



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

The Lifeguarding Experts

Waterfront Safety Guidelines

Published by the Lifesaving Society, BC & Yukon Branch

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The Lifesaving Society is Canada's lifeguarding expert. The Society works to prevent drowning & 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 800,000 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 and the International Life Saving Federation. The Society is the Canadian governing body for lifesaving sport, recognized by the International Olympic Committee and the Commonwealth Games Federation.

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PREFACE

Waterfront Safety Guidelines will assist waterfront owners and operators in providing a safe aquatic environment for their patrons.

Waterfront Safety Guidelines explains the Society's position on waterfront safety issues and informs owners and operators about safety expectations as a preventive measure before drownings occur.

Waterfront Safety Guidelines offers recommendations for minimum standards of operation for waterfront facilities where the general public is admitted for aquatic activity. Recommendations apply to both supervised and unsupervised swimming areas, unless otherwise specified. All facilities which “invite” the public to use the waterfront (by providing and maintaining beaches, parking lots, pathways, etc.) should implement these guidelines.

Waterfront Safety Guidelines does not replace or supersede current legislation. Owners and operators must obey all legislation and by-laws specific to their waterfront facility and operations.

Each waterfront has unique features, and no single document can adequately address every situation and need. The minimum standards of the *Waterfront Safety Guidelines* may not meet the safety requirements of all facilities. Owners and operators should customize safety efforts, remembering always that patron well-being is paramount. The Lifesaving Society commends owners and operators who maintain a higher standard than outlined in the guidelines.

By the same token, a recommendation may be impractical or impossible to implement at a particular facility due to an unusual geographical feature, or for other reasons. Owners and operators should apply good judgment in fulfilling the *intent* of these guidelines.

Owners and operators are referred to *Alert: Lifeguarding in Action*, the textbook of the Lifesaving Society's *National Lifeguard* certification, for further guidance on how to improve the safety of their waterfront facilities.

DEFINITIONS

- Throughout *Waterfront Safety Guidelines*:
 - ***Supervised waterfront*** means an area designated for swimming where safety supervision is provided by lifeguards.
 - ***Patrolled waterfront*** means an area designated for swimming where safety response is provided by Patrol staff.
 - ***Unsupervised waterfront*** means an area that is suitable and used for swimming where no safety supervision is provided.
 - ***Staffed waterfront*** means an area designated for swimming that is not supervised or when supervision is not provided but staff is scheduled and working on site (e.g., snack bar, rentals, regular grounds keeper).
 - ***Swimming area*** means that section of the waterfront facility marked and designated exclusively for swimming and wading activity; free of hazards that pose a risk to the safety of patrons; in which boating is discouraged.
 - ***Owner*** means a person or corporation who owns a waterfront facility (e.g., municipal or private corporation, camp owner).
 - ***Operator*** means a person designated by the owner as being responsible for the operation of the waterfront facility (e.g., operations personnel).

Every Operator or designate should:

- hold a Lifesaving Society Aquatic Management Training, Aquatic Supervisor Training, or National Lifeguard Service (preferably waterfront option) certification.

- ***Head Lifeguard (Head Patrol)*** (in-charge guard, site manager) means a person who is on site in-charge of the lifeguard or patrol operations.

Every Head Lifeguard or Head Patrol should:

- hold a current National Lifeguard Service (waterfront option) certification.
- have a minimum of 250 hours of waterfront lifeguarding (patrol) experience.

The Lifesaving Society Aquatic Supervisor Training certification is strongly recommended.

DEFINITIONS (cont'd)

Lifeguard means a person designated by the owner or operator to maintain surveillance over the patrons on the beach or in the water, to supervise patron safety, and to respond to emergency situations.

Every lifeguard:

- should be at least 16 years of age.
- should hold a current lifeguard certificate (National Lifeguard Service certification), dated not more than 2 years prior to the time when he or she is acting as a lifeguard.
- shall have training in waterfront patrolling and emergency procedures relevant to the specific facility and prior to the first shift of lifeguarding.

