

A photograph of a swimming pool's edge, showing blue mosaic tiles and two metal handrails. The background is a solid blue with white wavy lines.

# Swimming Pool Safety Guidelines







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# Table of Contents

|   |           |  |           |
|---|-----------|--|-----------|
| Abbreviations                             | ii        | <b>7. Pool Features</b>  | <b>34</b> |
| <b>Foreword</b>                           | <b>1</b>  | Swimming Pool Covers   | 39        |
| <b>Introduction</b>                       | <b>2</b>  | Lane Ropes   | 39        |
| The Purpose of these Guidelines           | 3         | Lane Swimming  | 39        |
| Philosophy                                | 3         | <b>8. Pool Users' Equipment</b>                                | <b>42</b> |
| How to use these Guidelines               | 4         | Swimming Goggles   | 42        |
| <b>1. Risk Assessment</b>                 | <b>6</b>  | Play Equipment   | 43        |
| Risk and Hazards                          | 7         | <b>9. Use of Electrical Equipment at Swimming Pools</b>        | <b>48</b> |
| Structural Considerations                 | 7         | <b>10. Diving</b>  | <b>50</b> |
| Safeguarding Children Considerations      | 8         | General Public   | 51        |
| <b>2. Working in the pool environment</b> | <b>10</b> | Structured and Programmed Swimming                             | 51        |
| Lifeguards                                | 10        | Diving Boards and Platforms                                    | 51        |
| Further Supervision Considerations        | 15        | <b>11. Safeguarding the Welfare and Protection of Children</b> | <b>54</b> |
| Teaching and Coaching                     | 16        | Child Admission Policy   | 56        |
| Qualifications and Ratios                 | 16        | Minimum recommendation for Non-Programmed Activities           | 57        |
| Teachers' Responsibilities                | 17        | Minimum recommendation for Programmed Activities               | 57        |
| The Assistant Teacher                     | 18        | <b>12. Responsibilities of Pool Operators</b>                  | <b>60</b> |
| Licensing and CPD                         | 18        | <b>References</b>  | <b>62</b> |
| Working Conditions                        | 18        | <b>Useful Contacts</b>   | <b>62</b> |
| <b>3. First Aid Provision</b>             | <b>20</b> | <b>Appendix:</b>   | <b>63</b> |
| <b>4. Safety Equipment</b>                | <b>22</b> | Risk Assessments   | 63        |
| <b>5. Communications</b>                  | <b>24</b> |  |           |
| Safety Signs                              | 25        |  |           |
| Normal Operation Plans                    | 27        |  |           |
| Mobile Phones                             | 27        |  |           |
| <b>6. Emergency Action Plans</b>          | <b>30</b> |  |           |
| Faecal Fouling                            | 31        |  |           |

## Abbreviations

|  |  |
|--|--|
| AED: Automated External Defibrillator                | ILS (E): International Life Saving (Europe)  |
| BLS: Basic Life Support                              | ILAM: The Industry Body for Sports, Fitness, Aquatic Facilities, Outdoor Sector, Spas and Wellness |
| CPD: Continuing Professional Development             | ISO: International Standards Organisation  |
| DP: Designated Person                                | ISRM: Institute of Sport and Recreation Management   |
| DLP: Designated Liaison Person                       | IWS: Irish Water Safety  |
| EAP: Emergency Action Plan                           | NOP: Normal Operations Plan  |
| EMS: Emergency Services                              | CEN: Comité Européen de Normalisation (European Committee for Standardisation)                     |
| FINA: Federation Internationale de Natation Amateurs | PA: Public Address   |
| HSA: Health and Safety Authority (Ireland)           | SI: Swim Ireland   |
| HSE: Health and Safety Executive (UK)                |  |
| ILS: International Life Saving                       |  |



# Foreword



This is the second edition of Swimming Pool Safety Guidelines. It has been made possible thanks to the co-operation of three leading National Bodies, concerned with safety in swimming, lifesaving, and pool management standards. Jointly, the three organisations have a desire for increased use of all available swimming pool facilities within the industry to the highest standards, thus benefiting all users of these facilities.

Irish Water Safety is a voluntary, statutory body responsible for the promotion of water safety in Ireland. Swim Ireland is the national governing body of swimming in Ireland. ILAM is the industry body for sports, fitness, aquatic facilities, outdoor sector, spas and wellness.

Swimming and Lifesaving are life skills giving safe access to other aquatic activities and employment opportunities nationwide.

Professional, voluntary and recreational users have a shared responsibility for safety and the three Organisations that have contributed to this Code of Practice are fully cognisant of this fact. Therefore it is important that all persons using a Swimming Pool are aware of and comply with these guidelines, and it is recommended to all users including school groups, clubs, swimming and life saving classes, and other recreational users.

We are pleased to note the expertise of the many individuals within the three organisations who have contributed to this Swimming Pool Safety Guidelines code of practice. We are confident that the revised publication will provide the leisure pool industry with guidelines and procedures that encompass rules of best practice drawn from many sources at national and international level. The adoption of these Guidelines by pool operators, managers, pool lifeguards and other employees will ensure a safe environment for all within a safe pool environment.

It is important that swimming pool operators, both public and private, accept that the document does not replace the responsibility to have a Safety Statement prepared, based on written and recorded Risk Assessments and similarly, when complying with Health and Safety Statements. However, our joint determination is that this publication will become the standard industry reference and an important reference when dealing with the responsibility attached to the management and supervisory duties associated with swimming pools, thus ensuring the safety of all users of such facilities.

**Frank J. Nolan**, Chairman, Irish Water Safety

**Clare Mc Grath**, President, Swim Ireland

**Susan Grady**, President, ILAM

## Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of the Swimming Pool Safety Guidelines proudly brought to you through the co-operation of three leading organisations that all contribute to ensuring safety within the Aquatic Environment.



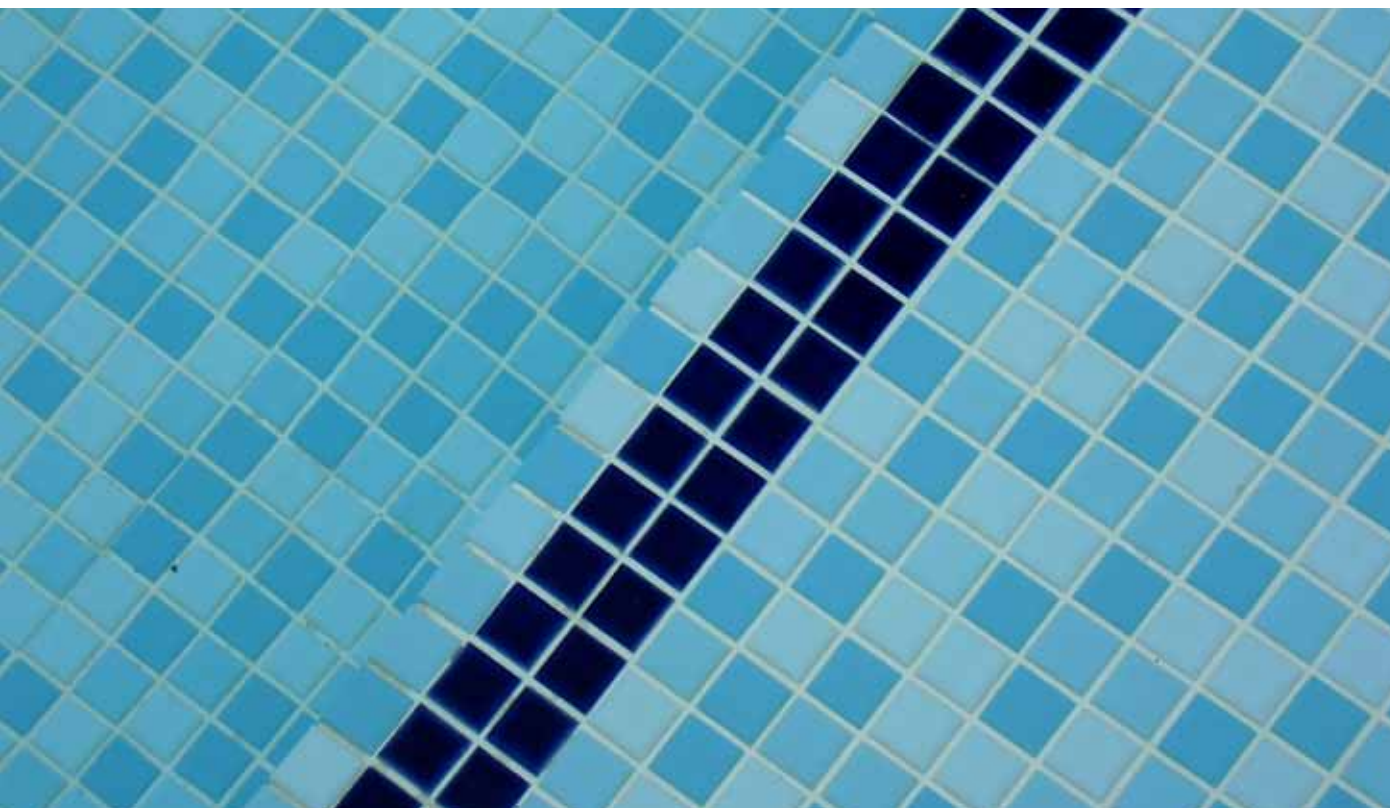
These guidelines have been revised and redeveloped with the support of Volunteers and staff across the three organisations **Irish Water Safety (IWS)**, **Swim Ireland (SI)** and **ILAM**, the Industry Body for Sports, Fitness, Aquatic Facilities, Outdoor Sector, Spas and Wellness.



Since the implementation of Irish Water Safety's Guidelines in 2007, the industry has grown and developed and advanced in its thinking and it is vital that these guidelines are monitored and reviewed on a continuous basis to keep pace with the industry. These guidelines detail the minimum requirements that a pool facility should possess in order to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to ensure a happy and safe experience for all in the water.



The 2010 Guidelines have drawn upon the knowledge and expertise of many and will contribute greatly to safety in all Irish swimming pools as we move into 2010 and beyond.



### The Purpose of these Guidelines

Swimming and water safety are life-saving skills, which provide thousands of people with the means to enjoy Ireland's aquatic environment in a healthy, enjoyable and safe manner.

Although swimming pools (which should at all times be lifeguarded) offer a greater level of safety, the risk of accidents happening remains ever present. This risk is all the more prevalent with the recent upsurge in the number of leisure centres and pools opening in Ireland and the number of adults and children visiting these venues. Therefore the public has a duty of care for themselves and those within their charge when visiting pools.

The Leisure sector on the island of Ireland is experiencing rapid growth, with more than five hundred swimming pools, public, private and commercial operating in the Republic, ranging from the small hotel leisure or spa pool to the large water parks catering to thousands of visitors weekly.

There has been recent recognition that physical activity has a significant positive impact on the health of the nation. Participating in swimming continues to be one of the population's favourite pastimes, as referenced within research carried out by the Irish Sports Council and the ERSI (2007, 2009). The predicted future growth will more than likely continue as more people enjoy the benefits of swimming and water activities.

Any swimming pool in Ireland, open to the public, to residents or members, has to be managed in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. There is a duty of care under this Act to ensure that the quality of swimming & spa pools is managed at safe levels and that bathers can expect trained, competent staff and a safe hygienic bathing environment. The pool guidelines emphasise the dual approach of awareness and prevention. These guidelines provide Pool Managers with comprehensive criteria and the information they require to ensure their pools are as safe as possible.

### Philosophy

Although swimming pools provide us with a safer place to swim than open water, needless deaths still occur. These are unacceptable when one considers the controlled environment of a swimming pool. Hazards/risks which have been associated with past deaths or serious injury, include the following:

- Inadequate supervision. This includes the lifeguard being absent, failure to identify a person in difficulty or inadequate response in an emergency.
- Health related issues at time of accident e.g. heart conditions, poor vision etc.
- Alcohol or food consumed before swimming.
- Youth and inexperience.
- Weak and non-swimmers straying out of their depth.
- Unauthorised access to swimming pools.
- Unsupervised diving activities.
- Diving into insufficient water depths.
- Dangerous behaviour.
- Misuse of equipment.
- Cloudy pool water, which affects visibility of the pool bottom.
- The level of qualification of staff.



In order to ensure our swimming facilities are as safe as possible, the philosophy behind these guidelines is that we would encourage operators to adopt a dual approach. This will include the following elements:

1. Awareness of the hazards and risks.
2. Prevention within the swimming pool.

This is the primary supervisory function of staff tasked with that responsibility, such as the lifeguard, but it can be improved through the education of bathers regarding safe practices and behaviour. Notices, signs, appropriate clauses in user contracts and oral reminders will all aid the philosophy of Preventative Life Guarding.

