

Pool Attendant Award Guide

# **The Supplement**

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Some technical content required in the Pool Attendant award is not found in the current edition of the *Canadian Lifesaving Manual*. The content is provided in this supplement.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Pool Attendants

### Pool Attendant Item 1: Theory and practice

Pool attendants, assistant lifeguards and lifeguards, have a legal responsibility for the safety supervision of patrons of the aquatic facility. Pool attendants may commonly act alone, or act as part of the lifeguard team – within established protocols and standard operating procedures. The primary objective of a pool attendant is to prevent drowning and water-related injury, and when prevention fails, to respond quickly and professionally to prevent loss of life.

Government regulation and employer policies – that address minimum ages, minimum certification requirements, and currency of awards – affect the employment eligibility of pool attendants, lifeguards and assistant lifeguards. In addition, specific job responsibilities of pool attendants, assistant lifeguards and lifeguards may vary from employer to employer and in different aquatic facilities.

**Prevention first:** Pool attendants spend most of their time in accident prevention activities including controlling, directing, or influencing patron behaviour. Attendants must be knowledgeable about how aquatic accidents occur – when, where, why, and to whom – so that they have the understanding necessary to prevent them.

**Prevention through facility analysis:** Attendants analyze both the physical characteristics and the operation of the aquatic facility, and the causes of accidents occurring in it, to identify hazards and to determine safety practices that will reduce or eliminate risks.

**Prevention through education:** Attendants educate patrons about the hazards and risks associated with aquatic activities and how to be “water smart.”

**Prevention through supervision:** Attendants provide vigilant, attentive, and alert supervision of the patrons of the facility. To do this, they must master a variety of supervision skills and techniques including: positioning, scanning and victim recognition, and communication.

**Rescue ready:** Attendants must ensure they are ready to respond effectively at any time. This requires ongoing in-service training of judgment, knowledge, skill, fitness, leadership, and teamwork.

Attendants have a range of rescue techniques from the basic to the advanced. As an emergency situation unfolds, changes in rescue procedures can become necessary and the pool attendants must be able to draw instantly on an understanding of alternative skills, techniques and procedures, and adapt them to the demands of the situation.

**Pool attendant responsibilities:** While the specific responsibilities of attendants may vary depending on the number of staff and the characteristics of the facility and the employer policies, pool attendants do have common responsibilities:

**To the public:** People who use the facility for recreation and pleasure are entitled to and expect a safe and happy experience. Attendants have an ethical and a legal duty to provide patrons with a high level of concern and a high standard of care for their safety. At the same time, pool attendants/assistant lifeguards/lifeguards are expected to facilitate this safe, enjoyable aquatic experience.

**To fellow staff/guards:** An attendant places trust in fellow team members. Each attendant has a responsibility to maintain this trust by maintaining adequate skill, knowledge and fitness levels, and by demonstrating a concern for personal and team development.

**To the employer:** In accepting the job, attendants accept the objectives, duties and responsibilities stated by the employer. Employer policies and protocols concerning abuse, harassment and confidentiality must be respected.

**To one's self:** An attendant's education and skill development is just the beginning. Ongoing practice and refinement of personal skills is essential. Techniques are revised periodically, new equipment is developed and changes in the structural features of aquatic facilities require reassessment of rules, emergency procedures and educational practices.

## Communication

Pool Attendant Item 3: Communication

Alert Chapter 2 *Communication with Patrons, Whistle signals, Voice communication* (p. 22-23); Chapter 3 *Communication among Lifeguards, Communication with the Victim, Communication with Emergency Services* (p. 36-39); Alert Insert *Arm signals* (p. 4-5); Alert Chapter 7 *Public Relations Problems and Solutions* (p. 96)

### Communication with patrons

To prevent accidents, attendants must communicate successfully with patrons to stop dangerous activities and to warn and educate them about potential hazards. During emergencies, attendants must maintain communication with patrons, both to direct and to reassure them.

The attendant's challenge is to maximize patrons' fun while minimizing their risk of injury. Positive public relations stems from the attitude that patrons are guests in the aquatic facility. Good public relations results in positive patron attitudes and behaviour. The behaviour that attendant's model and the manner in which they communicate with patrons matters. The goal should be to persuade patrons to see the pool attendant as someone who is professional, approachable and eager to help, rather than someone who interferes with enjoyment.