The *National Lifeguard Service* (NLS) certification, Waterfront Option is desirable. Further qualifications and training are encouraged.

- **Patrol** means a person whose job description includes responsibility for response to aquatic rescue situations.

Every patrol:

- should be at least 16 years of age.
- should hold a current Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion or higher certification.
- shall have training in waterfront patrolling and emergency procedures relevant to the specific facility and prior to the first shift of patrolling.

The *National Lifeguard Service* (NLS) certification, Waterfront Option is desirable. Further qualifications and training are encouraged.

- **On-call staff** means a person who is within call or signaling of a lifeguard who can assist with an emergency.

Every on-call staff shall:

- hold a Standard First Aid certificate.
- be trained in the facility's waterfront emergency procedures.

MINIMUM GUIDELINES FOR WATERFRONTS

- ❑ Every owner and operator has a responsibility to maintain the beach and designated swimming and wading area in a safe condition. Patrons must be informed of areas suitable for swimming and wading, and these areas should be kept free of personal watercraft and other boats. To this end, owners and operators shall ensure the waterfront is operated in accordance with the following guidelines:
 - Designated swimming areas can be clearly seen and recognized from the water as such by users of personal watercraft and other boaters.
 - Swimming area and beach are free from hazards, such as broken glass, hidden underwater dangers, etc.
 - Swimming areas are encouraged to follow standard protocols to ensure safe water quality. Signs are in place advising the status of recreational water quality, the agency responsible for testing and a contact number for information and to report any health issues.
 - Swimming area and beach intended for use by patrons are clearly designated through signs, buoy lines, buoy markers or a combination of these (markers are defined in the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001* and described in the *Transport Canada Safe Boating Guide* and *An Owner's Guide to Private Buoys in Canada*. Swim markers are white with a yellow light (if lighted). The light must conform to standards and guidelines in the Canadian Aids to Navigation System (TP 968); have yellow retro-reflective material (if material is used) and have minimum above-water dimensions of 15.25 cm (6 inches) in width and 30.5 cm (12 inches) in height.
 - Hazards such as drop-offs or rocky bottoms are clearly identified.
- ❑ Equipment inspection and maintenance programs are established, with timely follow-up action on repairs and replacements. Records should be kept of regular inspections, and those at the start and end of season.

MINIMUM GUIDELINES FOR WATERFRONTS *(cont'd)*

- ❑ Public education is provided – through pamphlets, signs, press releases or other means – with information about the level of safety supervision provided and tips on safe use of the waterfront.
- ❑ Lifeguard supervision is desirable. Where no lifeguard supervision is provided, or when lifeguards have gone off duty, the owner and operator shall ensure that the waterfront facility is operated in accordance with the following guidelines:
 - signs are posted at entrances and exits, or where there are not specific entrances and exits, at reasonable intervals along/near the swimming area, indicating:
 - *"Swimming area is not supervised; children require direct supervision by parents or adults."*
 - *"Don't swim alone."*
 - *"Waterfront conditions (depth, bottom, etc.) may change."*
 - location of telephone for emergency use (or other communication device), and nearest first aid station.
 - diving can result in serious injury or death; patrons are cautioned against diving, or to perform only foot-first entries in areas unsafe for diving or where uncertain of water depth.
 - hours of operation are identified where applicable.
 - beach safety rules such as "No Dogs", "No Fires", "No Glass", etc.
 - name of facility and operated by: _____.
 - report any site deficiencies to: _____.
- ❑ The nearest emergency telephone (or other communication device) carries a list of names and numbers of the emergency services.
- ❑ The following rescue equipment is provided in places conveniently located for emergency use at waterfronts where the public is invited to swim, but where the swimming area is not supervised, or when lifeguards have gone off duty:
 - a reaching pole at least 3 m in length
 - a buoyant throwing aid attached to a 6 mm line at least 8 m long.
- ❑ In areas of the waterfront where swimming is dangerous and the shoreline is easily accessible, signs are posted stipulating *"no swimming."*

