



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®  
SOCIÉTÉ DE SAUVETAGE

*The Lifeguarding Experts*  
*Les experts en surveillance aquatique*

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## Safety Standards for Canadian Swimming Pools and Waterfronts Swimming Pool Standard

### Bather Admission Standard

#### Standard

Every public pool shall implement the Lifesaving Society bather admission standard for all general open, public or unstructured recreational swim periods, and should include:

- Preschool children should be directly supervised by a parent or caregiver who remains within arm's reach of the child.
- Children who are non-swimmers, or who cannot pass the facility swim test, should be directly supervised by a parent or caregiver who remains within arm's reach.
- Individuals who self-determine or are determined to be weak or non-swimmers by the lifeguard staff should be advised to remain in shallow water, and in the case of children, be directly supervised.

#### Definitions

**Bather:** a person whose intent is to use the swimming facility.

**Caregiver:** an individual, such as a parent, foster parent, teacher or babysitter, fully responsible for attending to the needs of a child or dependent adult.

**Direct supervision:** maintaining continual eye contact on deck and in water; able to alert lifeguards.

**Recreational swim periods:** open public swims, birthday parties, day camps, rentals, etc.

**Swim test:** a measure of swimming competence determined by the facility owner/operator and supervised by aquatic personnel or staff member.

**Within arm's reach:** able to render immediate assistance and make immediate physical contact.

#### Rationale

- Preschool children are generally not of sufficient height to stand unassisted in most public pools.

- Children lack the judgment and experience to understand the dangers of water.
- Drowning statistics from unsupervised and supervised settings point out that children between the ages of 6 and 9 years of age, who cannot swim and are unaccompanied, are at highest risk of drowning.
- Aquatic safety of children is a responsibility that must be shared by pool operator, lifeguard, caregiver, parents and manager/organizer of a group of children. The pool operator shall educate everyone who is responsible for children safety.
- In addition to lifeguards, the parent, guardian and caregiver need to be responsible for applying admission standard and pool safety regulations; lifeguards are mainly responsible for safety supervision.

## Implementation

Owner/operators should implement a system to identify at-risk bathers.

To implement a bather admission standard for recreational swim periods, owner/operators should evaluate the level of risk posed by the facility. The following criteria should be considered:

- maximum depth of pool
- size of swimming pool
- design of swimming pool, i.e., blind spots, distractions, water features
- maximum number of bathers during recreational swim
- number of lifeguards on duty
- ratio of caregivers to children
- swim skill level of children
- PFD availability (number and size)

Admission standard could include the following:

- minimum age to be accompanied in facility
- criteria for direct supervision by caregiver
- when to stay in the shallow end of pool
- ratio of caregivers to children
- guidelines for PFD use
- swim skill level required
- admission procedure for a group of children
- identification system for non-swimmers and children not able to pass swim test
- tracking system used

A sign posted at facility entrance shall inform public of bather admission standard.

Facility staff, lifeguards and aquatic personnel must be trained in bather admission standard procedure and swim test evaluation.

For group admissions, the group leader shall be informed of the bather admission standard, facility safety rules, emergency and evacuation procedures

## References

- Coroner's Inquest recommendations regarding the provision of an admission standard in public swimming pools: Neave Inquiry, Alberta, 2008; Emun Inquest, Ontario, 2009; Ilunga Inquest, Ontario, 2011; Audette Inquest, Ontario, 2012

- Drowning Review – A review of all accidental drowning deaths in Ontario from May 1st to September 30th 2010, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario
- Alert: Lifeguarding in Action, Lifesaving Society Canada
- Encadrement sécuritaire des groupes d'enfants en milieu aquatique, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'éducation du loisir et du sport, 2006

### Approval

- Approved by the Lifesaving Society Canada Board of Directors on 9 March 2015.

### Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards are developed using Coroners' recommendations, the latest evidence-based research, and reflect the aquatic industry's best practices at the time the publication was approved or revised.

The purpose of these standards is to encourage swimming pool, waterpark and waterfront owners, managers, operators and regulators to adopt these standards in order to prevent drownings in aquatic environments.

Lifesaving Society Canada's National Safety Standards do not replace or supersede local, provincial/territorial or federal legislation or regulations, but they are considered the standard to which aquatic facility operators should work towards in order to enhance safety within their operations and to prevent drowning and aquatic-related injury.