Adapt communication signals and techniques to suit the specific characteristics of your facility and its clientele. Factors such as acoustics, noise levels, distances, sight lines, the type of patrons, and the desire for positive public relations all influence the appropriate communication.

Communication is two-way. Learn to convey information calmly, clearly and accurately. Ensure all communication with patrons is respectful. Practice effective listening skills to ensure that you accurately receive information important to a rescue.

**Confronting complaints or problems:** Resolving conflict requires respect and patience. Suggestions for receiving complaints include:

- Introduce yourself and ask the patron's name, set the tone.
- Listen, fully and patiently; hear the person out.
- Try to understand the complaint from the patron's point of view.
- Demonstrate that you have heard the complaint by paraphrasing it.
- Remain objective and neutral, investigate if needed.
- Shift complaint to problem-solving by identifying what steps will be taken next; follow up with supervisor if needed.

**Whistle signals:** Whistles are loud, piercing and shrill. Constant whistle blasts are annoying. Use them judiciously. Typical whistle signals include:

- 1 short blast means "attention" (followed by instructions).
- 1 long blast may mean "emergency: leave the water" or "pool fouling, exit for maintenance."

Educate patrons to respond quickly to signals and insist upon speedy reaction to "clear the water" signals.

**Verbal communication:** The most effective means of preventing accidents or correcting inappropriate behaviour is direct communication between the attendant and the patron. Move as close to the patron as possible. Lower yourself to the patron's physical level and use respectful language.

During communications with patrons ensure your zone is supervised; be brief and keep your eyes on your area. If you must communicate for any longer than a few seconds, signal to another attendant to cover your area if available.

### **Communication with victims**

The manner in which you communicate may have a calming effect. Gentle tones and calm soothing rhythms are the sort of non-verbal communication (paralanguage) that might penetrate the victim's limited awareness of the surroundings. How you say something may be as important as what you say. Calm, relaxed, and decisive movements and gestures help reassure a victim.

**Reassurance:** Although each victim will react uniquely, there are some characteristics common to accident victims in general. Expect the victim's concentration to be focused on their problem – pain or breathing for example. What you communicate and how you communicate it – verbally or non-verbally – is an important part of victim care.

Initial reassurance may start with supportive physical contact from the attendant while moving the victim to safety. Subsequent reassurance will address the emotional and physical needs of the victim.

**What to say:** As soon as it becomes practical, learn the victim's name and use it. Introduce yourself by name and let the victim know you are a Pool Attendant. Tell the victim what you are going to do before you do it. Ask permission. The following are the types of questions (both open-ended and specific) that may provide useful information:

- Are you okay? What's the problem?
- What's your name? Has this happened before?
- Do you hurt anywhere else? Do you have any medical problems we should know about?
- Will you let me help you?
- Are you here with anybody else? Whom should we call for you?

Listen carefully to the response to your questions. When more than one attendant is in attendance, avoid overloading the victim with questions from more than one person.

Tone of voice, facial expressions and body language all convey information. Make and sustain eye contact whenever possible. Maintain a calm and confident tone of voice. Your manner, and especially your facial expressions, should communicate confidence in the successful outcome and your ability to manage it.

## Communication among attendants and staff

An effective and reliable communication system results in the prevention of emergencies and an efficient response to them. When responding to emergencies, attendants must communicate effectively with other attendants/staff to alert them to a situation and to permit everyone to operate as an efficient team.

**Whistle signals:** Depending on the wading pool environment the use of whistles may or may not be used. Whistles are typically helpful in large facilities where the sound carries clearly. Usual whistle signals among staff include:

- 2 short blasts signal attention or alert to other attendants/guards. This signal asks all attendants/assistant lifeguards/lifeguards to look to the source of the whistle. Two short blasts (or hand signals) to indicate they must leave their stations to respond to a minor emergency or to speak with patrons, or to point out a potential or actual incident close to the other guard.
- 1 long blast signals a major emergency. Train patrons to clear the water on this signal.

**Hand or arm signals:** A system of hand or arm signals is a useful means of communication in facilities with good sight lines. These signals can vary widely. Typical hand/arm signals include:

- “Assistance required” – raised arm.
- “All clear or okay” – one hand on head.
- “Look” – arm points to specific location (with whistle signal).
- “Proceed left/right” – arm points in desired direction.

