

Admission Standard for Aquatic Facilities

Lifesaving Society Standard Approved by the Ontario Board of Directors, December 2003

Standard

The Society recommends that all pools adopt a policy that children under 10 years of age not be admitted to public recreational swimming unaccompanied, unless they are able to pass the facility swimming test.

Children six to nine years of age who are unable to pass the facility swimming test must be accompanied by a parent or guardian who is at least 12 years of age and responsible for their direct supervision, with a maximum of four children for each parent or guardian.

Children under six years of age may not be admitted to the swimming pool unless they are accompanied by a parent or guardian who is responsible for their direct supervision, with a maximum of two children for each parent or guardian.

For non-swimmers (those unable to pass the facility swimming test) between six and nine years of age the ratio of non-swimmers to parent or guardians may be increased to a maximum of eight bathers to one parent/guardian (8:1) if lifejackets are worn by all non-swimmers in their charge.

Definitions

Recreational swim settings: include recreational swims, birthday parties, day camps, rentals, etc.

Direct supervision: means within arms' reach and able to render immediate assistance.

Swim test: determined by the facility owner/ operator supervised by aquatic personnel or staff member.

Background/Rationale

The Society's drowning research shows that unattended youth are at a high risk of drowning during non-instructional swim settings.

Preschool children are generally too short to stand unassisted in most public pools.

Children lack the judgment and experience to understand the dangers of water.

Drowning statistics at unsupervised and supervised settings point out that children between the ages of six and nine, who cannot swim, and are unaccompanied, are at high risk of drowning.

Aquatic safety of children is a responsibility that must be shared by the pool operator, lifeguard, accompanist, parents and manager/organizer of a group of children. The pool operator shall educate everyone who is responsible for children safety.

Implementation

Parents/guardians are responsible for the children in their care while in this facility and must directly supervise the children at all times.

Operators should establish an administrative process that identifies children that have successfully or unsuccessfully meet the requirements of this standard. A suitable option would be a wristband process.

In addition to those required by the Regulation, the Lifesaving Society recommends that pools post signage at the entranceway to the facility advising patrons of the admission policies and safety procedures.

The admission standard should be applied to all bathers entering the swimming pool for recreational swimming including camps, birthday parties, rentals, etc.

Facility staff, lifeguards and aquatic personnel must be trained to admission standard procedure and swim test evaluation.

Sources

- Coroner's Inquest recommendation regarding the provision of an admission standard in public swimming pools: Neave Inquiry, Alberta, 2008; Emun Inquest, Ontario, 2009; Ilunga Inquest, Ontario, 2011; Audette Inquest, Ontario, 2012
- Office of the Chief Coroner, Drowning Review Report, 2010
- *Alert: Lifeguarding in Action*, Lifesaving Society
- Guide d'encadrement sécuritaire des groupes d'enfants en milieu Aquatique (Ministère de l'éducation du loisir et du sport), 2006

Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society 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 Safety Standards do not replace or supersede local, provincial/ territorial 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.

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