STAFFING AT AN UNSUPERVISED WATERFRONT

- ❑ Staff working at an unsupervised waterfront, who could be reasonably expected to be called upon in an emergency but not responsible for aquatic rescue shall:
 - Be readily identifiable as STAFF but *not* as LIFEGUARDS.
 - Not be stationed at the water's edge in such a way as to falsely give the impression of continuous supervision.
 - Promote a public education warning of no lifeguard supervision on site.
 - Be trained, at a minimum, in facility and emergency procedures.
 - Include one staff member on duty trained, at a minimum, in Emergency First Aid.
 - Be provided with the equipment required to carry out those procedures.
 - Have available back-up.
- ❑ It is strongly recommended that there be staff trained in Standard First Aid and who hold a current Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion or higher certification.
- ❑ Staff on site should maintain, display, and record beach conditions such as a flag system described below, current E-coli status or results and water temperature.
- ❑ A communication device for emergency use is accessible to the beach and swimming area.
- ❑ Telephones, located in a visible and readily accessible area from the waterfront and in areas frequented by swimmers, are strongly recommended. Where telephones are not feasible, other suitable methods of communication and strategies for immediately reaching emergency medical services are employed, such as walkie-talkies or CB Radios.
- ❑ Equipment inspection and maintenance programs are established, with timely follow-up action on repairs and replacements. Records should be kept of daily and weekly inspections, and those at the start and end of season.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE NEED TO SUPERVISE A WATERFRONT

❑ *Lifeguard Supervision*

A facility should provide full lifeguard supervision when any of the following exist:

- An admission fee is charged specifically for the use of the beach.
- Lifeguard towers or chairs are in place at the facility.
- Signs advertise a lifeguarded or supervised beach.

❑ *Patrol Supervision*

A facility should provide supervision where 3 or more of these conditions exist:

- Admission is charged to the facility in which the swimming beach is located.
- Level of known bather load is high.
- Past incident records showing high risk.
- Other activities are available on the water adjacent to the swimming area.
- Advertising promoting the area as a swimming area.
- Feature such as rafts, diving boards, tree ropes swings, etc. are installed within the swim area.
- The swimming area is associated with a licensed establishment.

❑ When determining supervision of a facility, consider the following criteria.

- Public invitation through the existence of parking lots, picnic facilities, washrooms and change rooms
- Proximity to children's play areas.
- Proximity to high population areas.
- Maintenance level of beach and facility.
- Private vs. public property: the public has a higher expectation of public operator's standards and responsibility for safeguarding the public on public lands.
- Water quality: known good water quality attracts bathers.

GUIDELINES FOR PATROLLED WATERFRONTS

- Where a patrol is provided, the owner operator shall ensure the waterfront is operated in accordance with the following additional guidelines:
 - There be a Head Patrol member on duty.
 - Every patrol member is currently certified and meets age requirements (outlined on page 5).
 - Every patrol member has been trained in waterfront patrolling and emergency procedures relevant to the specific facility prior to his or her first shift.
 - Clearly written emergency procedures are posted.
 - Emergency procedures are regularly reviewed and practiced at in-service training sessions held throughout the duration of the patrol member's employment.
 - At no time are there fewer than 2 patrol members on duty to respond to the swimming area. This includes the Head Patrol member.
 - An adequate number of patrol members to safely respond to the swimming area are on duty at any one time. The number of patrol members required changes according to the needs and conditions of each waterfront facility. The Lifesaving Society can provide assistance in determining appropriate staffing levels for waterfronts.
 - Incident reports are established and maintained to record the "when, where, who, why, and what action taken" for all incidents and emergencies (see *Alert: Lifeguarding in Action* for a sample incident report). Incident reports should be retained for a minimum of one year.

Reports include maps of the area to record locations of incidents and emergencies so that patterns may be established and preventive action taken.

