

INQUEST REPORT

Gihon Spring Pool – Daniela Caracciolo

Incident scenario & summary of facts

Name of deceased: Daniela Caracciolo

Date and time of death: July 22, 1987, 5:25 p.m.

Place of death: Etobicoke General Hospital – Toronto

Cause of death: Drowning

Location: Public Pool

Activity at time of incident: Swimming

Daniela Caracciolo was at the public pool with her six-year-old brother and 13-year-old cousin – the cousin was babysitting.

Two lifeguards were on active supervision at approximately 4:20 p.m., one scanning the deep section and the other scanning the shallow section. A floating line separates the two sections.

Between 4:20-4:25 p.m., the cousin lost sight of Daniela and started to look for her in a panic.

At 4:25 p.m. there was a whistle to clear the pool for another group starting at 4:30 p.m. The lifeguards were distracted by clearing procedure and the disruptive behaviour of three 17-year-old boys in the deep section of the pool.

When the pool was cleared of swimmers, one lifeguard found Daniela at the bottom of the pool, at the west wall near the floating line. The lifeguard started resuscitation attempts immediately, first mouth-to-mouth, then CPR.

The ambulance arrived in about 5 to 6 minutes and rushed the victim to Etobicoke General Hospital. Daniela was pronounced dead at Etobicoke General at 5:25 p.m.

JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. At all indoor and outdoor public swimming pools, during the public swim, children seven years of age or under must be accompanied by, and be under the direct supervision of a responsible person no less than 16 years of age.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society does not endorse this recommendation. In Section 19 of the Society's *Guide to Ontario Public Pools Regulation*, the Society states that an admittance policy should be established as part of safe operating procedures and communicated to the public through signs.

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 under 10 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 two 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.

2. Children who do not meet the height requirement of being 6 inches above the shallow end depth must not be admitted during public swim times.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society does not endorse this recommendation. An admission policy based on the swimming ability of children is a better indicator of how a child will react in a distress situation. The ability to meet the height requirement does not adequately indicate how the child will react, nor does it protect the child from deep water drowning.

3. An assistant should be placed at the entrance gate to ensure age and height requirements are enforced.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society endorses this recommendation. This is a facility-specific recommendation. All staff should be responsible for ensuring the admission policy of the facility is maintained at all times. Additional staff responsible for such enforcement is helpful where possible, especially during busy swims when lifeguards are unable to closely monitor the admission of children.

4. Maintain pool clearing procedures with all lifeguards on deck.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society endorses this recommendation. There was a lot of confusion at the time of the pool clearing that made the lifeguard response more difficult. All staff should be trained in proper emergency procedures.

The Society's guide *Alert: Lifeguarding in Action* makes reference to the R.I.D. factors in a drowning: (a failure to **R**ecognize the signs of distress or drowning, **I**ntrusion of non-lifeguard duties on a lifeguard's primary task – preventative lifeguarding, and **D**istract from surveillance duties). These factors should be reviewed to ensure the staff is aware that combinations of these factors increase the chances of a drowning.

5. Any lines at the bottom of the pool should not be more than 6 inches wide.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society endorses this recommendation and recommends that lines painted or tiled on the pool bottom be dotted black lines, or outlines of lines.

6. For disciplinary purposes, no less than one male lifeguard should be on duty at all times.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society does not endorse this recommendation. Instead, all staff should receive additional training in the management of difficult people. The Society offers the *Aquatic Supervisor Training* (AST) program, and recommends there be at least one lifeguard on duty with this certification at all times.

7. All regulatory signs should be posted outside and inside the pool area.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society endorses this recommendation. The Ontario Health Regulations state that several signs are required inside the pool area including:

- No person having a communicable disease or open sores on his or her body shall enter the pool.
- No person shall bring a glass container onto the deck or into the pool.
- No person shall pollute the water in the pool in any manner, and spitting, spouting of water and blowing the nose in the pool or on the deck are prohibited.
- No person shall engage in boisterous play in or about the pool.
- The maximum number of bathers permitted on the deck and in the pool at any time.
- The location of a telephone that is available for emergency use.

The Society also recommends that pools post signs to educate patrons about admission policies and safety procedures including:

- Admittance policy
- Medical conditions policy
- Same gender change room policy

See Section 19 of the Society's *Guide to Ontario Public Pools Regulation*.

8. Signs should be posted that say lifeguards have the authority to expel and suspend persons threatening the safety of others swimmers.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society does not endorse this as a requirement for all swimming pools in Ontario. However, operators may choose to address specific problems at the pool with specific pool signage.

9. All rules and regulations must be clearly stated in all pamphlets, brochures and other publications that the general public receives.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society endorses this recommendation. Public notices should clearly indicate all regulations outside the swimming area.

10. A water safety program should be introduced into the education system at the Grade 1 level.

Lifesaving Society Notes

The Society endorses this recommendation. The Society's "Swim-to-Survive Standard" for all children defines the essential minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. For more information, contact the Lifesaving Society.

11. Give consideration to the following:

- a) Install handrails around the shallow end of the pool.
- b) All playing equipment such as inner tubes, float boards, etc., should be banned during public swim hours.

Lifesaving Society Notes

- a) The Society does not endorse this recommendation. There is no safety value of such a handrail.
- b) The Society does not endorse this recommendation. The use of playing equipment should be encouraged by the facility, but controlled by either direct supervision, or by establishing standards for its use during public swims.