advance of the group visit.
- Group leaders should meet in advance with the Head Lifeguard/Swim Coordinator, to discuss appropriate plans and procedures.
- Conduct the established Swim Test according to the establish protocols.

### Strategies for Safe Group Visits

1. Safety orientations should be conducted when groups first arrive at the facility. The purpose is to educate all members of the visiting group. Review the rules, location of washrooms, swim tests, lifeguard signals, and where they can swim.
2. Group leaders should be clearly identifiable.
3. Establish leader to participant ratios.

<b>3</b> children under 5yrs.	1 leader
<b>4</b> children (2 pairs) 6-12yrs. (non-simmers)	1 leader
<b>8</b> children (4 pairs) 6-12yrs. in lifejackets	1 leader
<b>8</b> children (4 pairs) who have passed the swim tests	1 leader

4. Identify areas where they can and cannot swim, if applicable.
5. Point out where lifeguards are stationed and inform the group how to get additional help if needed.
6. Confirm the swimmer-to-leader ratio expected for the group.
7. Conduct the established Swim Test according to the establish protocols.

## Appendix B. Buddy Boards & Safety Checks

### BUDDY SYSTEM GUIDELINES FOR GROUPS

Safety management can be challenging during group swim times especially if most of the swimmers are youth. Heavy swimmer loads can create excessive surface and bottom agitation. This agitation coupled with glare can make bottom scanning difficult and at times impossible to see below the surface.

Dark water as found in lakes and ponds also adds to challenges for bottom scanning. Lifeguards need to be vigilant; actively scanning the lake or sea while also enforcing the rules to ensure that nobody disappears below the surface of the water.

It is not enough to rely on vigilant Lifeguards that actively scan their zones of coverage. Bather loads and conditions can inhibit effective scanning, particularly those as described above. Aquatic incidents can be silent, so organizations must look for additional strategies for swimmer management and accident prevention.

The use of a Buddy System is a time-tested and effective swimmer management system that can help to prevent aquatic incidents.

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### BUDDY SYSTEM

The Buddy System entails pairing each swimmer with another swimmer (Buddy) of similar swimming ability. This is not only an effective way to help manage large groups, but it also reinforces the character development trait of responsibility.

Each Buddy is responsible for the other. If their Buddy is having a problem, they can help to alert the aquatic staff. Buddies must remain in the same area and should be instructed not to perform rescues in the case of emergency but to inform the Lifeguard that their Buddy is in trouble.

If a Buddy needs to leave the water (ex. bathroom) for any reason, their Buddy must also leave until both are ready to return.

The use of bands or caps is encouraged to assist Lifeguards and other staff in identifying swimmer ability.

All swimmers under the age of 18 years should be deep water tested and banded.

Non-swimmers and non-confident swimmers must be restricted to water no deeper than their shoulders.

## **Buddy Board/Tag Board and Roll Calls**

Swimmers leaving and returning to the swim area should be accounted for with a Buddy Board/Tag Board or Roll Call (Buddy List) system. Buddy Board and Roll Call systems both work in a similar manner. Swimmers are accounted for before they enter the water and after their swimming period is over.

With the Buddy Board system, every swimmer gets a tag with his or her name or assigned number on it. Swimmers hang their tag on a peg board as they enter the water and remove it when they leave the water; both under the watchful eye of a Lifeguard or aquatic staff member. At the end of the swim period, the group leader can easily check to see that all swimmers have left the water.

### Buddy Checks

Buddy Checks should be conducted at regular intervals during the swim period. The length of these intervals may be determined by Head Lifeguard/Coordinator.

Conducting Buddy Checks at least every 10 minutes ensures that Buddies are near each other, being responsible and that a check can be performed quickly and efficiently.

The check is initiated by the Lifeguard using a predetermined signal (whistle blows). At the sound of the whistle blows all swimmers should clear the water and “Buddy Up”. Swimmers should join and raise hands with their Buddy while standing at the water’s edge. A staff member should be assigned to scan the bottom and another to perform a Buddy Count.

Staff must begin an immediate search if a Buddy is unaccounted for. When the water is clear and all Buddies are accounted for, swimmers may re-enter the water and resume activities. Using this system does not exclude swimmers from being tested prior to being allowed in the water.

*Lifesaving Society - BC & Yukon Branch*  
Guide to Waterfront Instructional Programs

## Appendix C. Sample Table of Contents - Waterfront Operations Manual & Safety Plan

**Note: Items in red text should be included in both your Staff Manual and Site-Specific Waterfront Safety Plan**

### ORGANIZATION INTRODUCTION

MANUAL INFORMATION – how the document is organized

WATERFRONT OPERATIONS MANUAL – Include all of the information including that which will be incorporated into the safety plan.

