



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

Off-Location Trip Standard

Lifesaving Society Standard Approved by the Ontario Board of Directors, January 2010

Standard

The ratio of certified staff to participants will be in keeping with the Ontario Health Regulations. To maintain ratios, assistant lifeguards may be employed. Recognized assistant lifeguard certifications are Bronze Cross and Distinction. Assistant lifeguards may never outnumber lifeguards supervising an aquatic facility/environment/activity. The following chart outlines acceptable ratios:

Number of bathers on deck and in the pool	<u>Minimum</u> number of lifeguards and assistant lifeguards on duty
0–30	1
31–100	2
101–200	3
201–300	4
Greater than 300	One additional lifeguard or assistant lifeguard for each additional 100 bathers, or fraction of 100 bathers

The individual on duty as lifeguard will have lifeguarding as their sole responsibility and will not be required to perform any other duties during the time they are assigned as a lifeguard.

Recommendation: Whenever possible, two National Lifeguard (NL) certified staff should be present to back each other up. This will be especially important for off-location overnight trips.

Definitions

Water: Any water environment, be it manufactured or natural, which poses the risk of immersion, e.g., a swimming pool, lake, river, pond, etc.

Camp: A day camp or residential camp, private or public; any organization programming “camp-like” activities for groups of participants.

Off location: Any site other than the “home” site from which the program operates.

Lifeguard: A person appointed by the owner or operator to maintain surveillance over bathers to ensure their safety and well-being.

Background/Rationale

Survey responses from recreation and camp professionals indicated the need for a standard to be established due to the wide variance in standard of care.

The NL certification is the minimum standard for lifeguards in the Ontario Health Regulations; therefore, the NL standard of care must be present. If the location the group is visiting employs NL lifeguards, then that should be sufficient.

The standard of care is inconsistent across the board so an industry standard would be advantageous. Non-aquatic professionals should be educated about safety supervision in aquatic environments.

Note: The Lifesaving Society recognizes that recreational camps are required to follow Regulation 568-90, which states that Bronze Medallion is an acceptable level of training for the supervision of waterfront activities where the holder of the award is a minimum of 16 years of age and has two years of experience in aquatic supervision. It is our belief, however, that this standard should be reviewed. It would be beneficial to those running camps to work toward having staff that are current NL holders to supervise aquatic activities. NL certifies competency in accident prevention and situational analysis that would be vital to the safe management of camp aquatic activities.

Implementation

When camp, program or school personnel are entrusted with the welfare of program participants, they must take every precaution to ensure the safety of those individuals. Logic dictates that when exposed to the hazard of water, whether at their own site or off location, the organizing authorities would endeavor to provide the highest standard of care in managing that risk. It is the responsibility of the camp, program or school to ensure that NL certified staff are present at all times when water activity or risk of immersion exists.

The Lifesaving Society suggests the following methods of implementing this standard:

1. Phase in the requirement. All of the staff has to be NL certified by a certain date in order to work. (This is provided that current legislation does not change requiring the level of certification to increase immediately.)
2. Include an NL certification course as part of your pre-camp training program for aquatic staff.
3. Plan budget strategies now to implement the standard. Will you be able to cover the cost to certify staff? Will the necessary certification be a prerequisite to employment?
4. Ensure that an appropriate protocol for trips is in place to ensure safety and success. This may include, but is not exclusive to:
 - Ensuring a list of participants is left at the point of departure
 - Establishing communication requirements
 - Creating a risk-assessment checklist
 - Pre-planning a route and schedule of events to be left with a supervisor at the point of departure
 - Assessing each participant's swimming ability
 - Creating an emergency response plan
 - Obtaining consent forms and medical information forms for participants
 - Holding a pre-trip meeting with participants and their guardians (if participants are minors)

Note: The Girl Guides of Canada already has such a protocol in place available on their website.

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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