



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

The Lifeguarding Experts

CONTRACTING & VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION BULLETIN

Taking a group to the waterfront for a day of fun? Hosting a party at your backyard pool? School classes, community groups and family gatherings often take place around the water and a safe approach will ensure that the day ends in fun, not tragedy. Here are a few tips to help make your next aquatic experience a good one:

To the Group Organizer:

- Does your group's insurance policy cover such activity?
- Have you hired a qualified & experienced lifeguard/instructor (preferably min. 17 yrs old)?
- Will you be providing safety equipment?
- Are there adults accompanying the group who have basic lifesaving or first aid training?

To the Lifeguard:

Things to consider when planning or supervising an event at a waterfront or backyard pool:

- Ensure that the group organizer has checked that their insurance covers the type of activity you are overseeing.
- Purchase personal liability insurance (\$2M policy available from the Lifesaving Society from date of purchase to May 26 of the following year; check website for details).
- Clarify the type of event and number of participants with the group organizer. Ensure a safe and reasonable ratio of lifeguards to swimmers such as the industry standard of 1:30.
- Whenever possible, perform a site visit prior to the event to familiarize yourself with the layout, determine hazard areas and identify safety equipment availability.
- Check on the safety equipment available at the site or provided to you. If no equipment is provided, ensure that you provide your own equipment such as:
 - a basic first aid kit as identified by WorkSafeBC
 - rescue aid such as a rescue can or rescue tube
 - personal fanny pack containing pocket mask, gloves & pair of goggles
 - a whistle and identifying clothing
 - a communication device to call EMS or other emergency services (if using a cell phone, check coverage prior to the event)
 - one set of fins, mask and snorkel for each lifeguard (waterfront only)
 - personal protection such as an umbrella or hat, sunglasses and sunscreen

BC & Yukon Branch

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- Identify adults accompanying the group who have basic lifesaving or first aid training and let them know what you might expect of them if an emergency were to occur.
- At the swim starts, clearly outline the safety rules to all participants (emphasize to adults that children must stay within arm's reach). Make it clear to the group organizer that:
 - you will be enforcing safety rules and those not obeying will be asked to leave
 - if activity becomes unsafe and you are unable to control it, you will leave

As the group organizer or the lifeguard supervising a group at a waterfront outing, it is your responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure safety of the participants. Some additional things to consider include:

- If supervising a waterfront, it is recommended that you have your NL Waterfront option; however, NL Pool with additional preparation for a waterfront setting will serve you well.
- For a waterfront, ideally the swim area is defined by a float line or other method of confining swim activity to the area for which you are responsible.
- Establish an emergency procedure in case of an incident and discuss it with the group organizer. Be prepared to organize a grid search if there is a report of a missing swimmer or a witnessed submersion.
- Ensure a safe and reasonable ratio of lifeguards to swimmers such as the industry standard of 1:30. Being a waterfront setting, several factors need to be taken into consideration when determining the optimum ratio:
 - How many participants in various age ranges are present (e.g. if the group is predominantly preschool, then there should be at least one adult in the water for every 3 children)?
 - Is there a clearly designated swim area that participants must stay within?
 - How large is the swim area that you are responsible for supervising?
 - Is there a drop-off in the swim area and is it clearly designated with buoys & signs?
 - Is the water clear or murky when swimmers are in it?
 - Are there any other hazards present such as moving water?
- Using the Swim to Survive standard, check on swimming skill level of participants.
- Employ the use of a buddy system and make regular 'buddy checks'.

If you have any questions in regard to the items noted above or other concerns, please contact the Lifesaving Society.

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