The most important consideration is that all pool attendants/assistant lifeguards/lifeguards at the facility use and interpret the hand/arm signals consistently.

**Verbal communication:** Whistle signals convey limited information. When more information is needed, talking is superior.

Verbal communication is essential in emergency situations. Attendants need to communicate instructions, information, suggestions and encouragement to fellow attendants/staff. Practice verbal communication during simulated emergencies to develop calm and succinct exchanges.

Some teams use verbal codes when communicating with one another. These signals convey messages without revealing information to patrons. For example, a certain number may indicate the need to telephone the police or ambulance, or indicate an assessment of a victim's condition without further alarming the victim. Weigh the value of verbal codes against the need to reassure victims. Hearing staff speaking in code may increase patrons' stress since they will not understand what is happening.

### **Communication with emergency services**

To contact emergency medical services, many communities use the 911 emergency telephone number, which connects the caller to a trained dispatcher who directs the call to one or more of the emergency response services – ambulance, police or fire department. Once connected, the operator leads the conversation, seeking the information crucial for obtaining the required assistance. In areas not equipped with the 911 system, know the individual telephone numbers for each service. Many facilities have direct-line telephone communication to the appropriate emergency services.

Emergency response teams follow their own protocols. Assist as required.

### **Safety Supervision**

Pool Attendant Item 8a – Supervision: scanning and observation

Alert Chapter 2 *Accident Prevention*; Chapter 3 *Aquatic emergencies*;

Alert Insert *Scanning*, p. 2

### **Supervision zones**

A pool attendant may be responsible for one single area, typically the whole wading pool, or be assigned responsibility for a designated supervision area or zone of a particular wading pool. The design of supervision zones and positioning of pool attendants/assistant lifeguards/lifeguards within them is the responsibility of the facility owner/operator, aquatic supervisor or head guard.

Supervision zones may include specific areas such as amusement devices, waterslides and play structures. These areas may experience a higher volume of patron activity requiring additional supervision. For example, pool attendants may be positioned at the top of a waterslide to control the flow of patrons descending to the bottom, while another pool attendant is positioned at the bottom to help patrons recover if needed. Other play structures, waterfalls, rope structures or floating pads may all require specific zone coverage by pool attendants.

The pool attendant's line of sight and field of vision are important factors in choosing positions for effective observation of a designated zone. Human vision is best focused when the observed object is directly in front of the eyes. Objects in peripheral vision cannot be seen clearly or in detail. This is why pool attendants must be careful to keep turning their heads to clearly monitor the whole area. Ideally, pool attendants are positioned to minimize the distance the head must turn in order to effectively scan the zone.

An attendant assigned to a walking patrol or ground-level station can provide effective public relations and education, and efficient enforcement of safety rules. Roving pool attendants can stay in closer verbal contact with patrons.

Ground patrols are careful to avoid turning their backs on any part of their area. The mobile attendant will, on occasion, have to walk sideways or backwards to maintain eye contact with the designated area.

### **Scanning**

Scanning is the systematic visual surveillance of the facility, its patrons, and their activities. Scanning requirements and techniques are affected by different factors including:

- The number of patrons and their activities.
- The number of attendants/lifeguards and their location.
- The facility design and layout.
- The shape and size of supervision zones.
- Lighting conditions.

Effective scanning assumes that attendants can see the entire area, that they know what they are looking for, and that they will recognize it when they see it. Pool attendants must:

- Be positioned with clear, unobstructed sight lines.
- Move to counteract patron interference (especially in ground-level supervision).
- Take steps to minimize the effect of reflection or glare (e.g., change position, use polarized sunglasses).
- Have a scanning strategy to compensate for an inability to see below the surface, and a strategy for managing distance from patron activity (e.g., they are far away).
- Practice to develop and improve perception skills.
- Understand the signs of potential trouble, and the characteristic behaviours of those in need of help.



