

B. WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES

Swimming - Pool/Water Park/Beach

Public Swimming Pool	Grade K+
Water Park (Water slide)	Grade 3+
Public Beach	Grade 3+

Swimming, water park usage and other aquatic activities are among the most popular lifetime recreational activities British Columbians enjoy. However, every year, the province experiences fatalities of children and youth due to drowning. Developing water safety and survival swimming skills through schools can help reverse this situation. Because of the inherent risks associated with the aquatic environment, preparation and vigilance are essential in delivering water-based activities.

These Level 1 guidelines apply only to educational and recreational aquatic contexts when the indoor or outdoor pool/water park/beach activity is undertaken in a public facility supervised by professionally trained and certified Lifeguards. For guidelines related to participating in other aquatic activities or contexts (e.g., using Lifesavers versus National Lifeguard Service (NLS) certified Lifeguards; using a hotel or backyard swimming pool; using an unguarded public beach; incidental swimming in lakes and rivers during adventure travel), see [Level 2](#).

Prior to reviewing elements of this subsection for the purpose of planning an activity or outing, be able to confirm the following:

- I have at least a basic familiarity with the content in Sections 1 (Introduction) and 2 (Risk Management Primer) of this document.*
- I have a solid understanding of all the material in Section 3 (General Considerations for Off-site Activities), and any relevant subsections in Section 4 (Special Considerations).*

With this grounding, now review the following:

General Considerations for all Aquatics Activities

Known Potential Risks

- Injuries related to vehicle crashes en route to and from activity area;
- Becoming lost or separated from the group or the group becoming split up;
- Injuries related to slips, trips, and falls in the program area or en-route to/from it;
- Injuries related to collisions with movable (e.g., other swimmers) or immovable (e.g., pool wall) objects;
- Injuries related to the physical demands of the activity and/or lack of activity skill;
- Injury related to ill-fitted equipment, equipment malfunction, failure to use the equipment properly or becoming tangled in apparatus;
- Injuries related to stepping on sharp objects with bare feet;
- If outdoors, weather changes creating adverse conditions;

- Hypothermia due to remaining in cool/cold water too long or due to insufficient clothing when out of the water if outdoors;
- Loss of manual dexterity of the hands when cold and wet;
- Hyperthermia (e.g., heat exhaustion, heat stroke) due to insufficient hydration, and/or overexertion in a hot environment (e.g., outdoors), or due to using a hot tub, steam bath or sauna);
- Allergic reactions to natural substances in the outdoor environment (e.g., bee or wasp stings);
- Injuries related to interactions with animals and plants in the environment;
- Psychological injury due to anxiety or embarrassment (e.g., re: body size or shape, lack of fitness or skill);
- Illness related to poor hygiene;
- Drowning or near drowning;
- Head or spinal injury related to diving into shallow water; and
- Other risks normally associated with the activity and environment.

Teacher/Leader Readiness

- This Level 1 Manual content is based on the assumption that the school is working with a public aquatic facility service provider.
- Where working with a service provider, the Lead Teacher from the school may be involved in coordinating the activity, ensuring informed parental/guardian consent, securing sufficient numbers of assistants to help supervise the activity, and working with the service provider public facility to ensure the group's needs are met.
- The aquatic facility staff must be competent to organize the swimming activity; to demonstrate, instruct and supervise it; and to effect rescue and emergency procedures as necessary, or to otherwise provide for any or all of these capacities (e.g., using service provider lifeguards and/or aquatics instructors).
- In public swimming situations (i.e., group in water with other members of the public present), it is recommended to have a certified and qualified lifeguard present. The required minimum qualifications of a Lifeguard are:
 - minimum age 16,
 - holds a current National Lifeguard Service (NLS) award,
 - holds a current Standard First Aid or equivalent award, and
 - is trained in the facility operating and emergency procedures.
- Parents/guardians must:
 - be notified of the supervisory arrangements (e.g., the number of supervisors, presence of certified lifeguard(s)),
 - acknowledge awareness of the potential hazards associated with the swimming/wading/water park activity, and
 - consent to their child/ward's participation.
- Parents/guardians should identify the student's approximate aquatic skill level to facilitate securing sufficient numbers of Lifeguards, supervisors and/or instructors.