These guidelines will highlight for pool operators and those working in and around swimming pools, some of the dangers associated with modern swimming facilities and precautions that should be taken to minimise possible risks.

These guidelines refer to operational issues in relation to modern swimming pool facilities, their immediate environs and associated facilities. While the planning and construction of these facilities is not directly referred to, it is anticipated that planners will refer to these guidelines to ensure best practice and that ongoing safety issues receive priority attention.

Central to these guidelines is the concept of Risk Assessment. The necessity for regular risk assessment is highlighted throughout this document. It is central to the effective management of health and safety from a staff and user point of view.

An awareness of possible risks will ensure that staff are better able to act in a proactive manner. This awareness also ensures that steps are taken to remove or decrease risks.

Any pool will be safer if bathers are aware of potential hazards and act responsibly. These guidelines will outline measures which will help this process.

### How to use these Guidelines

All pool operators are encouraged to read and adopt the principles as laid out in this document. It is essential that the criteria laid out in this document is implemented in every pool in Ireland.

It is important that not only is there self-regulation within the industry, but that there is an extension of the use of these guidelines to all user groups and everyone has a responsibility to work hand-in-hand to ensure that the minimum standards are put in place.

These guidelines provide you with practical help for implementation. There is trained help and support within the organisations that have brought you these guidelines.

Contact details for these organisations can be found on Page 62.





# one Risk Assessment



## 1. Risk Assessment

**The concept of Risk Assessment underlies all safety issues within these guidelines. The completion of regular Risk Assessments is a legal requirement under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.**

A risk assessment will ensure the operator considers all hazards and risks associated with the pool.

A “**hazard**” is anything which may cause harm.

A “**risk**” is a chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard.

A proper risk assessment has five steps. These are as follows:

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Step 1</b> | Identify the hazards.   |
| <b>Step 2</b> | Decide who might be harmed and how.   |
| <b>Step 3</b> | Assess the risks and take preventative action.                                |
| <b>Step 4</b> | Record the findings.  |
| <b>Step 5</b> | Carry out regular reviews and revise actions taken if judged to be necessary. |

The above five items should be incorporated into the facility's Normal Operational Plan (NOP) and Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with necessary control measures outlined.

Some of the key areas that feature within your risk assessment will include:

- Safeguarding Children.
- Workforce.
- Structural.
- Environmental.

All of the above are referenced throughout the document.

### Risk and Hazards

More information regarding the completion of Risk Assessments will be found in the IWS/ILAM Ireland Pool Lifeguard manual and from ILAM. Risk Assessments and the carrying out of risk assessments are also covered on a number of courses delivered by all three organisations and you will be able to access trained personnel who can help advise in carrying these out so they are effective and meaningful.

### Structural Considerations

The following are a number of guidelines which should be considered at the design stage of a modern facility. It is at the design stage that one has an opportunity to minimise potential risks.

- The prevention of unofficial access to a premises should receive priority attention because of the extra dangers associated with swimming pools. This should receive a higher priority in the case of outdoor pools. Surrounding walls or railings should be of adequate height where the latter type of pool facility is concerned.
- Pool covers may be used to support the prevention of unofficial access. These should not be considered safety features unless they are installed in such a way that no one can get underneath the cover.
- Access on to the poolside should be nearer the shallow end and include a barrier between pool entrance and pool edge.
- Entries at or near the deep end should be prevented at all times. A warning notice and/or a guard rail should be provided.
- The pool floor gradient should also receive attention. Sudden drops and/or steep inclines can present particular dangers for users. A slip resistant and non-abrasive finish should be provided on the end walls of the pool.
- Changes in depths should be clearly identified by the use of colour contrasted materials e.g. tiles or patterned finishes. The colours used should not reduce the ability to see a body on the pool bottom.
- The pool tank edge should be colour contrasted with the pool water to ensure it is visible to those in and out of the water.
- All pools should be designed with adequate storage space to ensure equipment that is not in use can be kept in a safe place. This will ensure that pool equipment will not create obstacles in and around the pool area and will prevent unsupervised use.
- Pool floors and the surrounds should be surfaced with non-slip materials and there should be appropriate signs in place to discourage running.
- Steps/ladders should be provided at the deep and shallow ends of the pool to ensure safe entry and exit. These can be permanent or removable. Attention should be paid to their design and location, to ensure they are safe, accessible and do not present an obstacle to safe supervision by the lifeguards. They should be fitted with handrails on both sides and these should protrude 750-950 mm above the pool surface. Steps should be flat and not tubular.
- Steps, handrails and ladders must be of sufficient strength and be firmly fixed to the poolside and should have treads which are slip resistant and have no sharp edges.
- Disability access should also be included in all pool designs e.g. ramps, officially recommended hoists.
- All ramps should have a slip resistant surface and handrails on both sides.
- Where it is intended to offer diving as an activity or as part of an activity, particular attention must be paid to water depths, height of the diving platform and forward clearance.
- Lighting should ensure that the bottom of the pool is clearly visible and that all signs can always be seen and read.
- Underwater lighting will help decrease the surface glare effects of other facility roof lights.
- Emergency lighting should be provided and regularly checked. A lighting failure can lead to panic. Emergency power back up should be available.
- Emergency exits from the poolside should be included in all pool designs.

- Where activities of a robust nature, e.g. water or canoe polo, may be permitted in the swimming pool, all lights should be protected against breakage.
- Where features, such as wave machines/slides, are being included in the design, the inclusion of built in recessed areas must be considered. While handrails and ropes are standard features included to assist bathers in and out of the water, they may become hazards in situations where bathers could become entrapped or thrown against them.
- Emergency stop buttons located near to or on the poolside will have a positive effect on general safety, where other features are to be included.
- All outlets/ inlets should be fitted with grilles which will not interfere with their efficient operation, but which will prevent the entrapment of fingers, arms etc. Such grids should only be removable mechanically and should remain tightly secured at all times. Overflow channel grids must of course be easily detachable for regular cleaning purposes.
- Anti vortex covers should be fitted where possible or pressure sensitive relief valves.
- Where possible the amount of glare caused by the glazing should be minimised, as this may affect the view of lifeguards and other users.
- A specifically defined First Aid Station should be designated. Full visibility of the pool from such a station is also desirable.
- For safety and teaching purposes, it is desirable to provide handrails on the walls of the pool, just above the water surface.
- A separate plant room should be included in all facilities to house and store the chemicals. Operators must undertake regular checks for corrosion. Adequate ventilation should be provided in this room. Legal requirements regarding the need for correct labelling must be followed.
- It is required that at least one member of staff is qualified with a ILAM National Swimming & Spa Pool Operators Certificate (NSSPC). They will have the responsibility for all necessary chemical adjustments.
- Room space is recommended to be made available within the facility for ongoing staff training.

### Safeguarding Children Considerations

Guidelines included in the appendix must be considered throughout all risk assessments with regards to the safeguarding of children within the Pool facility. These must always be given paramount priority.









## 2. Working in the pool environment

### Lifeguards

**Qualification:** All lifeguards shall hold a Pool Lifeguard qualification, recognised by IWS and ILAM. Other Lifeguard qualifications may be recognised and assimilated by IWS. Individuals should contact IWS (See Page 62)

Such qualifications shall contain two specific elements:

- Foundation knowledge
- Core skills e.g. swimming, life saving and basic life support.

In addition to the above qualification, lifeguards must undertake site-specific training, in-service and ongoing staff training.

**Age:** Be a minimum of 16 years of age.

**Employment:** In addition to the standard interview procedure, all applicants for the post of lifeguard must be tested for their fitness and ability to perform different types of rescues. The ability to perform Basic Life Support and to care for those with suspected spinal injuries shall also be tested.

It is also essential that pool operators take suitable measures to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with people aged under 18 as these make up a large part of the user numbers in many swimming pool facilities. History of current and potential new employees should be checked.

**Vetting: Vetting forms a crucial part of the recruitment process of the workforce.**

Vetting is a requirement for **all personnel** who are working with or in contact with and who have the responsibility for the management of children and vulnerable adults.

You are advised to refer to the policy of the member organisations (ILAM, IWS and or SI). In addition it is important to note that vetting is required for under 18s, only with permission of parents or guardians. For further information you are referred to the chapter regarding Child Protection.

**Duties of the lifeguard:** While these may vary between facilities, the following are functions, which shall be included:

- Correct supervision of the pool.
- Exercise an appropriate level of control over users.
- Apply the principles of preventative lifeguarding.
- Take appropriate action during incidents.
- Perform rescues.
- Treat suspected cases of suspected spinal injury.
- Provide First Aid, within the scope of one's qualifications.
- Provide Basic Life Support if necessary.
- Provide advanced Life Support if trained to do so e.g. AED, Oxygen etc

**CPD:** All lifeguards should undergo suitable training on a monthly basis, under the supervision of suitably qualified personnel, to ensure skills are retained and improved. The IWS/ILAM pool lifeguard manual can be used as a useful reference.



This training should primarily involve staged scenarios during which the facility's E.A.P. is tested and reviewed if necessary. Observation and surveillance techniques should also be part of such training scenarios.

This training must be recorded as evidence of ongoing professional development. Written evidence is the most useful way of tracking staff training and it may be required or relied upon at a later stage.

**First Aid:** While it is not a general requirement that all Lifeguards should have an Occupational First Aid qualification, they should however have an awareness of basic First Aid.

IWS and ILAM recommend that lifeguards receive training and qualifications in other relevant areas, including First Aid, use of AED and Oxygen equipment. Such training should also fall within the requirements of CPD.

**Physical and Mental Fitness:** is the responsibility of the individual, but ongoing regular training sessions are advised, in addition to the requirements of CPD. A suggested method for self-monitoring is outlined in the IWS document "CPD for Lifeguards". Lifeguards should be tested for their ability to surface dive to the deepest part of the pool, if this is included within their area of supervision.

In addition, member organisations can provide help and support to individuals who need their Physical fitness and swimming skills developed.

Lifeguards are also personally responsible for issues such as hydration, nutrition, warmth and sun protection (if working at an outdoor facility). Lack of attention to these aspects of general health will greatly impair the lifeguards' ability to perform their duties.

The facility's risk assessments shall consider the lifeguard's standard of hearing and vision to ensure they are appropriate to the duties being undertaken.

**Dress:** This should follow the internationally accepted guidelines (International Lifesaving Federation).

- Tracksuit bottoms, shorts and skirts should be red.
- Tops should be yellow.
- Uniforms should be appropriate to the situation, offering the lifeguard comfort while also ensuring that movement is not hampered.

**Communications:** Lifeguards are at the front line of customer education with regard to safe practices when using the pool and adjacent facilities. Therefore all lifeguards should have good communication skills.



Lifeguards should carry whistles for communication with other team members and pool users.

There should be a clearly defined alarm system in operation within the facility. This can be in the form of sirens, public address systems or other alarms.

Lifeguards should also have a direct line of communication in the event of an emergency. This can take the form of a telephone, two-way radio or alarm push buttons. The location of such an item of communications should ensure easy access for the lifeguard and immediate response by other facility staff and the EMS.

Communication systems shall be part of the NOP of all swimming facilities with specific guidelines in all EAPs.

The effectiveness of such systems should be continuously monitored with performance standards specified. Based on rehearsal and in line with new developments regular reviews of these systems should be undertaken.

**Lifeguard Numbers:** Irish Water Safety and ILAM recommends that at least one appropriately qualified lifeguard should be on duty at all times within the pool area, regardless of the level or type of activity taking place. When there is only one lifeguard on duty, suitably trained back-up must be available and easily contacted.

**Non Programmed activities:** Constant poolside supervision during all non-programmed activities is essential.

Having a qualified lifeguard on duty at all times within the pool area is important when one considers factors which are outside the immediate control of the pool operator. These include the following:

- Patrons may suffer from health problems (cardiovascular, respiratory, disabilities).
- Alcohol or food may have been consumed before swimming.
- Youth and inexperience.
- Weak or non-swimmers may stray out of their depths. Recommended guidelines for out of depth social swimming: swim 15m on front, 15m on back and tread water for one minute.
- Diving or falling into insufficient depths.
- “Responsible persons” in charge may be unaware of the potential dangers associated with aquatic activities.
- Adherence to facility rules regarding hygiene may also be compromised.