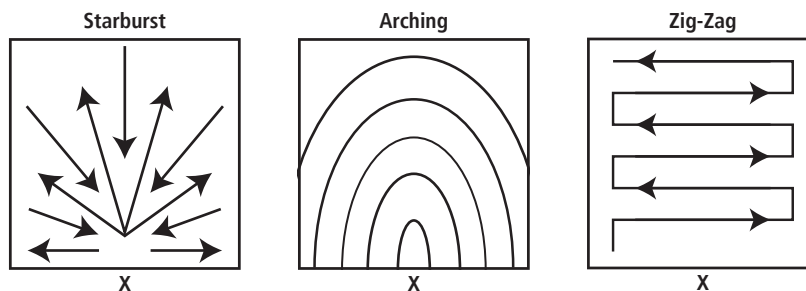
## How to scan

Drowning can occur in seconds, even in wading pools. Some victims, especially toddlers, can slip quietly below the surface, and an attendant may not see the event in spite of their best efforts. The less time it takes to effectively scan a zone, the better. Pool attendants should be able to complete a full and effective scan of the designated supervision zone within 10 to 30 seconds.

Over time, attendants come to know the characteristic sights and sounds, as well as the patterns and rhythms of activity that are normal for their facility during any given period.

- Focus on people and what they are doing. Make eye contact whenever possible. Watch the face.
- Look and listen for the unusual.
- Avoid staring fixedly at the same thing. Give your eyes a break by focusing momentarily on some distant object or the horizon.
- Use your peripheral vision to detect movement.
- Never stop scanning when speaking with a patron.
- In outdoor facilities, monitor changes in environmental conditions (weather and water) for impact on patron behaviour and safety.

## Sample scanning patterns



## Where to scan

Sweep your eyes over your zone, moving your head to see things to the right and left, and looking behind you regularly. Take note of patrons and activity right in front of you. Include adjacent attendants/lifeguards on each sweep to receive any visual communications they might be sending and to check the area behind them.

Scan below the surface and, in wading pools, scan the bottom regularly. Attend to the “hot spots” more often (e.g., amusement devices and waterslides). Ensure that each person who submerges in water (especially small children) resurfaces. Although wading pools are shallow, patrons can easily drown if left face down in water. Note that an activity “hot spot” can move with the people who create it.

## Scanning strategies

Attendants/lifeguards use a variety of strategies to organize and sort through sensory input, which can be overwhelming on crowded days. Commonly used techniques include:

**Head counting:** Try to count the number of people in your area on each scan. When the number changes, find out why.

**Grouping:** Sort patrons into groups by age, sex, risk potential, activity, and combinations of the above. Monitor changes in the groups.

**Mental filing:** On successive sweeps, build patron profiles that take note of swimming ability, skill, activity, or other relevant factors. Track changes in patron behaviour or activity on each scan.

**Profile matching:** On each scan, measure what you see against the characteristic profiles of potential trouble or victim types. Track the progress of individuals who submerge (from the diving board or the surface), and those who fit a high-risk profile (e.g., the lone child at the water's edge).

## What to look for

Experience is a very good teacher. Over time, attendants develop a discerning eye for potential trouble. Experienced attendants develop good pattern recognition skills and are faster at detecting disturbances or anomalies in those patterns than new attendants. Training and practice will help prepare the new attendant for those early days on the job.

Some patrons indicate by appearance or behaviour that they require close attention. Learn to recognize the indicators that help anticipate and prevent problems or accidents. The characteristics of various pool facilities affect patron behaviour, and therefore the signs of impending trouble may be different. Nevertheless, the following are typical patron behaviours requiring close surveillance:

- Unsupervised children. Attend to any child who is carelessly supervised or who is playing in the water alone. Whenever possible, link these children with their parent or guardian. Reinforce with the parents their responsibility to supervise their children. Even with conscientious parents, it is often a lapse in supervision – not merely a lack of supervision – that causes problems.
- Anyone who appears to lack confidence in the water or who looks frail.

- Unusual gestures or facial expressions, which suggest calls for assistance; for example, breath-holding or a child with WIDE open eyes and a fearful expression.
- Swimmers knocked over by water, e.g., amusement waterfalls, spray nozzles.
- Swimmers engaged in horseplay.
- Side jumpers who leap from slide top to bottom.