GUIDELINES FOR PATROLLED WATERFRONTS *(cont'd)*

- Patrol members are attired in such a way as to be readily identified as such. This clothing should not restrict physical movement or emergency response time. UV protection, polarized sunglasses and hat are also included as part of the patrol member's personal equipment.
- The following equipment is available and present at all times, in good working order, checked daily for breakdowns or faults, and easily accessible in case of an emergency:
 - 1 buoyant rescue aid attached to a shoulder loop with a 6 mm line at least 1.6 m in length for each patrol member on duty.
 - binoculars.
 - a drowning marker.
 - 25 m of buoyant rope.
 - masks, snorkels and fins available for searches.
 - a first aid kit.
 - a paddleboard (rescue board), when any part of the patrolled area is more than 25 m from shore.
 - a rescue boat when any of the patrolled area is more than 75 m from shore
 - a spineboard with suitable strapping that will immobilize the total body.
 - first aid supplies, in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of the facility, that include:
 - protective gloves (sterilized and unsterilized)
 - pocket face masks
 - scissors
 - triangular bandages
 - sterile bandages
 - sterile gauze pads (50 mm x 50 mm; 100 mm x 100 mm)
 - rolls of gauze conform bandages
 - eye pads
 - adhesive tape
 - emergency blankets or wrap
 - safety pins
 - tweezers

GUIDELINES FOR PATROLLED WATERFRONTS *(cont'd)*

- cold packs
 - antiseptic solution
 - splinting material
 - Incident Report forms
 - pencil or pen and note pad
 - watch or other mechanism for timing
 - clamps and hazardous waste bottle for needles.
- A cellular phone (inside a waterproof bag) is recommended where telephones lines are not available.
 - Due to the distance of most waterfront sites from speedy EMS response, we recommend consideration be given to additional emergency equipment, particularly oxygen and automated external defibrillators (AEDs).
 - Signs are posted and clearly visible to patrons indicating the hours of supervision and whether patrol is on or off duty.
 - A system (e.g., flag system) of communicating conditions to patrons is desirable. Such a system may indicate cold water temperatures, adverse weather or warn patrons of an increased risk or danger for example
 - Signs reporting the latest E-coli counts and current water temperature.
 - When the patrol is off duty the facility must still meet **MINIMUM GUIDELINES FOR WATERFRONTS.**

GUIDELINES FOR LIFEGUARD SUPERVISED WATERFRONTS

- Where lifeguard supervision is provided, the owner and operator shall ensure the waterfront is operated in accordance with the following additional guidelines:
 - There is a Head Lifeguard on duty.
 - Every lifeguard is currently certified and meets age requirements (outlined on page 6).
 - Every lifeguard has been trained in waterfront patrolling and emergency procedures relevant to the specific facility prior to his or her first shift.
 - Clearly written emergency procedures (as defined by the Lifesaving Society) are provided and posted.
 - Emergency procedures are regularly reviewed and practiced at in-service training sessions held throughout the duration of the lifeguards' employment.
 - At no time are there fewer than 2 lifeguards, or 1 lifeguard and 1 on-call staff, on duty in the swimming area. This includes the Head Lifeguard. This recommendation represents a minimum standard. A greater number of lifeguards is desirable, and in some situations, required to safely supervise the swimming area.
 - An adequate number of lifeguards to safely supervise the swimming area are on duty at any one time. The number of lifeguards required changes according to the needs and conditions of each waterfront facility. The Lifesaving Society can provide assistance in determining appropriate supervision standards for waterfronts. Factors affecting numbers of lifeguards required include:
 - length of shoreline
 - bather load
 - concentration of bather load
 - potential dangers such as drop-offs
 - geographical features, such as curves or bends in shoreline affecting the lifeguards' view
 - water and weather conditions

GUIDELINES FOR LIFEGUARD SUPERVISED WATERFRONTS *(cont'd)*

- experience and training of lifeguards
- ratio of assistant lifeguards to lifeguards
- type of patron activity engaged in
- width of swimming area.

Larger, more complex waterfront facilities require more lifeguards, often with increased or specialized training. So too will facilities with larger bather loads or concentrations, or patron activities which place increased demands on lifeguards.

