



Lifeguarding places specific demands on an individual's physical and mental abilities and requires a good level of fitness to safely perform essential job functions. To ensure public safety, lifeguards must be able to perform their safety supervision duties at an optimum level at all times while on deck.

In such a safety-sensitive job, personal physical and mental fitness is the responsibility of the individual lifeguard, as well as there being an obligation on the employer to ensure acceptable employee levels of fitness. Workplace health and safety programs must include written policies and procedures for unavoidable absences from work for illness and injury, and a clear return to work policy that ensures lifeguards are 'rescue ready' when they resume their duties following an injury or health event.

The employer is required to take reasonable steps to ensure that staff responsible for safety supervision are able to perform to the aquatic facility's safety supervision standard when employed in a safety supervision role. The lifeguard/instructor also has a personal responsibility to be able to meet the required aquatic facility's safety supervision standard at any time they are lifeguarding or instructing. Anytime they are not able to meet the standard (e.g. due to illness, injury, pregnancy, etc.), they must inform their employer.

All lifeguards and instructors returning from an absence due to illness, injury or maternity leave should receive re-orientation training and a skill evaluation before assuming their safety supervision duties. Such an evaluation could include, but not be limited to:

- Ensuring all required job qualifications and certifications are current
- Ensuring that the fitness and skill standards required by the facility are met
- Knowledge in the specific facility's current safety systems and emergency procedures
- Knowledge in the specific facility's current programs, activities, operational and maintenance procedures.

It is expected that these items would only be evaluated after adequate training/re-training is provided by the employer/supervisor.

Employers will often require the returning lifeguard to successfully complete elements of a National Lifeguard recertification as it is recognized as the standard proof of lifeguard competence.

For further information, contact the Lifesaving Society Branch Office.

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