**Signs and safety guidelines will not guarantee that appropriate behaviour will be followed.**

**Programmed Activities:** Lifeguard cover during programmed activities is also recommended.





The activity taking place, the standards of those participating, their age, experience and the qualifications of those in charge, must be considered when carrying out the risk assessment. Where those in charge of the activity have a recognised, valid Lifeguard qualification the principles of suitable and immediate back-up must apply.

Regardless of user numbers or activities taking place, accepted international guidelines state that immediate poolside lifeguard supervision is necessary when

- The pool has water deeper than 1.5m.
- The pool water area is greater than 170 square meters.
- Diving from the poolside is allowed.
- There is a poolside feature or equipment posing additional risk.
- There are sudden changes in water depth.
- Where access is not restricted.
- When the pool will be used by children aged under 15 years.
- When crowded conditions are expected.

Due to the wide variety of swimming pool facilities and the many ways in which pools are used, it is difficult to make specific recommendations with regard to lifeguard numbers. General guidelines are made which should be followed after the completion of a “**Risk Assessment**” by the Pool Operators.

The following table outlines minimum recommended lifeguard numbers for different levels of general use in rectangular shaped pools of varying size. The recommended minimum number of lifeguards in busy conditions is also shown.

| Pool Size (m) | Area (m <sup>2</sup> ) | Min No. | Min No. during Busy periods |
|---------------|------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| 20 x 8.5      | 170                    | 1       | 2                           |
| 25 x 8.5      | 212                    | 1       | 2                           |
| 25 x 10       | 250                    | 1       | 2                           |
| 25 x 12.5     | 312                    | 2       | 2                           |
| 33.3 x 12.5   | 416                    | 2       | 3                           |
| 50 x 20       | 1,000                  | 4       | 6                           |

Programmed activities taking place in swimming pools with a large water area may operate under the supervision of fewer lifeguards than that shown in the above table. A written Risk Assessment will be required in such situations. Individuals running these programmed activities should hold the relevant qualifications appropriate to the activity.

Alternatively during busy periods such as the summer holidays, it is a necessity that pool operators carry out regular reviews of the risk assessments that deal with the expected change in customer numbers. Responsibility for the distribution of the facilities maximum bather load during unprogrammed activities will be directed by this risk assessment.

Where pool facilities include special features such as diving boards, wave machines, rivers etc, the number of lifeguards on duty should be increased.

The shape of a swimming pool will also influence the numbers on duty. All parts of the pool should be under the direct supervision of a lifeguard. The figures shown for busy conditions may serve as a useful guideline in such instances.

Fewer lifeguards may be required in pools with a water depth of 1m or less. Conversely, extra supervision may be required if water depths are greater than 2m. An extensive area of water may also require more supervision, regardless of depth. Risk assessments will direct the operator in such instances.

Inappropriate illumination, poor acoustics, glare, poor ventilation, crowded conditions, turbulent waters and cloudy water are all aspects of swimming pools, which should be considered when deciding on appropriate lifeguard numbers.

These factors may also have a negative influence on the efficiency of the lifeguards' supervision (concentration, visibility or audibility). Lifeguard rota and duty structures should be arranged to counteract such negative influences.

Visibility through water will become a problem in pools which are 16m wide or more.

50m pools require extra attention in that visibility through the water and access to users in need of assistance becomes more difficult. Also, a number of different activities may take place in pools of this size at any one time, all with their own lifeguard demands. The importance of thorough Risk Assessments by appropriately trained personnel, with regular reviews must again be stressed.

Where the pool is receiving specialist use, such as lane/fitness swimming, club swimming, advanced swimming classes, then the numbers of lifeguards on duty may be decreased if the risk assessment indicates that the safety of the facility users is not compromised in any way. This risk assessment should also be highly dependant on the type and level of qualification of the leader of the relevant activity e.g. a swimming teacher.

It is essential that all pool operators have clearly documented guidelines for hire to outside organisations. These will be part of the facility's Normal Operational Plan. In such instances, consideration must be taken of the competencies of those in control of the particular activity. It is advised that all such users are familiar and competent in the actions required within the facilities' EAP. Participation in training should be a requirement of all contractual arrangements. Those who take charge of aquatic activities, such as swimming classes, and who have a Pool Lifeguard qualifications can provide an essential part of the team during an emergency. Their qualifications should be considered when carrying out risk assessments. Their presence will also influence the numbers of lifeguards required at any particular time.

**Working Conditions:** Swimming Pools present a number of additional problems when compared to many other working environments. Noise levels, glare, user numbers, types of activities taking place, features on offer and heat can all impinge on the lifeguards' concentration and efficiency, if ignored.

The NOP should clearly outline a system for rotation among lifeguards. This will help to alleviate boredom, will allow for breaks from the supervision of demanding areas, will allow for an increase or decrease of lifeguard numbers in line with expected or current usage and will allow lifeguards to exchange information relevant to the ongoing safety of users. Rotation systems can be time, break or non-poolside duty based.

Where rotation systems exist it is important to ensure that supervision continues during all changeovers.

Lifeguards should be able to scan their area of responsibility within 10 seconds and be able to get to an incident within 20 seconds. This is the internationally recognised practice known as the 10-20 system and is a specific level of response for effective safety in swimming pool facilities. The practice of EAPs will serve as a suitable check on the effectiveness of this system.





The use of a permanent or moveable elevated chair may be helpful to lifeguards. Effective use should be determined by a Risk Assessment.

To ensure the development of an effective team it is recommended that regular team meetings be held and regular practice and review of EAP procedures are undertaken. Part time/temporary staff should also be included in such meetings and practices.

Completion of a recognised Pool Life Guard qualification will ensure an awareness of good practice as part of a team, the importance of helping colleagues at work and possible ways of responding to conflict within the group.

Lifeguard qualifications should be revalidated at least every two years.

### Further Supervision Considerations

A risk assessment will also guide the operator in the levels of supervision or checking required for:

- Showers and other washing facilities.
- Seating.
- Floors.
- Equipment (hair dryers etc).
- Toilets.

Many facilities include some or all of the above as part of the lifeguard's duties. If so, the safety of pool users should not be compromised while such duties are being undertaken. Consideration should also be given to the completion of these extra duties during busy times. This may require higher staffing levels.

### Teaching and Coaching

**Clear Role:** The role of the teacher/coach within aquatics is one that is integral to the delivery of safe and effective activities to the benefit of the users. A teacher/coach holds a very different role to that of a lifeguard. However the teacher/coach and lifeguard should always be encouraged to work as a team to ensure safe practice is being carried out in the water. Where the teacher/coach does not hold a full pool lifeguard qualification there must be a qualified lifeguard on duty.

The same recruitment procedures as referenced earlier in this section should also be used for the recruitment of teachers/coaches. Vetting and advice policies can be sought from the relevant Member organisations. The teacher/coach should abide by the relevant member organisation's guidelines and policies for best practice with respect to safeguarding the welfare of children at all times.

### Qualifications and Ratios

Pool Operators should ensure that best practice is being followed by all users e.g. teacher/pupil ratios.

There are a number of teaching and coaching qualifications that exist and it is important that member organisations should be contacted to advise with regard to the level of qualification of a teacher or coach, and the recommended ratios for particular activities with regards to that level of qualification.

A written risk assessment is necessary to determine specific ratios within each facility.

Factors which must be considered include:

- Qualification of teachers, coaches and helpers.
- Skill level of participants.
- Age of participants.
- Pupil background eg cultural, special needs.
- Water depths.
- Space available for the activity.
- Other water users.
- Safety equipment.
- Learning / teaching aids.
- Emergency back up including lifeguard supervision and first aid.
- Reporting procedures.
- Pool layout eg features



The following are some accepted teacher/pupil ratios, which should apply when all of the above safety factors have been considered. These ratios have been developed with the philosophy of one fully qualified teacher present with the relevant number of participants.

These are recommendations that relate to **programmed activities** with a formal structure, that is, supervised, controlled and continuously monitored from the poolside by an appropriately qualified person(s)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Adult and Infant (Baby) classes   | 12 pairs classified as 1 adult and 1 child 12 :1  |
| Non swimmers and beginners  | 12:1  |
| Improving swimmers  | 20:1  |
| Mixed ability groups  | 20:1  |
| Competent swimmers (able to swim 25 m on front and on back and tread water for 2 minutes) | 20:1  |
| Synchronised swimmers   | 20:1  |
| Diving  | 12: 1 beginners and improver divers<br>15:1 Competitive divers  |
| Water polo training   | 20:1  |
| Aerobics in deep water  | 20:1  |
| Aerobics in shallow water   | 30:1  |
| Competitive swim training   | 30:1  |
| Disabilities swimming   | 8:1 to ratios as above – in guidelines<br><br>This can vary from 1:1 to higher ratios as above.<br><br>Disability type, help available, depth of water will all influence the pupil/teacher ratio. Many disabilities have their own National organisations, from which more specific advice should be sought. |
| Schools swimming  | As above.   |

- The above are guidelines only.
- Risk Assessments will determine more specific ratios, if necessary.
- Safe Supervision for teaching and coaching available from Swim Ireland is a useful reference.
- The relevant National Governing Body can advise on the remit of the individuals qualification on an individual basis. In addition the relevant organisation can also advise on how to carry out a risk assessment for the relevant activities being held, or going to be held, in the facility and how to define the relevant ability levels as referenced above.

### Teachers' Responsibilities

Teachers and coaches must be trained and able to carry out their role in the pool's Emergency Action Plan (EAP). They must ensure that the pupils understand and regularly practise their response in an emergency. The emergency procedures to evacuate the water and summon assistance are practised regularly in accordance with the requirements of the Emergency Action Plan. Safety considerations must always be paramount.

Pool Operators must be able to justify their decisions regarding lifeguard/teacher numbers in a legal and moral context.

### The Assistant Teacher

An individual who holds the first level qualification of swimming teaching/coaching should be viewed by the facility operator as a trainee teacher, and must not have sole responsibility for the delivery of any programmed aquatic activity within a facility. The role of the assistant teacher is to assist a fully qualified teacher/coach.

There is a huge benefit to facility operators in having this teacher as part of the team, as they can provide additional assistance and supervision to help maintain a safe aquatic environment. Whilst the most favourable option is to have all teachers working from the pool deck, some teachers can be used in the water to help a Level Two teacher on dry land.

Recommended ratios for the use of the assistant teacher under the supervision of an appropriately qualified teacher/coach is as follows:

- 4 pupils to 1 Assistant teacher under the supervision of a fully qualified teacher.

This ratio should be reviewed during Risk Assessments on a continuous basis.

### Licensing and CPD

It is important as a pool operator that the teachers/coaches employed should follow regular continuing professional development (CPD) training to ensure that all teachers and coaches stay as up to date as possible with relevant teaching practises and methods to ensure safety at all times especially when working with children. The relevant organisations have education and training teams that can advise on best practise in this regard. A number of CPD modules have been developed and are available through your member organisation.

Both Swim Ireland and the Irish Water Safety offer a licensing scheme for teachers and coaches to follow which provides qualified teachers and coaches with a license to practise.

### Working Conditions

Similarly to lifeguards, swimming teachers also require consideration when working in the swimming pool due to the unique pool environment. Relevant breaks will help a teacher/coach maintain their concentration and efficiency at all times.

# three

## First Aid Provision

### 3. First Aid Provision

A specifically defined first aid station should be adjacent to the swimming pool area of the facility which is easily reached by the Emergency Services (EMS). Its location should be clearly shown on the facility's NOP. First aid equipment should include the following:

- A removable screen or curtain to protect the privacy of the casualty.
- A medical examination couch with blankets and pillows.
- Hot and cold water.
- Good ventilation.
- A nearby toilet.
- Stretcher.
- Chairs.
- Spinal Board.
- AED (Automatic External Defibrillator), Oxygen and Suction Equipment, if staff have been properly trained.
- A fully stocked First Aid kit, with clearly defined restocking levels.

As stated earlier, lifeguards are not required to have a full Occupational First Aid qualification, but they should have a good foundation in First Aid Awareness

IWS and ILAM recommend that all lifeguards should seek to become fully qualified as HSA recognised Occupational First Aiders.





# four Safety Equipment

## 4. Safety Equipment

This can be defined under two headings 1) General and 2) Personal.

**General Safety Equipment:** This should include throwing items such as ring buoys and throw bags/ropes and reaching aids such as poles. A variety of such items should be available and accessible to lifeguards on duty as they have general and specific application. Lifeguards should be able to access a piece of safety equipment in approximately 5 seconds.

All pools should have a minimum of one ring buoy/throw bag and one reaching pole on each side.