### Working alone

It is not uncommon for wading pool attendants to work without immediate staff backup nearby. This poses unique challenges for safe supervision and backup support during an emergency. Consider the following:

- **Breaks:** Pool attendants should know and understand the type and frequency of breaks permitted by their employer. This includes any special communication required by the employer to patrons. For example, if a washroom break is required, clear the pool and have all the children return to their parents. Communicate to patrons the reason for clearing the pool and when it will reopen.
- **When EMS is needed:** Follow the emergency procedures outlined by the employer for activating EMS. For example, procedures for using a cellphone or handheld radio. If a life-threatening emergency does occur, attendants may recruit additional help from nearby patrons certified in first aid. In large public settings, it is not uncommon to find paramedics, nurses or firefighters who are willing to lend a hand.
- **Just ask:** Being the lone staff member at a wading pool does not mean being isolated. Pool attendants should be comfortable and encouraged to reach out to their supervisors or other staff members whenever questions or situations arise that are not easily answered or manageable. This may include questions on handling maintenance problems during the day, incoming inclement weather, dealing with difficult patrons, etc. Pool attendants should always feel they have the support of their employer and can easily access help when needed.
- **Stay alert:** Pool attendants ensure a safe and enjoyable aquatic experience through the vigilant supervision of patrons. Pool attendants must avoid distractions and behaviours that may interfere with staying focused in performing their duties (e.g., talking on their personal cellphone, reading a book, sunbathing). The temptation of “my boss is not around” or “no one will notice” is the wrong mindset for staying alert and being vigilant.

## Appendix A

# Chemicals

### General safety practices

- Store chemicals in a cool, dry and ventilated area.
- Keep corrosive materials away from other chemicals.
- Keep all chemicals away from hot surfaces.
- Wear the personal protective equipment provided by your employer.
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) must be made available to employees for every chemical in use.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in the chemical storage area.
- Ensure the chemical storage room is inaccessible to unauthorized persons.
- Handle chemicals with clean and dry scoops only. Each chemical must have its own scoop. Use scoops provided by the manufacturer if available.
- Keep containers closed when chemicals are not in use.
- Label all containers with the chemical name.
- Ensure that there is a safe distance between different types of chemicals to avoid accidental mixing of dangerous chemicals.
- Never reuse empty chemical containers for the storage of other chemicals.
- Never mix contaminated chemicals with your fresh supply.
- When mixing chemicals, add them slowly. Never add water to the chemicals, always add the chemical to the water.
- Always wash hands thoroughly after handling chemicals.

**Note:** Owners and operators have a duty to comply with the requirements of the Occupational Health & Safety Act.

## Appendix B

# Wading pool tests

Log sheet example, tracked every two hours.

Log sheet	am/pm (1/2 hr.) before opening	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm	am/pm
Water clarity					
Total number of bathers					
Free available chlorine Unstabilized: 5 ppm – 10ppm Stabilized: 1.0 ppm – 10ppm					
Total chlorine: TC-FAC= combined chlorine (CC) Shock treatment should be considered when combined chlorine reaches 0.2 ppm or above					
Total bromine 2.0 ppm – 4.0 ppm					
Total alkalinity 80 ppm – 120ppm					
pH 7.2 – 7.8					
O.R.P (if applicable) 600mV – 900mV					
Emergency communication device					
Emergency first aid kit and equipment					
Pool Attendant initials					

**Wading pool closures:** Common examples may include

- Water clarity is poor.
- Fouling (e.g., feces, vomit, blood or chemical).
- Filtration or circulation system is not operative or is malfunctioning.
- Drain cover or fittings are missing or not in good repair.
- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter missing or malfunctioning (if applicable).
- Emergency communication device not available or malfunctioning.
- Health and safety: inclement weather, electrical concern.

# Appendix C

## If AED Available

*The following Must Sees apply if an AED is available in drowning resuscitation items: Pool Attendant Item 5.*

### Notes

- AED pad placement: the upper-right chest pad should not go over the sternum, clavicle or nipple. The lower-left pad should wrap around the rib cage – not on the abdomen or in the arm pit.
- On a child, if the pads are going to be less than 2 inches apart, place one on the centre of the chest and the other on the back between the shoulder blades.
- The need for defibrillation on infants is uncommon, and the preferred treatment involves the use of a manual defibrillator by trained health care professionals. In an emergency, an AED could be used on an infant. If so, use pediatric pads if available. Otherwise, use adult pads.

### Must See

- AED applied, power on: expose chest – shave and dry if necessary
- Appropriate positioning of electrodes and connection to defibrillator
- Appropriate response to voice prompts and machine indicators
- Victim cleared for analysis ensuring no motion or contact with others. Visual check and “all clear” stated for analysis and shock
- AED prompts followed: sequence of analyze – shock/no shock – followed immediately by 2 min. of CPR until EMS takes over treatment or victim shows signs of life (AED remains on until EMS takes over)