Where equipment, leisure accessories or other structures are present, additional supervision is provided. In the opinion of the operator, this additional supervision must be adequate, taking into consideration the number and type of equipment, leisure accessories, and structures present.

- Incident reports are established and maintained to record the "when, where, who, why, and what action taken" for all incidents and emergencies (see *Alert: Lifeguarding in Action* for a sample incident report). Incident reports should be retained for a minimum of one year.

Reports include maps of the area to record locations of incidents and emergencies so that patterns may be established and preventive action taken.

- Lifeguards are clothed in such a way as to be readily identified as such. It is recommended that the International standard of Red on Yellow be used. This clothing should not restrict physical movement or emergency response time. UV protection, polarized sunglasses, hat and whistle are also included as part of the lifeguard's personal equipment, as well as protective gloves and pocket face masks.
- The following equipment is available and present at all times, in good working order, checked daily for breakdowns or faults, and easily accessible in case of an emergency:
 - 1 buoyant rescue aid attached to a shoulder loop with a 6 mm line at least 1.6 m in length for each lifeguard on duty.

GUIDELINES FOR LIFEGUARD SUPERVISED WATERFRONTS *(cont'd)*

At each Chair or Lifeguard station:

- if elevated, the lifeguard tower or station shall have a seat not less than 1.8 m above the water surface that permits an unobstructed view of the entire area under surveillance.

Towers or stations should be located no more than 25 m from the high-water line and a minimum of 1 for every 150 m of water front installed.

Lifeguard safety is a priority: lifeguard towers and stations should have a canopy for sun protection, be maintained in good condition and, where elevated, have safe railings, ladders or steps.

- binoculars.
- a portable megaphone.
- a drowning marker.
- 25 m of buoyant rope.
- masks, snorkels and fins available for searches.
- a first aid kit.

At the facility:

- a paddleboard (rescue board), when any part of the supervised area is more than 25 m from shore.
- a rescue boat when any of the supervised area is more than 75 m from shore
- a spineboard with suitable strapping that will immobilize the total body.
- first aid supplies in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of the facility, that include:
 - protective gloves (sterilized and unsterilized)
 - pocket face masks
 - scissors
 - triangular bandages
 - sterile bandages
 - sterile gauze pads (50 mm x 50 mm; 100 mm x 100 mm)
 - rolls of gauze conform bandages
 - eye pads

GUIDELINES FOR LIFEGUARD SUPERVISED WATERFRONTS *(cont'd)*

- adhesive tape
 - emergency blankets or wrap
 - safety pins
 - tweezers
 - cold packs
 - antiseptic solution
 - splinting material
 - Incident Report forms
 - pencil or pen and note pad
 - watch or other mechanism for timing
 - clamps and hazardous waste bottle for needles.
- A cellular phone (inside a waterproof bag) is recommended where telephones lines are not available.
 - Due to the distance of most waterfront sites from speedy EMS response, we recommend consideration of additional emergency equipment be made, particularly oxygen and automated external defibrillators.
 - A public address system. For small waterfronts, this may be a power megaphone. Larger waterfront may need a complete public address system.
 - Signs are posted and clearly visible to patrons indicating the hours of supervision and whether lifeguards are on duty or off duty
 - A system (e.g., flag system) of communicating conditions to patrons is desirable. Such a system may indicate cold water temperatures, adverse weather, or warn patrons of an increased risk or danger for example
 - Signs reporting the latest E-coli counts and current water temperature.
 - When lifeguards are off duty the facility must still meet
- MINIMUM GUIDELINES FOR WATERFRONTS**