The type of Ring Buoy used should follow the recommendations of Irish Water Safety and should be mounted approx. 1.33m high on the walls to ensure clear visibility and access by all including children and those with disabilities.

Ideally lifeguards should always have an item of safety equipment in their possession. This can include any of the above mentioned items such as a rescue tube or can buoy.

Other items of equipment, which should be available and accessible for the working lifeguard include spinal boards, AEDs and Oxygen equipment. Full training in their use must be provided. The recommendations of the relevant training authorities should be followed with regard to re-validation and ongoing-training. Records must be kept by Pool Operators to ensure best practices are followed.

All facilities should have a fully stocked First Aid box. Its location should be clearly identifiable with markings which satisfy Health and Safety Laws. All such boxes should be fully stocked with clearly defined re-stocking levels and a clear procedure as to who is responsible for the re-stocking of items when necessary. The level of First Aid provision and where this will be delivered shall be defined in the facility's NOP.

All safety equipment should be of a type approved by Irish Water Safety and all lifeguards should be trained in its correct use. Practice for the effective and correct use of rescue equipment should be included during staff training as part of staged accident scenarios (EAPs). This equipment should be in good repair and be subject to daily checks which are recorded.

**Personal Safety Equipment:** This should include items such as gloves, masks and protective clothing. The provision of such items is a requirement under Irish Health and Safety Laws.

Communication systems, referred to earlier in this document, should also be included under this heading because many operate as back up to the lifeguard during an emergency. Included here is access to telephones, push button alarm systems, portable radio alarm systems and whistles or bells.

All approved Safety Equipment should be used and stored in accordance with the manufacturers' guidelines and should be checked regularly.

Pool personnel should be trained and familiar with the safe use and storage of this equipment.

Safety equipment should be checked daily and a record made of the outcome of such checks. Any remedial actions required should be recorded.

Leisure facilities should have a clearly defined action plan for the repair and/or replacement of items. This can be part of the facilities NOP.



# five Communications





## 5. Communications

This area has been referred to in earlier sections but it requires specific attention in all modern Swimming Pool facilities.

Areas which shall be attended to include communications between poolside staff, supervisors and staff, the public and facility staff, and with the press and with the Emergency Services.

The facility's NOP should clearly define the existing lines of command. It should also define who is ultimately responsible for issues such as dealing with customers and in particular, communicating with the Press. Normally, this role is fulfilled by the facility manager.

Lifeguards and others responsible for safety should be able to attend to their areas of responsibility without distractions. It will of course be necessary for such personnel to communicate with members of the public and customers but this should be limited and within their areas of responsibility. Unnecessary and prolonged communications are a source of distraction.

Communication with the Emergency Services is a crucial concern within any leisure facility. A clear procedure for call out should be defined and practiced on occasion. This procedure shall define WHO makes the contact and WHEN they make it. All staff members should have a thorough knowledge of how to call the EMS and under what circumstances they should be contacted.

All facilities should have a clearly identifiable telephone which can be used for contacting the EMS. Relevant contact numbers should be clearly displayed.

Lifeguards should have a means of communicating with other facility staff when there is an emergency. This is particularly important when a facility has occasion to have a single guard on duty (refer to earlier section regarding lifeguard numbers). This can take the form of sirens or alarms. Portable 'push button' alarm systems may also be considered.

An audible PA system for communications with facility customers should be in place in all facilities. This will be important in emergencies and for general communications. This system should be checked for efficiency and audibility at regular intervals. This will be necessary when one considers the abrasive effect of some of the chemicals being used in modern swimming pools and other variables, which will influence the acoustics.





Lifeguards should know and practice defined systems for communication between themselves. These can be through the use of whistles, hand signals or buzzers. Again, consideration must be given to the many possible barriers to communications within the swimming pool environment, such as glare, noise and acoustics.

Ireland is now a multi-cultural society. With different languages in use, the use of communications other than verbal is recommended as a solution, particularly as emergency signals. This action will also be suitable for those who may be visually impaired.

Swimming pool facilities must also consider those with hearing problems. This will be achieved through the use of some form of visual communication system combined with other recommended methods.

Emergency lighting, both permanent and incident specific (e.g. flashing) will suit.

- Communication with children should always be conducted in an open environment. A private conversation can be held in a public place which safeguards not only the child but also the adult.

### Safety Signs

Signs fall under the following three categories and should follow the colour scheme recommended by the International Standards Organisation:



- **Prohibition** – indicate activities which are not allowed or show areas where a particular activity will present a danger e.g. diving. Such signs should be on a white circle with red edging and should contain a black pictogram indicating the danger.



- **Warning** – indicate where there may be a danger if some caution is not exercised e.g. changes in depth, slippery surfaces. This type of sign should be on a yellow triangle with a black edge and black symbol.



- **Mandatory** – outline procedures that must be followed in order to ensure customer safety and satisfaction e.g. safe practices when swimming. These should be on a blue circle with white outlined symbols.

Using pictograms will ensure that non-readers understand relevant messages. Pool operators can choose suitable pictograms which will help maintain a safe pool environment in accordance with the International Standards Organisation.

The use of auditory signals can also be used to supplement written signs e.g. to indicate that the wave machine is being turned on. Such signals will also greatly assist the visually impaired.

It is essential that all signs are easily seen and suitably placed in relation to the message being displayed.

Pool operators and lifeguards must ensure that all signs remain free from obstruction e.g. towels, clothing etc. It is also essential that the information displayed on any sign is up to date and accurate. For example, changes to the pool layout may affect the accuracy of information on any particular sign.

All signs should be subject to regular inspections as part of the facility's ongoing risk assessments, with necessary follow up maintenance and updating as required.

Common signs currently in use include the following:

- Water depth.
- Deep end/shallow end.
- Hygiene rules.
- Prohibited activities.
- Use of equipment e.g. fins, buoyancy aids.
- Prohibiting the use of photographic equipment e.g. cameras, camera phones. Signs prohibiting the use of such equipment without proper authorisation should be placed at the entrance to all pools and at other suitable locations throughout the facility.

Regulations for the swimming pool should be placed beside the entrance and must be easily read by visitors. They should also be displayed at other central areas around the pool facility.

Rules and regulations will be facility specific and should be influenced by the facility's written Risk Assessments. A list of standards and common regulations that should be considered for display to the public will include the following:

- Opening and closing times.
- Hygiene rules.
- Use of changing rooms.
- The supervision of young children.
- Use of glass bottles.
- Swimming ability required for specific activities e.g. entry into deep end.
- Use of equipment.
- Chewing gum.
- Use of swimming hats.
- Use of any type of photographic equipment, in line with child protection policy.

In addition, it is recommended that all pools should have rules that forbid running and discourage shouting.

Due to the ever-presence of water on pool floors, slipping is likely if care is not taken.

Shouting, when combined with the acoustics in most swimming pools, can have a negative effect on the lifeguard's concentration and ability to hear relevant emergency signals.

### Normal Operation Plans

It is a legal requirement that all facilities shall have a written operational plan. This outlines the general operation and safety measures of the swimming pool. They shall include the following:

- Line of authority.
- Pool regulations.
- Responsibilities and functions of the various members of staff.
- Details of the pool, to show design, depths, access and other facilities.
- Hazards and how they are to be controlled e.g. diving
- Risks and how they are to be dealt with e.g. slippery floors after cleaning.
- Control of admissions. This should outline maximum bather loads and security arrangements to prevent unauthorised access when the pool is closed or during specific activities.
- All swimming pools should have a clearly defined Child Admission Policy. These are summarised in the next section.
- A minimum water area of 3 sq m per person is recommended. The capacity of the plant water treatment system will also be a key factor when determining maximum bather loads.
- Again, a thorough risk assessment will be necessary to ensure maximum bather numbers are set for various circumstances e.g. children, disabilities
- Pool shape and depth needs to be considered in busy periods. Bather loads will be assessed at the point of reception and numbers should be communicated. Risk Assessments may include a particular section of the pool if unusually busy.
- Lifeguard duties and responsibilities
- Facility staff training, qualifications and arrangements for ongoing continuing professional development.
- Management of special features and events.
- Use of pool equipment.
- Management of the pool when being used by specialist groups e.g. clubs and those with special needs.
- First aid, qualifications of staff and levels of provision. First aid equipment available should also be listed.
- Pool safety equipment available and where it is located.
- Conditions of hire.
- Actions to be taken in cases of non-conformity.

**Camera/computer surveillance:** The use of surveillance cameras and sensors, are useful to assist the lifeguard with pool supervision, but are not acceptable as a replacement for the presence and supervision of properly qualified personnel. It is important to note that these should be placed in open public areas excluding changing rooms.


Use of surveillance cameras must be advised to facility users.

### Mobile Phones

A new addition to the 2010 Safety Guidelines is that in all cases mobile phones and their use should be banned/prohibited from defined areas within the facility. A risk assessment should determine your policy.







# six Emergency Action Plans

## 6. Emergency Action Plans

It is impossible to predict and plan for every eventuality in and around the swimming pool environment but there are a number of foreseeable emergencies for which one can pre-plan. Such pre-planned scenarios should be included in the facility's written NOP.

Examples of these are as follows:

- Structural failure e.g. lighting failure.
- Drowning.
- Spinal injury.
- Theft.
- All facilities should have a very specific evacuation plan. This may be required due to poor water quality, escape of toxic gases, fatality etc.
- Allegation of Child/Vulnerable Adult Abuse.
- Water contamination.
- Missing person.
- First aid incidents - major and minor incidents.
- Disorderly behaviour
- Overcrowding.
- Rescuing a casualty in the water.
- Incidents in other parts of a facility e.g. heart attack in the steam room.
- Breaches of the pool's admissions policies.



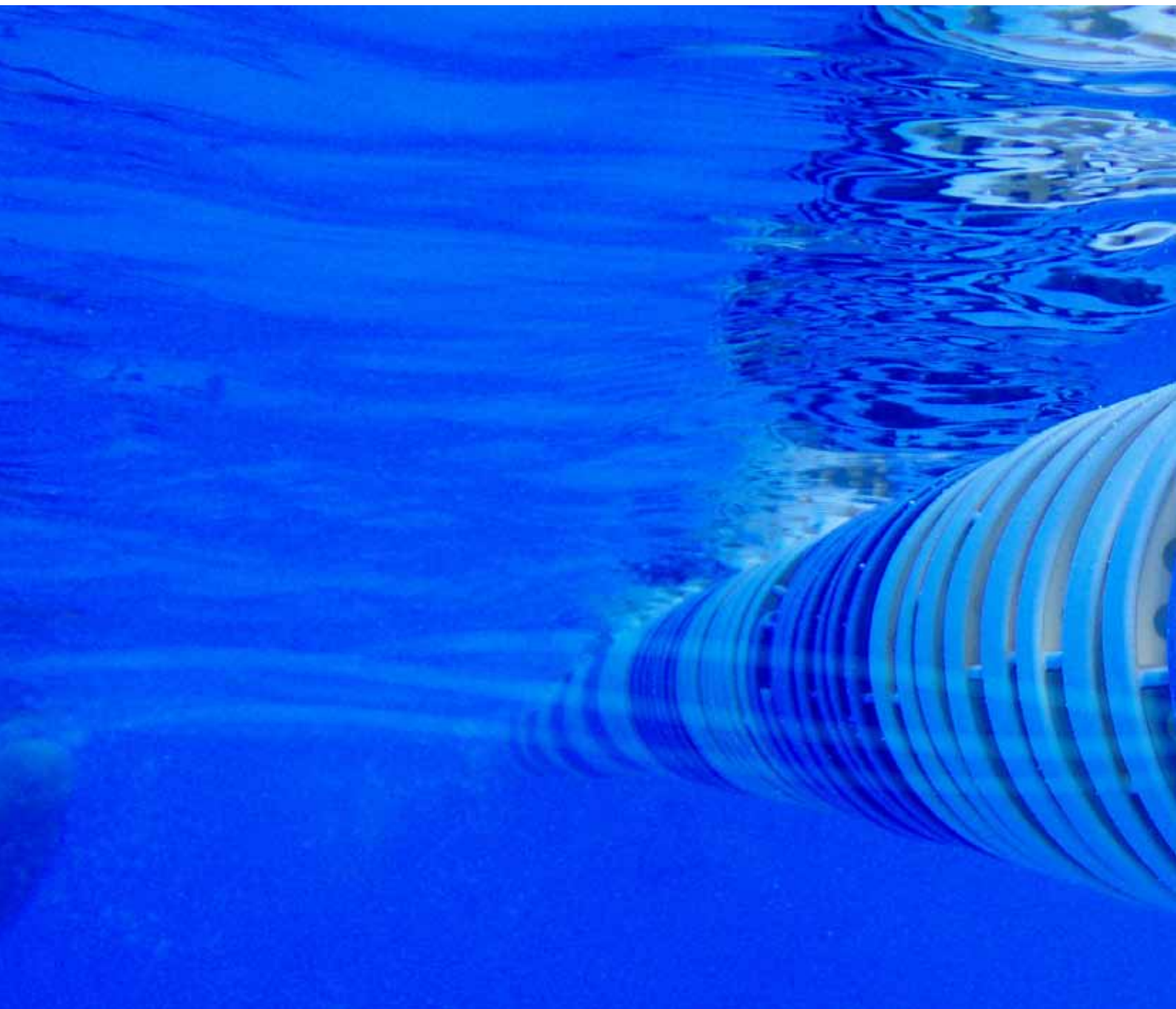
### Faecal Fouling

This is a significant risk when one considers the high use of swimming pools by babies and very young children. All swimming facilities must have clearly outlined procedures for dealing with fouling incidents. The clearly stated Emergency Action Plan must be known to all staff.

