



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

Breaks from Direct Supervision

Lifesaving Society Standard Approved by the Ontario Board of Directors, June 2007

Standard

Lifeguards and Assistant Lifeguards

After each two consecutive hours or less of direct supervision of swimmers, every lifeguard and assistant lifeguard should be provided with a break period from the direct supervision of swimmers. A break period should be a minimum of 15 minutes in duration.

During the break period, lifeguards should be on-duty, within call, on the premises and available to assist in emergency situations. While on break from direct supervision, lifeguards may participate in tasks such as maintenance, reception and administration.

Definitions

Direct supervision: an action by a lifeguard or assistant lifeguard where active supervision is being provided of a bather or bathers in a specified area of a swimming facility.

Break period: a period of time specified by an operator where safety supervision is not being provided by aquatic staff.

Background/Rationale

A minimum 15-minute break from direct supervision after a maximum of two hours is a reasonable standard given the nature of the lifeguard's job – the hot, humid environment; the need for high level of concentration and alertness; the continual scanning of the designated area.

While it may be reasonable to follow Ontario Ministry of Labour standards (one half-hour break after five hours of work) for an instructor or coach, this is not conducive for lifeguards to maintain an acceptable level of safety.

Implementation

Aquatic supervisory staff should ensure rotation schedules are established that allow for breaks from direct supervision. These breaks can include off-duty locations in pool office areas where staff are not providing direct supervision but instead may be involved with administrative, maintenance or other duties.

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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