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### SECTION 1. HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION

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Staff Description and Roles	Training Policy
Hiring Process	Staff Evaluations
Qualifications	Lifeguard Service Dress Code Policy
Terms of Employment	Workplace Harassment
General Conditions	Staff Discipline
Responsibility	Social Media Policy
Job Descriptions	Use of Personal Electronic Devices
Qualifications	Theft, Lost and Found Property
Confidentiality & Privacy	
Waterfront(s) information	

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### SECTION 2. ADMINISTRATION & DOCUMENTATION

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<b>Staff Logbook</b>	<b>Swimming Alone</b>
Shift Substitutions	<b>Protective Measures Against Communicable Diseases</b>
<b>Sign In/Out Policy &amp; Process</b>	<b>WHMIS</b>
Call-In Policy	<b>Bio mechanic Caution</b>
Rainy Day Policy	<b>Heat and Cold Distress</b>
Health and Safety	<b>Heat Advisory</b>
<b>Reporting Staff Injuries</b>	<b>Sun Safety</b>
<b>Staff Accident Reports</b>	<b>UV Index</b>
<b>Reporting Safety Issues</b>	<b>Thunder and Lightning</b>
Readiness to Work Policy (Injury or Illness)	Employee Assistance Program
Impairment Policy	
<b>Working Alone Policies</b>	

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### SECTION 3 WATERFRONT POLICIES & SITE SAFETY

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Strategies for Safety	Earthquake
Site Safety	Public Emergency Evacuation Procedures
Amenities & Features	Smoking Policy
Swim Area	Alcohol and Drug Use Prohibited
Lost /Missing Person	Dogs Only Permitted in Designated Areas
Extreme Weather	Boat Restrictions Info
Wildfire Alert	Also Prohibited: Firearms, Camping, Vending, Drones
Shelter in Place (SIP)	

SAFETY AROUND WATER

Safe Use of Equipment on the Water  
 Swimming Information  
 Safety Rules for the Swim Area  
 Pictures and Video Recording  
 Fishing  
 Inflatables/Mats  
 Snorkels & Masks  
 Swim Goggles & Fins

Patron Rules and Guidelines  
 Beach Rules  
 Diving  
 Bathing Attire  
 Mermaid Tails  
 Breath-holding Policy  
 Mechanical Swim Aids (underwater scooters etc.)

PATRON/VISITOR BEHAVIOUR

Staff Harassment

SECTION 4. EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

Connecting to Emergency Medical Service  
 Waterfront Emergency Equipment List  
 Personal First Aid Equipment  
 Types of Emergencies  
 Guidelines for First Aid and Water Rescue  
 Universal Precautions  
 First Aid Clean-Up  
 Emergency Priorities  
 Primary Treatment Process  
 Missing Person  
 Procedure - Missing Person Last Seen in Water (Water’s Edge)  
 Searching Deep-Water Areas

Emergency Priorities  
 Major Incident/Accidents Versus Minor Incident/Accidents  
 Secondary Treatment  
 Accident/Incident Reporting  
 Handling the Media  
 Non-Aquatic Emergency Procedures  
 Child Abuse  
 Spinal Injurie(S)  
 Responding to Emergencies Outside of the Swim Area

MEDICAL EMERGENCY GUIDELINES

Angina & Heart Attack  
 Airway and Oxygen Management  
 Seizures  
 Heat-Related Illnesses and Cold-Related

Emergencies  
 Aquatic Emergencies  
 Scene Management  
 Victim Recovery

SERIOUS INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Post Incident Management  
 Post-Incident Kit

Staff Debrief  
 Return to Normal Operations

SECTION 5. SUPERVISION

Lifeguard Signals  
 Radio/Walkie-Talkie Protocols  
 Beach Start-Up  
 Beach Flags  
 Beach Take-Down – At End Of Daily Operation  
 Meal Breaks & Off-Duty Breaks  
 Scanning Zones  
 Positioning  
 Distracted Lifeguarding

Beach Rotation Guidelines  
 Lifeguard to Bather Ratios  
 Swimming Outside of Supervised Areas  
 Scanning Guidelines  
 Group Bather Safety  
 Site Specific Zone Maps

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**SECTION 6. FACILITY OPERATIONS & INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

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Opening & Closing Procedures  
Water Sampling  
Additional Tasks  
Beach Maintenance

Poor Weather Condition Procedure

Picnic Area Maintenance  
Public Education

**APPENDIX**

Critical Contact List  
Site Staff List  
Radio Use  
Oxygen  
SDS - Bleach

H&S Policy Procedure  
The Five Steps to Conflict Resolution  
Shallow-Water Blackout  
BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect

**FORMS**

Accident & Incident Report  
Critical Incident Check List  
Minor Occurrence Form  
Missing Person Report  
Opening And & Closing Form  
First-Aid Kit Equipment List

Pay Sheets  
Training Sign-Off Sheet  
Staff Emergency Information Forms  
Shift Availability Form



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