The following are some specific guidelines:

- Solid faeces must be removed from the pool as quickly as possible. No other follow up action is necessary as long as disinfection levels are within the range set for the pool and as long as it has been possible to remove all the material.
- Diarrhoeal fouling is likely to contain bacteria and viruses, thus posing a risk for users. It should be noted that it is unusual for this to be brought to the pool's attention, because the faeces are often too liquid to be seen. If a user reports signs of a stool that is liquid or runny, then it should be suspected that the faecal release could be more hazardous. One of the most prevalent causes of diarrhoea is either cryptosporidium or giardia. Either of these protozoa will make their victim quite ill. Unfortunately, cryptosporidium is resistant to chlorine and ozone and can only be dealt with through adequate filtration using flocculent or through a UV plant.
- Residual disinfection will remove these dangers in a well run pool within minutes. However, diarrhoea often contains an inter-gastinal parasite, which can cause chronic diarrhoea and vomiting when ingested. This will present extra, more serious dangers for immune compromised bathers. Pool chlorine does not kill this parasite (Cryptosporidium) quickly enough. Ozone or ultra violet light systems are as ineffective as anything else. Only medium pressure UV has any noticeable biocidal effect on cryptosporidium. Effective filtration will eventually remove all traces of the parasite.
- Because of the associated risks with diarrhoeal fouling, the following action plan is recommended:
  - a. Close the fouled pool and other pools whose water treatment systems are linked.
  - b. Request bathers to leave the pool and to shower thoroughly. Ensure that you take note of the name and address of all pool users at the time of the incident. This will enable you to contact them later to warn or reassure them.
  - c. Maintain disinfectant levels at the top of the operating range. Reduce pH as low as possible – 7.0. Reduction in pH increases the effectiveness of chlorine.
  - d. Vacuum and sweep the pool.
  - e. Using a coagulant and filter for six turnover cycles. This will only work when medium rate filters are being used. Operators who use high rate filters may need to follow a more complex operation or empty the pool completely.
  - f. Backwash the filters.
  - g. Check the final chlorine residual and pH values of the pool water.
  - h. The pool should only be reopened after the above actions have been taken.
- The above sequence of actions must be followed if the pool is identified as a potential source of Cryptosporidium.
- The prevention of Cryptosporidium incidents can be enhanced by the following:
  1. Discourage babies under six months of age from using the swimming pool.
  2. Encourage the wearing of nappies by babies and young children who may not be toilet trained as yet. A variety of nappies designed for use in swimming pools are now available on the market but it must be remembered that these may not provide complete protection.
  3. Encourage all bathers to shower thoroughly before pool use.
  4. Provide good hygienic nappy changing areas.
  5. Discourage those who have been ill with diarrhoea, within the previous 14 days from swimming.

The above guidelines are based directly on the British HSE publication "Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools (third edition, 2003)".







# seven Pool Features

## 7. Pool Features

**There are recognised European Normal standards that cover many aspects of pool design and operation (including swimming-related equipment). In light of increased litigation we recommend the review of these current European standards that are there for the protection of all – staff and patrons.**

Some of the reference points for these documents are as follows:

- EN 15288-2:2008 Swimming Pools Safety Requirements for Operations
- EN 15288-1:2008 Swimming Pools Safety Requirements for Design

Modern facilities are now offering a wide range of other features as an added attraction to their patrons. It is an error to generalise the risks associated with such features. All have their own peculiarities and should therefore receive individual attention when completing the facility's risk assessment. There are, however, a number of requirements, which apply to all such features as follows:

- At the design stage, great attention must be paid to the positioning of bends, steps and rails on all pool features.
- Features should be adequately protected against corrosion. The effects of chlorine on structures should receive additional attention.
- They must be staffed by an adequate number of lifeguards. This will be dictated by the risk assessment. Lifeguard cover for such features shall not compromise the supervision of other parts of the pool.
- Lifeguards should be aware of the potential dangers, their causes and prevention. All operatives must be trained in the specific use and supervision of any features.
- Lifeguards should be aware of the excitement caused by these features, which may lead to erratic behaviour by the users.
- Lifeguards should be constantly aware of the water clarity surrounding such features.
- Adequate signage giving user advice, dangers and restrictions (may include age restrictions).
- Rules for safe use must be strictly enforced.
- Operators and those supervising must know how to turn off the equipment if necessary.
- Regular checks must be carried out on all feature fittings e.g. water slides and flumes.
- Regular checks should also ensure that bolts remain tight on all ladders, handrails and steps.
- Manufacturers guidelines must be strictly adhered to.
- Access to all such features should be prevented when not in use.
- These features should be referred to in the facilities' NOP and EAP.

In addition to the above, the more commonly available features also have their own specific safety guidelines. These are outlined in the following paragraphs.

**Wave Machines:** A common factor associated with this particular feature is the presence of high surrounds necessary to contain the water. This will have an effect on people leaving and entering the water. It is hoped that the design of the wave machine will minimise the risk of people being thrown together or against fixed objects such as walls, rails or ladders. The strength and height of waves will create a number of associated hazards as will the varying water depths often found in and around these features. Lifeguards and other operators should be aware of these.





Along with recommended signage, an audible signal, which signals the start of the machine, should be in place.

- Weak and non swimmers should be requested to move to the side prior to the machine being switched on.
- Lifeguards should be positioned so that they are able to supervise between the waves, supervise the “beach” areas (attending to those being knocked over by the water) and have an overall view of the area.
- Diving under the waves should be prohibited.
- Entry should be from the shallow end only.
- A system should be in place to ensure users are aware of changing wave patterns and strength.

**Rapids or Jet Streams:** These are often designed with dips, bends and varying speed of water flow. These design features can combine to give whirlpool effects. There are many potential hazards and dangers associated with their use especially for the weak or non-swimmer. Proper control and supervision will ensure safe and enjoyable use of these features.

In addition to the above general guidelines, the following feature specific guidelines should be adhered to:

- Lifeguards should be placed at the entrance and exit to assist users in and out.
- The positioning of lifeguards should allow for the rescue of panicking, injured or unconscious users while constant supervision is maintained. The facilities EAP shall detail actions, which will ensure constant supervision.
- The flow of users should be controlled to prevent congestion during the ride.



- If such features are fully or partially outdoors, measures should be in place to ensure adequate protection of lifeguards from the prevailing weather conditions.

**Inner Tube Rides:** These may be combined with other features.

Some dangers associated with such features include overturning, falling off, hitting the sides, getting trapped underwater or stopping, leading to impact injuries from other users.

In addition to the above general guidelines, the following should also be enforced:

- Lifeguards should be placed at the entrance and exits to help users in and out.
- User rules should be strictly enforced to prevent horseplay that could give rise to some of the feature specific dangers.
- The stacking of tubes should not be allowed.
- Allow one person per tube only.

**Slow and Fast Rivers:** These are usually shallow, level and may be circular or twisting streams of water. Booster pumps are used to maintain a steady current. Users swim or float along with the current. Tubes are often used.

In addition to the general guidelines above, the following specific requirements should also be implemented:

- Lifeguards should be placed at the entrance and exit to help users in and out of the river.
- Jumping and diving into the river should be prevented.
- A system shall be in place to ensure that maximum user capacity is not exceeded at any time.

**Waterfalls; Water Canons; Geysers; Rain Sprays and Mushrooms:** These are some of the other features common to many modern facilities. Although they are relatively basic features, all have possible associated dangers.

Water patterns may interfere with supervision. Also, fumes may build up within water screens.

In addition to the general guidelines for swimming pool features, additional attention is required to the following aspects:

- The operation times of these features shall be regulated to prevent the build up of gases and fumes.
- Water pressure on such features should be checked regularly.
- Super chlorinate regularly and check for Legionella bacteria.
- A slow, low-pressure start up will assist with safety.
- Geysers should only be used in water depths greater than 0.7 m.
- Many safety features should be included at the construction stage (See. "Structural Considerations" section in Chapter 1).



**Water Slides and Flumes:** These can vary from being fixed in place to being inflatable and removable. Each type has its own associated dangers. The necessity for regular checks and risk assessments on all features, has already been stated in the general guidelines at the start of this section. Air pressure will be an additional concern if the inflatable type is in use.

The facility's NOP and EAP shall outline the necessary actions for safe use and emergency procedures.

In addition to the general checks, lifeguards/supervisors shall be aware of the extra dangers associated with the wearing of potentially dangerous items of jewellery. It is also essential that other users keep the landing area clear.

Acoustic signals can be used to regulate the use of slides.

In addition to the general guidelines made in relation to all pool features, the following requirements should also be followed:

- There should be an entry point and exit point lifeguard on duty during all periods of use.
- Ensure good communication between the supervising lifeguards.
- The 'entry' point lifeguard shall ensure the following:
  - Queuing remains orderly.
  - Dangerous jewellery is not worn and removed when necessary.
  - Swimsuits with metal rivets, buttons or fasteners should not be allowed.
  - A feet first sitting position is taken for flume rides.
  - Legs are crossed at the ankles with the arms folded across the chest for free falls and speed rides.
  - Safe spacing.
  - Users going in chains or groups are prevented.
  - Running starts are not used as a means of gaining extra speed.
- The 'exit' point lifeguard shall ensure the following:
  - The landing area is cleared immediately after landing.
  - Users do not cross in front of other slides.
  - Disoriented users are assisted to exit immediately.
  - Children, weak/non-swimmers or those with disabilities may require assistance from turbulent splashdown areas.
  - Diving into splashdown areas is prohibited.
- EAPs shall be in place to ensure that injuries and other emergencies are dealt with immediately, while other users are under continuous supervision.
- All supervising lifeguards have a joint responsibility to ensure that users do not slow down or stop while in the flume.

A full Risk Assessment may indicate that one lifeguard at the entry point operating with CCTV, covering the exit area may be acceptable.

**Moveable Floors and Bulkheads:** These are features being included in the design of many modern swimming pool facilities and particularly in 50m facilities. Their purpose is to give variety to pool length and depth. They greatly increase the potential uses of the pool. Disability access, swimming, water polo and diving competitions, teaching and aqua aerobics classes are examples of areas that can benefit from the availability of these features.

In addition to the general requirements made for all features, the following are also required:

- There should be clear depth indication where there are movable floors.
- Audible warning signals shall be used when adjustments are being made.
- Adjustments should be made with the pool empty and with users away from the immediate poolside.



- Correct and regular maintenance, in line with the manufacturers guidelines, shall be carried out by properly qualified personnel.
- Swimmers should not be allowed under bulkheads.
- Lifeguards should be able to scan both sides of the bulkhead. Their positioning will be guided by risk assessments.

**Pool Hoists:** These decrease the necessity for manual handling of disabled users. They can vary in style from being hydraulic, electric or mechanical.

Again, the general guidelines, outlined at the start of this section, also apply to hoists. In addition the following requirements should be followed:

- Ensure all operatives are trained in the correct operating procedures.
- The differing abilities of users must be taken into consideration.
- Snap shackles should be used to prevent slings floating free from the supporting arm.
- Along with the recommended regular safety checks, special consideration shall be given to ensure the hoist can be lifted up to its specified safe working load.
- Manufacturer and Insurance Company guidelines must be adhered to.

**Spas:** These are popular in many swimming pools, and may be located adjacent to the pool or in a separate health suite.

It must be noted that Legionella is the greatest danger associated with spas and has lead to fatalities.