RESCUE CRAFT

- ❑ Rescue craft are recommended at any supervised waterfront that permits supervised recreational boating (such as canoeing, wind sailing, sailing, paddle boating, personal watercraft, powerboating) or their unsupervised use in the nearby vicinity.
- ❑ Clearly mark the rescue craft to indicate its primary emergency use.
- ❑ Size and type of rescue craft depends on individual waterfront needs. Some lakes and waterways have engine size restrictions. Check with authorities for information about your area.
- ❑ Essential equipment for a non-motorized rescue boat (must conform to Transport Canada Small Commercial vessel Safety Guide requirements) includes:
 - two paddles or oars*
 - bailer *
 - first aid kit *, splints
 - binoculars
 - lifejacket or PFD that fits each person in the boat *
 - drowning marker
 - sound making device*
 - buoyant heaving line 15 m*
 - Flash light *
 - blanket
 - lifesaving equipment; rescue can or tube
 - mask, snorkel, fins

* Items required by Transport Canada for vessels under 6 m

- ❑ Essential equipment for a motorized rescue boat (must conform to Transport Canada Small Commercial vessel Safety Guide requirements) includes:
 - two paddles or oars*
 - bailer *
 - first aid kit *, splints
 - running lights *
 - fire extinguisher *
 - lifejacket or PFD that fits each person in the boat *
 - binoculars
 - drowning marker
 - tow rope
 - sound making device*
 - buoyant heaving line 15 m*
 - flash light *
 - flares (3) *
 - extra gas (if applicable)
 - lifesaving equipment; rescue can or tube
 - blanket
 - mask, snorkel, fins

* Items required by Transport Canada for vessels under 6 m

RESCUE CRAFT *(cont'd)*

- ❑ A communication device, such as a marine style walkie-talkie (with Coast Guard Emergency Channel 16), CB (Channel 9) and/or a cellular phone is desirable in some situations, particular on large bodies of water.
- ❑ Develop a daily checklist for staff to ensure the rescue craft is in good working order (see Lifesaving Society *BOAT Study Guide*). Inspect hull, engine (if applicable), parts, and equipment every day.
- ❑ Ensure every person using the rescue craft has instruction on its operation and safe handling and has training in the proper rescue techniques.
- ❑ Federal regulations require operators of powered craft to hold a Pleasure Craft Operator (PCO) card. To obtain the card, a Lifesaving Society BOAT (Boat Operator Accredited Training) course is recommended for lifeguarding staff using motorized rescue craft.
- ❑ Lifeguards should further prepare using the Lifesaving Society's Boat Rescue course. Lifeguard staff using personal watercraft (Wave Runner, Sea-Doo, Jet Ski, etc.) as rescue craft should take the Lifesaving Society's Patrol Rider certification.

RELATED LIFESAVING SOCIETY RESOURCES

Are You Ready?.....

Guide to Ontario Public Pools Regulation explains and interprets Ontario government regulations governing public pools using simple language and everyday terms understood by aquatic personnel.

Guide to Ontario Public Spas Regulation explains and interprets key aspects of the Ontario regulations governing public spas.

Wading Pool Guidelines provides recommendations for the construction and operation of public wading pools, splash and spray pads including supervision requirements.

Backyard Pool Safety Guidelines helps pool owners reduce the risk of drowning and injury by identifying what they can do to prevent dangerous or risky situations.

Pool Operations Manual is the reference text for pool managers, operators, and other participants in the Society's Pool Operator Certification Courses.

Dragon Boat Race Event Organizers Safety Procedures Handbook outlines the recommended incident prevention planning and on-water emergency response procedures required to maximize the safety of race participants, officials and spectators.

Alert: lifeguarding in action, the textbook of the *National Lifeguard* certification program, details the roles and responsibilities of lifeguards and defines lifeguarding skills, techniques and procedures for pools and waterfronts.

The Drowning Report summarizes the Lifesaving Society's annual research into water-related deaths.

Standards Journals assist recreation personnel in the safe operation of aquatic facilities. These editions include legal precedents, inquest reports, and Lifesaving Society positions on a variety of issues ranging from Staff training to Emergency communications systems.

The Lifesaving Society's *BOAT Study Guide* contains all the information required to earn the Pleasure Craft Operator (PCO)

card. The *Boat Study Guide* is the reference text for self-study or the Boat Operator Accredited Training (BOAT) course.

Boat Rescue for First Responders is a comprehensive guide covering boating accident prevention, safety, and boat rescue.