

Beach and Pool Safety

PRIMEX³ RISK MANAGEMENT BULLETIN

Municipal pools and beaches provide inviting summer recreational opportunities. But fun in the sun and water also mean increased risks, and these risks should be managed to protect patrons and staff. Sometimes risk management practices are overlooked to meet public demands to open facilities as soon as possible.

Chances are your municipality already has several risk management practices in place. Running through a checklist to ensure that your beach or pool is ready for fun in the sun is an important step to ensure those risks are well managed.



■ Lifeguards

If your beach or pool is monitored by lifeguards, the lifeguard staff must be ready to respond in the event of an emergency at a pool or beach. Among the items to consider are:

- ✓ Careful hiring, proper training, and current certifications.
- ✓ Vigilance, water scanning zones and the ability of lifeguards to identify and react to an emergency.
- ✓ Rotation so that no one lifeguard remains on duty without periodic breaks.
- ✓ Positioning of guards in order to establish appropriate distance between positions so that guards can adequately monitor swimmers. Distances should be based on the nature/conditions of the swimming area and the number of swimmers in the water.
- ✓ Identification of guards with brightly colored uniforms (swim suits).
- ✓ Conducting periodic training and drills to update and reinforce lifeguard staff.

■ Signs and Warnings

While signs and warnings may not always prevent an accident, they can be a helpful tool in mitigating loss potential. Among sign considerations are:

- ✓ Lifeguard status signs indicating whether or not a lifeguard is on duty and any other special considerations.
- ✓ Beach Rules signs indicating hours of operation, patron conduct, including *permitted* and *non-permitted* practices at the beach or pool. Modify to meet local requirements.
- ✓ Specific Hazard signage warning of hazards which cannot be removed or protected — an example would be “No Diving - Underwater Hazards”.
- ✓ **Sample Signs** may include:



Beach Rules

- No Lifeguard - Use premises and/or water at your own risk
- No Smoking, Open Fire, or Fireworks Allowed on the Beach
- No Removal or Throwing Stones/Rocks
- Children Should be Supervised at all Times
- When Leaving the Beach, Take Your Trash, Chairs, Toys, Noodles, etc.
- Sand Castles, Holes, etc. Should be Filled in Prior to Leaving the Beach
- No Horseplay Allowed on the Float or Beach
- No Boats Allowed on the Beach or Swimming Area
- No Dogs Permitted on the Beach
- Use Common Sense - Respect the Rights of Others

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Beach and Pool Safety (continued)

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■ Emergency Response

Have a plan and equipment to deal with emergencies at a beach or pool. Among things to consider would be:

- ✓ An emergency response plan for dealing with emergencies and/or missing persons around the water. The plan should be understood and practiced and should involve dialog and drills with your local emergency responders (fire, police and EMS).
- ✓ Communications systems for communicating with patrons, like a bull horn, and more permanent communications for contacting emergency officials such as a telephone.
- ✓ Water rescue equipment like throw buoys, rings and poles.
- ✓ First aid supplies and automated external defibrillators (AED's).



■ Emergency Response

Dealing with site-specific conditions can also help to eliminate the risk to patrons and staff. Consider:

- ✓ Fencing, gates and latching mechanisms around pools must be working properly.
- ✓ Swimming area boundary and/or depth delineation markers, floating lines or buoys should be in place.
- ✓ Emergency vehicle access should be assessed and made available.
- ✓ Beach area structures such as lifeguard stations or docks should be checked for splinters, loose boards, nails or other hazards.

■ Environmental

Mother Nature too can wield an unpleasant blow to enjoying the beach or pool. Planning ahead can be helpful. Among those concerns are:

- ✓ **Lightning and bad weather.** Staff should have a plan in place for what actions to take should bad weather/lightening be imminent. First and foremost is a notification system and method to inform patrons of an impending weather issue.
- ✓ **Sun exposure,** both short and long term, can be dangerous. Staff should be informed of sun dangers and encouraged to protect their skin with clothing and/or appropriate sun blocks.
- ✓ **Heavy rains** can dramatically affect water quality. Municipalities must provide for ongoing and documented water quality testing to ensure that the water is safe is to be in.



For more information, please contact your Primex³ Risk Management Consultant at 800-698-2364 or email RiskManagement@nhprimex.org.