Operators/lifeguards also need to be very conscious of the fact that hot water may be a cause of passive drowning particularly if alcohol has been consumed. Water temperature greater than the maximum recommended 38 degrees celsius is also a particular danger.

The general requirements regarding the need to follow the manufacturers' guidelines, that operatives be trained in safe operating and emergency shut down procedures and adequate signage b put in place, all apply.

In addition, the following extra requirements shall be followed:

- Constant supervision may not be required, but regular checks are necessary.
- An alarm button to summon help in an emergency should be provided. This button shall be in a prominent and publicly accessible position.
- Using the spa after intense physical exercise or after using the sauna is not recommended.
- Entry and exit from the spa should be done carefully, to avoid falling or slipping. Lifeguards shall promote such safe practices.
- Spa use is not recommended for those who are pregnant or who suffer from cardiovascular or respiratory problems.
- Use by children under 16 years of age shall not be allowed.
- Spa running time should be set to help limit use to a maximum of 15 minutes, with rest intervals of at least five minutes between uses.
- Users should be prevented from jumping or diving into the spa.
- Submerging under the water in the spa should also be discouraged.
- Food, drink, body lotions or oils should not be allowed into the Spa.
- Where the spa is part of a separate health suite, shower facilities should be provided for use before using the spa.
- Qualified personnel should carry out correct and regular maintenance.





### Swimming Pool Covers

These are now a commonplace feature of most swimming pools. They serve economic and minimal safety purposes. Covers vary in type from hand operated roller systems to automatically operated wall mounted systems.

Economically, they help to conserve water temperatures with resulting savings in fuel costs. They also benefit by reducing the relative humidity in the atmosphere, enabling a reduction in air temperature and ventilation rates.

From a safety point of view they could be used as a method of preventing unauthorised entry into the pool, provided they are of a type that meet the following minimum requirements:

- Can be secured continuously around the edge.
- Will support an adult's weight, as a precaution to a person walking or falling onto them.
- Will be resistant to vandalism (as far as is reasonable).

The above guidelines are particularly important when covers are being used in an outdoor pool, where entry may not be as controlled as an indoor facility.

Finally, it is essential that all operators ensure staff are familiar with the safe operating procedures relating to the use of such covers and that safe handling techniques have been taught and practiced under the supervision of a suitably qualified person.

### Lane Ropes

There are European Standards that pertain to the design, fixings, storage, and maintenance of lane ropes. We would recommend that you review these and implement the standard accordingly.

### Lane Swimming

A majority of swimming facilities now operate a multi-use policy for their swimming pools. The demand on pool operators to provide lanes is currently on the increase. Facilities differ in the number of lanes they are able to provide at any one time. Lanes are now being used for a variety of reasons, including:

- Fitness swimming.
- Swimming lessons.
- Triathlon training.
- Social swimming by the elderly, in particular.
- Competitive training.
- Sub aqua training.
- Life saving training.

Swimming pool operators may decide to allocate times exclusively for lane swimming, when a number of activities are taking place consecutively.

The use of lanes demands a number of management considerations, to ensure the ongoing satisfaction and safety of users. These will include:

- Allocation of swimmers of varying abilities and speeds to lanes so that requirements are met. Describing lanes as 'fast' and 'slow' is subjective and dependant on swimmer interpretation. Defining use in objective terms such as time or distance bands may be preferable.
- Ensuring a well defined policy of 'lane etiquette' is outlined and known to users. This policy will include procedures for overtaking, use of equipment (fins, paddles etc) and direction of travel in adjoining lanes.



- Defining who gets use of side lanes will also help with good management. Priority should be given to weak swimmers who may require the security of being near the side wall. The elderly often fit into this category. Groups who may require the use of ladders for entry and exit should also be given side lane priority.

Swimming lessons and technique development and life saving sessions are more effective if teachers and coaches can observe swimmers' movements directly.

- If diving from starting blocks or the pool side is allowed, consideration must be given to the supervision of this activity, the competence levels of the users and the effects of resulting waves on those in adjoining sections of the pool.
- The number of swimmers allowed in any lane must also be considered. This will depend on many factors such as the activity, the ability level, the speed, equipment being used and lane width. The defined use of the lane, in addition to ratios recommended by the various national aquatic bodies require consideration when deciding specific bather loading.

The use of lanes will be greatly enhanced if a clearly visible pace clock is displayed. This will help with the management of spacing between swimmers. Also, using directional signs at the end of each lane will help guide the direction of swimming when two or more lanes are being used side by side.

The lane ropes themselves require special attention to ensure ongoing customer safety and satisfaction. The ropes should be of good quality and their condition must be checked regularly, in line with the manufacturer's guidelines and the facilities operations plan. Problems that occur which require immediate attention include:

- Missing discs and rope-floats can expose areas of wire or rope, which can result in skin burns and cuts when contacted strongly.
- Missing discs and rope-floats can also result in swimmers miscalculating their distance from pool ends.
- Broken discs and rope-floats will also result in bad cuts and bruises when rubbed against.
- The cable ends of steel ropes can become frayed with the potential for minor and serious injuries as a result of incisions.
- Lane rope attachments can loosen, leading to lanes narrowing and/or widening. This can lead to impact injuries for users.

The storage of ropes must ensure they do not impede access points or create obstructions for users and lifeguards. Safe procedures for taking up and putting down lanes must be in place to ensure staff welfare and safety. This can form part of staff training programmes.

Lifeguards have a crucial role to play in the management of lanes allocated for sole use. They must be proactive ensuring that lane etiquette is adhered to and that lanes remain in good repair. Good management will be furthered if customers are aware that lanes are being used at particular times during the facilities operating hours. Clubs and other sole users must also be informed of the conditions of hire and associated facility procedures.





# eight

## Pool Users' Equipment





## 8. Pool Users' Equipment

### Swimming Goggles

Swimming goggles are now an almost essential piece of equipment used by the majority of visitors to swimming pools. They are primarily for swimmer comfort in that they protect from the negative effects of chlorine in the eyes and improve visibility in the water.

They come in many styles, from prescription to regular, and come in a wide variety of colours.

As with all pieces of equipment, they also have some associated dangers.

- Putting goggles on in an improper fashion may lead to injuries around the eye area. Lifeguards should be prepared to advise regarding safe use.
- Swimmers engaging in 'horse play' or robust activities such as ball-playing games may injure others with whom they come into contact.
- Poorly fitting goggles can lead to impeded user view, with possible impact injuries as a result.

**The controlled use of goggles during some activities is advised, for example, diving or life-saving.**

### Play Equipment

Along with the pool features now available in many facilities, there is also a wide variety of play equipment available. Such equipment may be provided by the facility or privately owned by the customers and may range from being small to large in size. Uses can vary from being fun to helping with the development of aquatic skills. Regardless of the purpose, all have a certain degree of associated risk. Pool operators and lifeguards should have an understanding of these in order to prevent accidents.

Some general safety guidelines for the use of such equipment include:

- Never allow the use of glass equipment.
- Provide adequate signage to indicate when and where equipment may and may not be used.
- Check equipment for safety on a regular basis. Some types of equipment such as inflatable arm bands should be examined before each use.
- Small toys, balls etc should not be less than 7mm in diameter as a precaution against choking.
- Safety checks shall ensure conformity to minimum safety standards.
- Ensure equipment being used is appropriate to the age of those using it.
- Equipment should only be used under proper supervision.

The following are some of the more common types of play equipment used in modern swimming pool facilities and their associated risks:

**Snorkels:** These are normal in the teaching of sub aqua and snorkelling but today, they are used in the teaching of swimming.

- Lifeguards should be alert to the possible dangers associated with 'horse play' by users e.g. the airway being blocked by others.
- Improper use can result in water inhalation.
- Use should be limited to scheduled sessions e.g. sub aqua or to users with a perceived competence in use.

**Face Masks:** These vary in appearance and quality.

- Operators should be familiar with the risks associated with masks breaking, in particular those with glass faces.
- Masks that are too tight fitting can lead to facial or eye injuries.
- Badly fitted or poorly sealed masks can result in water getting under the mask, with possible inhalation of water through the nose or disorientation due to blurred vision.
- Limiting the use of this type of equipment to scheduled times will greatly decrease the possibility of accidents occurring.

**Fins:** Fins are used during a wide range of activities, from general recreation to competitive swimming etc. Their use is no longer limited to the traditional uses of snorkelling and sub aqua. Fins are manufactured with a wide variety of lengths and with differing strengths.

Lifeguards and facility operators should be aware of the following:

- The use of fins can cause cramp for new and untrained users.
- Some fins can be particularly stiff and can cause injury to others.
- They may lead to impact injuries with other users or walls.
- Due to the size of some types of fin, space for other users can be limited.

In general, it will be best to limit the use of fins to scheduled sessions, where use is under the supervision of suitably qualified personnel. Alternatively, define a specific area for fin use.

**Floats / Woggles:** These are now common items of equipment in most swimming facilities. Generally, the operator provides them but recently they have become a popular piece of personal equipment. Floats, like so many other pieces of equipment, have very positive uses in the teaching and development of swimming and are a great aid to aquatic fitness. They come in many shapes and sizes. Pool operators and lifeguards should be aware of the following with regard to floats:

- Users sometimes bite the floats, with a resultant danger of choking.
- Abusing floats can result in pieces blocking inlets and outlets. This can lead to problems for the water treatment system. The use of polystyrene floats shall be discouraged
- The use of floats can give rise to a false sense of confidence which may encourage users into deep water.

- Floats should be securely stored. This will help to control use and ensure the pool deck is free from obstructions.
- Limiting the use of floats to scheduled sessions or defined areas, is recommended.



**Rubber Rings:** These are very popular in swimming pools and vary in size and style. Dangers associated with the use of rubber rings include:

- May give rise to a false sense of security which may encourage users to enter deep water.
- Small children may slip out of the ring.
- Users may capsize when using these rubber rings.
- Rings may deflate, thus highlighting the need for a safety check before each use.
- Some rings have air valves or stoppers protruding, which may result in injuries or to unexpected deflation.
- Diving through or jumping on top of such rings should be discouraged due to the dangers of impact with the pool bottom/sides.

**Lifeguards must be especially vigilant when this type of equipment is in use.**

**Play Balls:** There are a large variety of these available. They are used during water confidence exercises for the very young. As with all equipment used in water, there are some possible associated dangers.

- Ball throwing games in the swimming pool may lead to robust behaviour, posing particular danger for poor/weak or non-swimmers.
- Timid swimmers may panic when trying to avoid being hit by a ball.
- Swimming after a ball into deep water may be particularly hazardous for poor swimmers.
- The excitement of getting to the ball may have a negative effect when assessing dangers.
- Small balls in use in the swimming pool shall be no less than 7 mm in diameter, to prevent any risk of swallowing by children.
- Balls shall be suitable for the age group for which they are being used.
- The use of balls should be encouraged in structured sessions under the guidance of appropriately qualified personnel (e.g. Water polo coach)

**Weighted Rings/Blocks:** These are common pieces of equipment used for the development of water confidence, surface diving and early diving practices. Safety guidelines include the following:

- Water depths should be appropriate and suitable to the ability level.
- When in use, clear visibility of the bottom is necessary.
- Ensure the area in use for practice session with this type of equipment is clear from other users.
- Safe spacing shall apply between users, if in a learning group.

**Inflatable Play Equipment:** This type of equipment can vary from the small self inflated items e.g. rings as referred to above, to the large anchored type. The latter are usually anchored and kept inflated by the use of electric blowers.

Lifeguards must be ever vigilant when large inflatables are in use, as these items can obstruct vision of areas surrounding and under the structure. Poor visibility can greatly increase associated dangers.

The facilities' risk assessments will provide guidelines regarding the appropriate number of lifeguards required to ensure best supervision.

- As a minimum safety guideline, it is recommended that no more than one square meter of the pool bottom is obscured to the lifeguard. Correct zoning of lifeguards will greatly decrease this area.
- Lifeguards should also have to be vigilant towards overcrowding, robust play and smaller and younger users who may be knocked over by others.
- Prohibit diving from the structure.
- Prohibit jumping from the poolside onto such structures.

Other guidelines are as follows:

- Structures must be firmly anchored, in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines. This shall be stated in the facility's NOP.
- At least 2 meters should be permitted between the structure and the poolside wall and/or other obstructions. The starting point of large structures should be between one and 1.5m from the poolside.
- There should be at least 3-4 m of clearway between the end of the structure and the poolside.
- The depth of water around the structure must be considered. Falls into shallow water can lead to serious injury. High structures should have a minimum depth of 1.5m of water.
- Use of the structure by weak and non-swimmers should also have to receive special attention. In addition to the risks referred to above, falling off the structure may lead to submersion and possible panic.
- Overcrowding on the structure may weaken the anchors.