See **Supervision** below for additional considerations

Equipment/Facilities

- Persons assuming lifeguard responsibilities should be clearly visible and identifiable.
- The following rescue equipment must be available:
 - whistle or other sound signaling device,
 - reaching assists (e.g., pole, shepherd's hook),
 - throw bag or line,
 - floatation devices (e.g., flutter board, pool noodle, torpedo buoy),
 - spinal board, and
 - first aid kit(s) with emergency blanket(s).
- The swimming area must be:
 - clearly marked,
 - free from hazards,
 - roped off with floating devices or boundaries otherwise clear, and
 - reasonably clean (i.e., not polluted).
- Where a hazard cannot be removed, students need to be warned of its presence and directed re: related safety procedures.
- Non or weak swimming students should not rely on a flotation device, nor should they be allowed to use inflatable toys in water that is above their chest height unless it is an approved personal flotation device (PFD) or lifejacket, properly fitted and worn.
- If swimming outdoors, students should be notified to bring and apply sunscreen.
- If outdoors, attend to weather forecast and current weather and respond appropriately (e.g., no swimming during electrical storms).
- Students must not dive head first from the pool edge (or other similar surface close to the water level), unless the water at that point has a minimum depth at least 2.5 meters. It is the venue manager's responsibility to ensure diving tank depth is in compliance with standards if divers are entering from a diving board or platform.
- Duration of swim should consider:
 - the type (age, skill level) of swimmers,
 - air temperature and wind conditions if outdoors,
 - temperature and condition of water,
 - time of day, and
 - objectives of the activity.

Instruction

- Before being permitted to swim in water above their chest height without a PFD the students must be given a **survival swim test**, or at least an **endurance test**. The survival swim test consists of a roll into deep water, treading water for 1 minute and swimming 50m using any method. The endurance test only includes the 50m swim. Whichever test is used, it will generally be conducted by venue staff and can be used to channel students into appropriate level swimming lessons. If the swim is a recreational outing, the successful students can be given an identifying mark on their arm, or an identification tag or ribbon. Those not taking or passing the test may also be given a marker (of different color or design to distinguish them to lifeguards and supervisors).

- Unless in a structured swimming class (i.e., small group with designated instructor) all non-swimmers or weak swimmers should wear a PFD when in or near the water or they must be restricted to a well-marked shallow area (less than chest height). Clarify with parents/ guardians if PFDs will be available on-site or if they must provide one for the student.
- All rules and regulations of the swimming area, diving area, swing ropes, pool slides, waterslides, hot tubs/steam rooms/saunas, change rooms and/or other related facilities in the aquatic must be presented to the students and followed. This rule review may be done by the venue staff (Lead Teacher to confirm arrangements).
- Students should know an emergency signal and response (e.g., 3 loud whistle blasts means assemble on shore/pool edge). If exclusive use of the facility by the youth serving group, students aged under age 10 should have emergency drill practice.
- Students with infectious diseases (e.g., chickenpox, impetigo) or any illness with diarrhea associated should not go in the water.
- A student with a large and/or deep sore that is likely to weep and to suffer delayed healing if exposed to the water over the swim period should not go in the water.
- Band-aids should be removed prior to swimming (they tend to release in the water, posing a hygiene hazard to other swimmers and/or blocking the pool's filtration system).
- An emergency action plan should be in place specific to the activity and environment.
- Supervisors not trained in aquatic rescue should not personally enter the water to render assistance to an eight year old or older (approximately 27kg (60 lb) swimmer in difficulty. Their job in these cases and which they need to be clear about through a briefing by the Lifeguard and/or Lead Teacher, is to serve as extra sets of eyes and to summons the Lifeguard to render assistance to a swimmer in distress. In all cases, a reaching assist (e.g., hooked pole, flutter board) should be extended to a swimmer in difficulty; body contact should be avoided, except with young children.
- Change/locker rooms need to be supervised whenever in use.

Supervision

- Supervision ratio as per Section 3 plus a certified Lifeguard(s) as per the number/ratio determined by the Facility Manager for supervision of the particular facility and bather load.
- For recreational swimming in an exclusive use context, a head counting system should be used at regular intervals (about every 15-20 minutes), particularly with larger groups;
- For recreational swimming, students should swim with a buddy of comparable swimming ability and should buddy up quickly on command. Students should know the consequences of not swimming with their buddy (e.g., a 5-minute time out on deck).
- Any students required to sit out for part or all of the swim period must be supervised.
- The Lifeguard(s) should be free of all other duties (e.g., cleaning the facility, doing chemical testing) when supervising the aquatic activity.
- The Lead Teacher or designate needs to remain free to handle needs and discipline of individual students.
- When students under age eight are in the water, instructors/supervisors (not Lifeguards) must be in the water with them.

- Generally, when students aged eight or older are in the water, and especially with larger groups, at least some of the adult supervisors should remain out of the water and position themselves so that the students are in clear sight (i.e., supervisors distributed around swimming area and standing at or near the waterline).