

Emergency Communication Systems

Lifesaving Society Standard Approved by the Ontario Board of Directors, January 2024

Standard

Operators should ensure the facility's emergency communication system is in place and staff are trained in its use during an emergency. In addition, the operator should have written policies for cell phone use when the facility's primary communication system is not functioning.

Definitions

Cell phone: A phone that is not attached by wire or lines through the ground.

Land line: A phone that is attached by wire or lines through the ground.

Locally based: The cell phone's base phone number and hook up is located in the same region where the phone is being used. The EMS dispatcher and the cell phone base should be in the same region.

Two-way radio: A handheld device that allows for distance two-way communication but cannot dial out to obtain help.

Background/Rationale

In recent years the use of cell phones as emergency backup phones at swimming pools and wading pools has increased. They are also a distraction if used by staff while on duty. Having a policy for their use in the operation of an aquatic facility will enhance safety.

Implementation

The preferred communication device for a Class A pool is in this order:

1. Land line.
2. Affiliate provided cell phone that is locally based and used only as a backup if land line is severed temporarily; the cell phone must be checked to ensure it is fully charged and a fully charged back up battery must also be present.

A record of the Daily Phone Check to ensure that the phone is in good working order prior to opening needs to be kept as per Ontario Health Regulations (Section 16).

The preferred communication device for a Class B or Wading Pool is in this order:

1. Land Line.
2. Affiliate provided cell phone that is locally based and used only as a backup if land line is severed temporarily: the cell phone must be checked to ensure it is fully charged and a fully charged back up battery must also be present.
3. An affiliate provided two-way radio that is linked to a person with a land line that could call EMS to ensure reliable contact.

A record of the Daily Phone Check to ensure that the phone is in good working order prior to opening needs to be kept as per Ontario Health Regulations (Section 16). The Lifesaving Society recommends operators include this position in their facility policy and procedures manual, and staff handbooks.

All staff should review this position and its application at least once a year during staff training sessions, or better, update and refresher sessions should be scheduled regularly throughout the year. A training record should be maintained listing aquatic staff who have participated in such training.

References

- *Canadian Lifesaving Manual*
- *Alert: Lifeguarding in Action*
- Ontario Health Regulation 565

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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