**Rafts and Rigid Play Equipment:** These present dangers similar to those associated with the use of other types of inflatable play equipment, such as:

- Floating into deep water with poor or non-swimmers on top.
- Falling off can lead to disorientation.
- Jumping on to the raft from the poolside can lead to a range of possible injuries.
- Falling or jumping from such rafts close to the pool walls can lead to injury.
- Impact injuries to users or others if the structure is a solid type.

The following requirements will enforce the safe and enjoyable use of this type of equipment:

- Specify suitable times for its use.
- Check for damage and replace if necessary.
- Ensure adequate qualified supervision.
- Prevent dangerous and over-robust behaviour.



**Paddling Pools and Children's Play Areas:** These may be provided within the pool hall or as an outdoor facility. Such areas can incorporate many of the items of play equipment already referred to. The following are the recommended requirements:

- Signage must indicate dangers and restrictions (age, height) as well as user advice.
- Warning signs should be in place regarding the dangers of sunburn, if the facility is outdoors.
- A responsible person should always accompany children. This shall be specified in the 'Swimming Pool Child Admission Policy'.
- An EAP for lost children should be in place and familiar to all lifeguards and facility staff.
- There will always be a risk that the area will be used as a toilet (accidental or otherwise). Clearly defined procedures shall be in place to deal with such situations.
- Because of the high usage of such areas, close monitoring of water quality on a regular basis will be necessary.
- Such areas may not require constant supervision, due to the requirement to have a responsible person present, but it will be necessary to make regular checks to ensure all rules relating to safe use are being adhered to, including the prevention of sunburn.

# nine Electrical Equipment

## 9. Use of Electrical Equipment at Swimming Pools

**The danger of using electricity when in close proximity to water is well known and documented. Safety and Health legislation contains guidelines for safe working practices when electricity is used adjacent to water.**

The Electricity Regulations, Part 8 of Safety, Health and Welfare at Work – (General Application) Regulations 1993, impose duties on employers, the self-employed and employees in respect of electrical equipment and installations and in respect of work activities on or near electrical equipment. Because this legislation may be subject to change from time to time, it is important that all concerned remain up to date with new developments.

As mentioned in the previous sections, many extra features are now available in swimming pool facilities. Some require the use of electricity. Examples include: CD/Tape recorders for aqua aerobics; electronic timing systems; some communication systems and electric blowers used to keep some structures inflated to the proper level.

Some general cleaning equipment is also powered by electricity.

Electric hair and hand dryers are readily available in facility washing and changing areas.

Regular checks on all electrical equipment is essential for the following reasons:

- The acknowledged dangers associated with it's use in or near water.
- The corrosive effects of many chemicals used in and around swimming facilities.
- The dangers associated with possible panic if there is a power cut.

Some general guidelines are as follows:

- A qualified electrical engineer must make frequent checks on all electrical installations and equipment. This includes wires and plugs. The facility's NOP shall provide an outline for all such checks.
- Using equipment designed for use while immersed in water is recommended. This equipment can be designed for use with a 12-volt battery.
- Using and testing residual current breakers should be carried out regularly.
- Avoid the use of 220-volt equipment.
- Use portable electrical equipment that operates at 110 volts or below.
- Use a safety-isolating transformer that is suitably earthed and which conforms to Irish standards.
- Prevent non- authorised access to all electrical equipment and wires.



# ten Diving





## 10. Diving

**The provision of diving varies from separate custom built diving pits in large complexes to diving at the deep end of some swimming pools. While diving has long been a popular aquatic activity, facilities for it's provision have decreased due to the modern practice of building pools which are too shallow for diving.**

While there are many dangers associated with the practice of diving, the number of recorded injuries remains low. Injuries, if they occur, may vary from head and facial injuries to spinal injury, or even death.

Negligence, where diving is concerned, may range from inadequate supervision to a lack of appropriate signage. Pool users can themselves be a principle factor in diving accidents.

Along with being a very enjoyable activity, diving is also an important survival skill. In general, the teaching of diving, while following strict safety guidelines should be encouraged.

"Diving and Jumping in Swimming Pools and Open Water areas" published by the ISRM contains comprehensive information on diving and deals with a number of aspects of diving which may have relevance to particular pools and/or situations. In addition, some of the main points are summarised with regards to operating the activity of diving in a facility:

### General Diving Recommendations

- The activity of diving into swimming pools should be risk assessed at all times..
- Diving should be limited to specific areas only, if a purpose built facility is unavailable.
- Lifeguards must be constantly alert for unsafe diving practices e.g. "bombing".
- Clearly visible and legible signs must indicate where and when diving can take place.
- It is essential that all divers are aware of the pool depths.
- Competitive diving boards and starting blocks must conform to FINA design standards.
- Ensure diver competence is assessed before progression to diving from starting blocks.
- Hire agreements/contracts should indicate conditions of use for diving equipment.
- Only fully trained personnel should undertake the setting up of diving equipment e.g. starting blocks.
- All diving equipment should be safely stored to prevent use outside of scheduled hours.
- The use of goggles by learner divers should be discouraged because of the dangers of injury to the eyes.

- Diving boards and platforms must be of proven strength and sound construction.
- The use of non-abrasive and slip resistant surfaces on all diving equipment is strongly recommended.

### General Public

#### Recreational and un-programmed swimming

##### (Associated with water depths of 1.8m or deeper)

- A flat racing dive is the only recommended form of dive into shallow water (1.8m) and this must be performed under qualified supervision and by users with a certified competence.
- Diving into water from heights greater than 0.38m shall not be permitted. For heights greater than this, FINA requirements for one-metre platform (firm board) must be adhered to.
- Diving shall only take place in water with a vertical depth exceeding 1.8m. Additional caution must be exercised when this minimum depth is used.
- Forward clearance for diving should be a minimum of 7.6m. Research in the USA has shown that this is the distance required to ensure divers do not hit the opposite side. This distance also helps to prevent swimmers taking too steep an entry. The supervising person must assess the height, weight and skill levels of divers on an individual basis, even when this distance criterion applies.
- Dives requiring a steeper entry shall only take place into pools specifically designed for the activity. Their design should follow FINA standards.
- No running dives or jumps should be permitted.

### Structured and Programmed Swimming

#### Teaching Diving

- Where the recommended vertical depth of 1.5m does not prevail for the full clearance of 7.5m, a comprehensive risk assessment will be necessary.
- Flat racing dives only.
- The teaching of diving should not start in water less than 1.8m deep.
- Diving into water from heights greater than 0.38m shall not be permitted. For heights greater than this, FINA requirements for one metre platform (firm board) must be adhered to. The clearance forward may vary depending on the height and ability of the person undergoing instruction.
- There are also various regulations in both learn to swim programmes and competition environments. The regulations relating to the environment and workforce eligible to teach/coach diving techniques will fall under National Governing Body guidelines (especially for Regional and National competitions) and FINA guidelines.
- Contact the National Governing Body for more information in this area.

### Diving Boards and Platforms

**Diving Boards:** These can vary in type from being rigid to spring boards.

Due to their height and spring, great care must be exercised to ensure correct use. The placing of such boards in a separate diving pit/pool is recommended. Defining a segregated area, if a separate diving pit/pool is not available, is an alternative. Such an area must be marked off with lane rope or a floating boom to ensure it is clearly identifiable.

Where diving boards are available, the following requirements and user guidelines shall apply:

- A recommended minimum water depth for a one-meter high board is 3m. This should be combined with a forward clearance of 7.34m.
- Scheduled times of use should be outlined.
- Strict supervision must apply at all times.
- Assess the competence of users before use.
- Do not allow queuing on the ladders.
- Where steps to the diving boards exist, lifeguards should ensure that orderly queues prevail at all times.
- Do not permit sitting on the platform guardrails.
- Allow one diver on the board at a time.
- Ensure divers on higher boards have the right of way.
- A second diver must not follow until the previous diver has re-surfaced and swam clear.
- Allow one bounce only before diving on springboards.
- Allow dives from the front of the board only.



- Prohibit hanging from the boards.
- Hand first entries shall be required.
- Request users to swim to the side of the diving area, immediately after resurfacing. Supervising lifeguards shall ensure this practice is adhered to.
- Prohibit swimming across the diving area.
- Pay particular attention to divers using or attempting to use goggles, due to the dangers of injuries to the eye.
- Users suffering from colds and/or ear infections should be discouraged from diving board use.
- Lifeguards must be mindful of disorientation that may result from deep dives. Panic and running out of breath might also result from such dives.
- Lifeguards need to be conscious of the possibility of impact injuries occurring when users high dive or hit the water at an awkward angle. Such incidents should be catered for in the facilities' EAP.
- Failure to achieve appropriate forward clearance can result in injuries caused by impact with the boards themselves.

Where an operator offers diving facilities, it is essential that the lifeguards who supervise this activity be trained to recover a casualty from the deepest part of the pool.





# eleven Child Welfare





## 11. Safeguarding the Welfare and Protection of Children

In Ireland a child is legally defined as being under the age of 18.

The need to ensure the welfare of children is now an accepted principle of best practice for all organisations, whether they are voluntary or professional. All organisations have a corporate responsibility to safeguard children.

Swimming pools provide an outlet for many children from a social, physical and sporting point of view. Visits to nearby swimming facilities are popular for schools and families alike.

Each facility should ensure the following:

- Safe and clearly defined methods of selecting staff are in place including the use of vetting.
- All staff know clearly defined and effective procedures for the reporting and management of child protection concerns.
- A suitable person, normally the facility manager, shall be identified and trained as the Designated Person (DP) or Designated Liaison Person (DLP). Their role will include liaison with outside agencies, including the Gardai and Health Boards. They will be responsible for reporting allegations and will act as a resource person for other members of staff who may have child protection concerns.
- Training of the DP/DLP should be through relevant agencies to ensure quality input and a measure of effectiveness.

**Child Protection training:** Child Protection training is available from various agencies. These include the HSE, Irish Sports Council, Irish Water Safety and Swim Ireland. Individual members should refer to their member organisations to ensure that they meet the requirements.



Training shall also include the following:

Code of ethics and good practice, when dealing with children.

- Child protection procedures.
- An understanding of the role of the DP/DLP, in the context of an investigation or validation of child protection concerns.
- A basic understanding of child development.
- Communication skills with children and young people.
- Being accessible to, and approachable by, children.
- Issues relating to Child Admissions.

Training should involve an assessment and evaluative component to ensure that only those who are suitable to the role of the DP are requested to undertake this most important function.

The facility guidelines should fulfil the following purposes:

- Provide basic information on the nature of child abuse.
- Outline the procedures if child abuse is occurring or there are suspicions that it is occurring. This shall include written reporting procedures.
- Raise awareness of the necessity for ongoing good practice to ensure the protection of young people from abuse and others from false accusations of abuse.

Encounters with incidents or suspicions of abuse may occur in any of the following ways:

- A young person may disclose that he/she is being abused.
- A third party, who has been informed of incidents of abuse, may, in turn pass this information on to a member of the facility staff.
- Third parties may disclose their own suspicions of abuse to members of staff.
- Discussions may be overheard, where issues or incidents of abuse are being discussed among facility users.
- Abuse might be witnessed.
- An allegation or report can be made to a member of staff.



Regardless of the way in which a person hears of an allegation of abuse, there is a necessity to respond in an appropriate manner. All members of staff shall be trained and clear in the appropriate response procedures. In particular, a non-judgmental approach shall be adapted when listening to an allegation and confidentiality must be protected at all times.

**Reporting Procedures:** At all times, the statutory reporting procedures must be followed, however, the procedure must be relevant to the facility or organisation dependant on terms of hire. This must be clear at the point of hire.

Operators are referred to the **Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport** (The Irish Sports Council) and to the **Code Of Ethics and Child Protection Policy** (Irish Water Safety) and the **Swim Ireland Guidelines for Safeguarding Children** (Swim Ireland). While these documents may differ slightly in general layout, they underline the same principles and follow-up procedures. Individuals should refer to their member organisations for guidance.

### Child Admission Policy

The aim of such a policy is to protect those who, historically, are most at risk of drowning in swimming pools. This policy should be implemented in partnership with parents and it should ensure the ongoing enjoyment of the facility by children. It should balance the level of risk for children using swimming pools and the benefits to be gained by such use.

