

# The Importance and Mission of Lifeguards

At a member's outdoor pool, a girl was bobbing in the water, going under and coming above the water for air. The Emergency Action Plan (EAP) was then activated involving Call 911 – Retrieve AED, Crowd Control and Meet EMS Professionals. A beach drag extraction was done of the girl and she was placed on a cement



island where she was found non-responsive and not breathing. A face mask was immediately donned to perform mouth to mouth resuscitation and then CPR. She then began to cough and was turned on her side to clear her lungs.

This is not the only save that occurred in 2018 as many of our pools participate in various rescue, save and lifesaving measures annually. When parents are often not around or distracted with their phones, or children are cared for by their aging grandparents, it is all the more important to have professional and attentive lifeguards.

Most entities hire lifeguards and have them trained and certified by Red Cross or other reputable agency. CIRSA requires certification in the CIRSA Loss Control Standards. Some entities have reached out and asked, "Do we really need to have lifeguards?" Could we not install a sign stating, "Swim at Your Own Risk?" No matter how difficult it is to obtain lifeguards, it is crucial that appropriate number of lifeguards are present during the time pools are open to view every segment of the aquatic environment. Some States have a fixed number of lifeguards codified in regulations, yet one lifeguard per 25 patrons is seen as an industry standard. If there are equipment or walls that interfere with the sightlines of lifeguards at fixed locations, more than one lifeguard per 25 patrons is needed so that the entire aquatic environment is within view of the guards.

Most lifeguards at CIRSA member entities are very professional and attentive to their

task. Typically, there are a couple of lifeguards on stands and one walking the deck. They are judicious with using their whistle to caution patrons not to run on the deck, to not hold their breath underwater or to minimize excessive horseplay. They also supervise non-swimmers and caution them if they are headed into deep water or ensuring that they wear the appropriate life jackets. Non-swimmers should be identified prior to entry into the pool and are often equipped with lifejackets or necklaces of red, yellow or green that can identify their aquatic skill level. Due to the focus required to properly surveil the aquatic environment, lifeguards should rotate on and off duty to avoid fatigue and boredom. Guards should be trained not to interact with patrons on the deck for long periods that would minimize their scanning duties. So, they should not be involved in directing patrons to restrooms or locker rooms while on duty. To maintain an alert status in scanning, strategies have been used such as changing guard stations and walking the deck, sweeping their gaze from side to side, and taking the necessary breaks to recharge.

The responsibilities of lifeguards are not limited to but include the following:

1. Recognize a situation of emergency
2. Take immediate action to attend to the emergency or need at hand
3. Ensure all safety rules and standard operating procedures are strictly followed
4. Conduct a regular survey of the area and report any discrepancies immediately
5. Ensure all communication devices, and safety and emergency equipment are in working condition
6. Completed entries in all the necessary log books and reports

The lifeguard should be trained in surveillance and rescue techniques and demonstrate such skills in tests and drills. They should have quick decision-making skills, communication skills and be able to pass out instructions to large group of people without causing panic or fear. They should participate in regular drills and be updated on the latest rescue techniques, remain physically fit, follow the rules of the pool themselves, show good team spirit and obey the pool manager or supervisor. When there is a violation of pool safety measures or an emergency, you want someone confident enough to act, and act with conviction and confidence.

