LIFESAVING SOCIETY®
SOCIÉTÉ DE SAUVETAGE
The Lifeguarding Experts
Les experts en surveillance aquatique

Lifesaving Society Canada
1145 Hunt Club Road, Suite 001- Ottawa, Ontario K1V 0Y3
Telephone: 613-746-5694
E-mail: experts@lifesaving.ca Web: www.lifesaving.ca

Safety Standards
for Canadian Swimming Pools and Waterfronts
Swimming Pool Standard

Lifeguard In-Service Training

Standard

Every owner and every operator should plan, document and conduct regular and ongoing lifeguard training.

Definitions

Owner: the person or corporation who is the owner of an aquatic facility.

Operator: the trained individual designated by the owner to be responsible for the day to day operation of an aquatic facility.

Lifeguard: a person with a current National Lifeguard certification appointed by the owner or operator to supervise bather safety while bathers are on the deck or beach, or in the pool or body of water.

Rationale

- Ongoing in-service training improves proficiency and helps to ensure that lifeguards maintain the judgement, knowledge, skills and physical capability required to perform their duties.
- Ongoing in-service training reinforces the risks associated with the facility, allows lifeguards to become familiar with emergency procedures, and provides practical experience for lifeguards to work as a team.
- Ongoing in-service training is essential to maintaining lifeguard skills [1].
- Lifeguard training agencies support the need for ongoing in-service training. The United States Lifeguard Standard Coalition final report and the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC) agree that lifeguard skills need to be refreshed as often as possible [2] [3].

- Physical skills practice is necessary to develop an understanding of how to apply knowledge and identify various needs in an emergency situation. During skills practice, an instructor can provide individualized learning approaches, corrective feedback, and lead simulations and scenarios.
- Lifeguards should be competent in lifesaving skills, swimming, and the most current methods of resuscitation. Recertification should be undertaken at regular intervals, and practical rescue and resuscitation skills should be practiced frequently. Both fitness and technical knowledge are required.
- Research on CPR skill retention showed significant skill degradation within the first year after training. Many studies concluded that CPR skills deteriorated after 6 months [1], while others show retention loss after only 3 months [4/5]. Studies suggest a rapid deterioration of psychomotor skills post-training (as early as two weeks), with a slower, but progressive loss of CPR knowledge [6].
- Several studies showed improved retention if a brief refresher is given at 6-12 months [1/2/3]. To improve skill retention, data suggests that repetition may have greater impact than the number of days since last trained [6]. Studies also suggest that brief refreshers (e.g. semi-annual), as short as 30 minutes, improved retention [8] and that refreshers held more frequently and at shorter intervals increased trainee self-assessed confidence [1/9].

Implementation

- Training should include CPR practice, reconfirmation of National Lifeguard skills, team work and procedures or activities specific to the facility.
    - Training can take different forms to include a series of questions, quizzes, problems, in water simulations, technical practices, web-based scenarios, video, text, posters, etc. [6].
    - Simulations should be designed to elicit physical responses that show knowledge, judgement and ability - allow for as much realistic practice as possible. For psychomotor skills, training should emphasize repetition rather than various scenarios of different items.
- At a minimum, all lifeguards should participate in CPR skill training every 6 months.
- A physical performance test should be undertaken annually to include the 400 metre swim in 10 minutes [1].
- At a minimum, training should include a review of the following items once a year [1/2/3/10/11/12]:
    - Practical application of facility safety and supervision plan (rotations, coverage zones, zone-specific variances, scanning techniques, vigilance awareness, emergency equipment, facility information, site-specific hazards, etc.).
    - Procedures (emergency, minor/major incident, mandatory pool shut down situations, evacuation, communication, reception of groups of children, missing person procedures, facility specific procedures, etc.).
    - Contamination response plan (fecal, vomit, blood). Information about recreational water illness transmission.

    - Chemical hazards to include pool chemical handling, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and chemical storage (WHMIS 2015).
    - Regulatory issues (federal and provincial/territorial legislation, Lifesaving Society standards).
    - Use of remote monitoring systems if applicable.
    - Self-rescue/self-care to include ability to escape from grips, sun exposure awareness and Critical Incident Stress Management.
- Training should include adapting lifesaving skills and competencies to the specific facility such as its [13]:
    - amenities (water slide, diving board, wide inflatable, ramps, stairs, etc.),
    - activities (lane swim, public swim, courses, competitions, etc.),
    - design (number of pools, glare on water, obstructions to sightlines, etc.).
    - clients (New Canadians, disabled, athletes, etc.).
- Lifeguards with less experience and on-going training should receive training at a higher frequency than what is suggested above [6].
- Pool owner/operators must keep records of ongoing in-service training for at least seven years (which must be led by a competent instructor in the matter), to include [2/5/14]:
    - Content of training
    - Date of training
    - Attendance
    - Duration of training
    - Name of the instructor(s)
    - Demonstration of test-ready skills for each trainee

References

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[5] World Health Organization, "Preventing drowning: an implementation guide", p. 52. World Health Organization, Geneva, 2017.

[6] D. G. Anderson, CPR and First Aid Skill Retention (p. 10, 113, 115), Abbotsford: Workers' Compensation Board of B.C., 2008.

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[9] International Life Saving Federation, Medical Position Statement - MPS 11 : Critical CPR skills for lifeguard, Belgium: International Life Saving Federation, 2016.

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[11] Royal Life Saving Society Canada, Alert: Lifeguarding in Action (2nd Edition) Chapter 10, Ontario: Royal Life Saving Society Canada, 2016.

[12] Lifesaving Society Ontario Branch's, Standards Journal 1 (p. 29), Toronto: Lifesaving Society, 2001.

[13] Lifesaving Society, National Lifeguard : award guide, Ontario: Lifesaving Society, 2012.

[14] Bureau du coroner du Québec, "A-165122", p. 7. Montréal, 2010.

[15] Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016 Model Aquatic Health Code (2nd Edition), Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016.

Approval

- Approved by the Lifesaving Society Canada Board of Directors on 18 March 2019.

Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society Canada's National 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 Canada's National Safety Standards do not replace or supersede local, provincial/territorial or federal 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.