Lifeguards cannot and should not be expected to replace the care and supervision of a parent. Lifeguards should, however, be trained to identify when adult/child ratios in the water may be a cause for concern and the appropriate follow up, as defined in the facility's NOP.

In Ireland a child is legally defined as being under the age of 18. However children under 8 years of age have been identified within Ireland as being most at risk from drowning. This could be due to the fact that their judgement of dangerous situations may be poor. For this reason the following restrictions are recommended to be implemented across pools as being best practice which will clearly define how particular age groups should be catered for in the aquatic environment:



### Minimum recommendation for Non-Programmed Activities

- Children aged 1-5 must be accompanied by a responsible adult in the pool.
- Children aged 6-10 must be accompanied by a responsible adult who must remain in view of the child in the pool.
- Children aged 11 and upwards may be unaccompanied.

### Minimum recommendation for Programmed Activities

Age needs to be considered, depending upon the nature of the activity and obtaining parent/guardian permission.

The following will steer facility operators to look at the factors which will help to control risks. They will also provide guidance in arriving at a practical and positive policy for child safety. It is impossible to arrive at a finite set of guidelines that would cover the many types of swimming pools now being built for public use. It is also impossible to account for the varying aquatic abilities and the physical and psychological development found in children of similar ages.

A full Risk Assessment will be required before the Child Admission Policy for the facility is defined. This will have to consider factors such as pool design and layout; general staffing levels and their experience; the swimming ability and maturity of the children and whether, buoyancy aids are being used by non-swimmers. The presence of pool features such as slides and waves will also have to be considered.

The above factors, when considered in the light of the Risk Assessment findings, will help pool operators determine the appropriate child/adult ratios. As with all Risk Assessments regular reviews must be undertaken.

For the purposes of these guidelines the health and safety of children must be paramount to all pool procedures and rules.

Some general guidelines are as follows:

- All children, as defined for the purposes of these guidelines, should be under constant staff or parental supervision within the facility.
- Operators may outline specific rules for younger children and those with special needs.
- For example, a policy for children aged eight and under, should be enforced during open leisure swimming times. This should state that children under eight may only enter the pool under the parents supervision. The minder must supervise the child from a safe distance i.e. be able to maintain visual contact with the child at all times. This policy may not apply during structured swimming sessions e.g. lessons, schools.
- Buoyancy aids should carry an approved standards emblem. Operators should advise customers of this fact where appropriate.







- Designated Non Swimmer Areas must meet the following criteria:
  - a. Suitable and sufficient area of shallow water.
  - b. Restricted access to deep water.
  - c. Clear line of view for the supervising lifeguard.
  - d. No water features e.g. slides.
  - e. No steep gradients.
- In programmed activities: The aquatic skills and safety awareness of children should be tested and certified by a recognised authority (e.g. Irish Water Safety, Swim Ireland), through appropriately qualified personnel.

Any changes to the facility's recommended ratios should be explained and justified in the pool's written operating procedures.

**Children's use of changing rooms:** Issues sometimes arise for other users when a child of the opposite sex has to share the dressing room with the person minding them. This is best eliminated by the provision of family or group changing rooms. Other guidelines in this respect are as follows:

- Pool operators should train their staff to be aware of people behaving in an inappropriate and suspicious manner. Once trained, staff should be able to intervene directly for the protection of the child.
- All swimming facilities should have appropriate reporting and intervention strategies in place to ensure protection of children from suspicious persons.
- The overwhelming consideration in all circumstances has to be the safety of the child.

The Child Admissions Policy shall be implemented on completion of a thorough risk assessment and after consultation with users. It should then be displayed at the main points of public access to the facility.

The admission policy should cater separately for specific groups of children, such as schools, children's parties and club groups. Special consideration must also be made for those with special needs and their carers. Factors, which might be altered for such groups are as follows:

- Ratio of carer to children.
- Numbers of lifeguards on duty.
- Limiting use of the pool to designated areas.
- Age requirements may also be altered.

A thorough Risk Assessment will indicate specific requirements and highlight any alterations, which might be made for the different category of user.

**Training for the disabled:** Training for the disabled is available from various agencies. Individual members should refer to their member organisations to ensure that they meet the requirements. These requirements should also include a Code of ethics and good practice, when dealing with vulnerable children and adults. Where disabled persons need personal care when using pool facilities, care should be taken that the disabled person's dignity and privacy be maintained at all times and that suitable safeguards be put in place to facilitate this.

# twelve

## Responsibilities of Pool Operators

## 12. Responsibilities of Pool Operators

In general, pool operators have a responsibility to ensure that the above requirements are in place. Pool operators have a duty of care for all who enter their premises. This includes bathers and staff.

Some of the principle responsibilities may be summarised as follows:

- There is a written organisational training policy in place with an associated budget. This policy shall outline provisions for staff time used for training and identify who will present the various types of training. The Irish Water Safety “Continuing Professional Development for Lifeguards” document recommends the following:
  - A minimum of twelve hours per year is devoted to CPD for facility staff, divided as follows:
  - Knowledge of the facility’s NOP and EAP – 6 hours. The practice of EAPs should receive most of the attention.
  - The practice of Basic Life Support – 4 hours.
  - Customer Care issues – 1 hour.
- Swimming Fitness – weekly attention.
- There is a specific staff induction plan for new employees. This must include health, safety and customer service.
- The staff are properly supervised.
- Employees are appropriately qualified for their specific roles.
- There is a current Health and Safety statement for the facility.
- Risk assessments must be carried out on a regular basis with written reports available as evidence. These reports shall outline all actions taken in response.
- The facility has an up to date NOP.
- Outline EAPs for identifiable incidents.
- Staff undergo “Continuing Professional Development”. Included here will be an assurance that staff qualifications remain valid and that further relevant training is undertaken. The Irish Water Safety’s CPD for Lifeguards document further recommends that all full time lifeguards attend at least one relevant course every two years to further their skills.
- Rehearse aspects of operations as part of staff CPD. This should include staged accident scenarios. Such rehearsals will also provide feedback with regard to the effectiveness of outlined procedures.
- The facility has clearly visible customer information on display, including safety advice, rules and limitations.
- Facility is clean and tidy - including the plant room.
- Appoint and fully train a DP/DLP. This may be the facility manager or other senior members of staff. Regardless, the appointed person must be fully trained.
- Cleaning is on a regular basis. Equipment and chemicals used shall be checked to ensure they pose no danger to users.
- It is the Manager’s responsibility to ensure that all users follow the codes of conduct for the facility that is relevant to the activity being undertaken. Managers should ensure that elements include some of the conditions of hire, knowledge of safety equipment, some aspects of both the EAP and NOP and child protection procedures and general conduct.



# References & Appendix



## References

- 'Safe Supervision for Teaching and Coaching Swimming', ISRM, June 1996.
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- 'Pool Lifeguard Manual', Irish Water Safety and ILAM, 2005.
- 'European Basic Guidance in Swimming Pools', ILSE, 2005.
- 'Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport', The Irish Sports Council, 2006
- 'Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children', Dec 2009, Office of the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs
- 'Risk Assessment Guidance Documents', Health and Safety Authority.
- Swim Ireland references: Childrens Guidelines
- Swim Ireland: Teacher and coaching qualifications
- Swim Ireland: diving and competitions
- An analysis of a lifetime in Irish sport, 2008, (ISC and ERSI research) [www.irishsportsCouncil.ie](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie) – The Irish sports monitor 2007
- National Physical activity guidelines – Department of Health and Children [www.GetIrelandActive.ie](http://www.GetIrelandActive.ie)
- ILAM "White flag award for spa & leisure criteria" 2010
- ISRM Waterslides Guide
- ISRM Diving & Jumping in swimming Pools
- ISRM Use of Play Equipment & Water Features in Pools  
(Available from ILAM Publications)

## Useful Contacts

- IWS – Irish Water Safety  
The Long Walk, Galway, Ireland  
Tel: 1890 420 202 Fax: 091 564700 Email: [info@iws.ie](mailto:info@iws.ie)  
Web: [www.iws.ie](http://www.iws.ie), [www.ringbuoys.ie](http://www.ringbuoys.ie), [www.aquaattack.ie](http://www.aquaattack.ie)
- ILAM – The Industry Body for Sports, Fitness, Aquatic Facilities, Outdoor Sector, Spas & Wellness,  
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- HSA – Health and Safety Authority  
10 Hogan Place, Dublin 2.  
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- NAD – National Association for Deaf People  
35 North Frederick Street, Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 872 3800 Fax: 01 872 3816 Email: [nad@iol.ie](mailto:nad@iol.ie)
- NCBI – National Council for the Blind of Ireland  
Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.  
Tel: 1850 334353 Fax: 01 830 7787.
- Swim Ireland  
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**Irish Water Safety, ILAM and Swim Ireland take no responsibility for any issues or accidents arising from the implementation of any policies outlined in this document.**



## Appendix:

### Risk Assessments

#### Activities Risk Assessment – example

| Hazard                                    | Risks  | Who is at risk?   | Level of risk (Low/Med/High) | Controls  | Immediate response to an incident   |
|---|--|---|------------------------------|---|---|
| Diving from poolside, boards or platforms | Minor to major head and body injuries<br>Impact injuries<br>Going too deep | Public swimmers<br>Class participants<br>Specialist classes | Low                          | Attention to recommended depths<br>Water depth signs<br>Lifeguard supervision<br>Teachers operating within qualification level<br>Zoned area<br>Specialist training<br>Correct ratios<br>Equipment checks | Activate EAP<br>Team support<br>Provide First Aid, within competence level.<br>Treat for spinal injury<br>Contact EMS |

#### Environmental Risk Assessment - example

| Hazard           | Risk  | Who is at risk?    | Level of risk (High/Med/Low) | Controls   | Immediate reaction to an incident  |
|------------------|---|--------------------|------------------------------|--|--|
| Wet floors/tiles | Slip, trip and fall injuries<br>Spinal injury | All facility users | Medium                       | Signs<br>Regular cleaning/mopping<br>Lifeguard intervention<br>Verbal warnings from all activity supervisors<br>No running<br>Non-slip tiles/ mats | Activate EAP<br>Team support<br>Provide First Aid, within competence level.<br>Contact EMS, if required. |











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Webs: [www.ilam.ie](http://www.ilam.ie) [www.whiteflag.ie](http://www.whiteflag.ie)



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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE ABOVE  
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## Aviva proud supporters of the White Flag Award

2010 is an exciting year for Aviva Ireland. Having re-branded our company and product offerings, we now look forward to the opening of Aviva Stadium in June in Dublin. This stadium development reiterates our company's commitment to sport in Ireland and we look forward to cementing our ties with the FAI and IRFU in the years ahead. This sponsorship represents a direct investment into the grass roots of these sporting codes over the coming years.

Sport and sporting activities are truly commendable pastimes in that they promote healthy living and positive lifestyle. Sport is a key contributor to the social fabric of the community in Ireland today and as such provides very valuable side effects such as improved health and community well being that benefits the economy and the Insurance Industry as a whole.

As Ireland's largest composite general insurer we continually strive to recognise and reward standards of excellence and risk reduction initiatives. This is because quality risk assessment and risk reduction means an improvement to the risks we insure and that makes good business sense. The White Flag award initiated by ILAM- The Industry body for Sports, Fitness, Aquatic Facilities, Outdoor Sector, Spa & Wellness in Ireland offers a double benefit to Fitness Club operators, i.e. excellent customer quality but also a clear recognition from Aviva that we understand the standard will help manage your insurance risks better.

As I'm sure you know, there is a world of safety standards, codes of practice and regulation surrounding business and business activity. It is commendable that the White Flag initiative continues to grow and prosper in the leisure sector and we at Aviva are delighted to recognise its common sense approach to safety and health in Irish Fitness Centres.

As an insurer we are very familiar with the consequences of poor health and safety management and systems of risk control.

Time spent on identifying hazard, assessing risk and implementing meaningful controls are solid steps to reducing your risk of fire, accident and loss and also makes you a better insurance risk and thereby reduces your expected insurance premium.

What differentiates one safety management system from another is its ability to demonstrate documented evidence of best practice, that this best practice forms part and is, an integral part of general business management and that all employees and staff have committed themselves to its implementation.

The White Flag Awards recognise those who have reached very high quality standards in this industry. As a code of practice, it provides detailed guidance on how to ensure quality management systems are robust and continuously assessed and improved.

Aviva are proud to be associated with the White Flag standard and look forward to building on this relationship with ILAM into the future. Aviva recognise the White Flag award for what it is, a quality mark of excellence that is a quality insurance risk.



