

The Redwoods Group Insurance Program for YMCAs

RISK MANAGEMENT ALERT

TOPIC: Aquatic Facility Safety Issues

Many factors need constant attention in our aquatic facilities. While it is not possible to address all of the literally thousands of potential items on a single page, the most commonly overlooked and inaccurately assessed critical items are listed below. Attention to detail is the key to operating a safe facility. If any unsafe area of your pool is left unnoticed, guests will get injured probably sooner rather than later. Regular documented checks should be completed to ensure all areas of the pool are within industry standards.

Guarding location:

- From the position with the least glare - staff must respond to the day's changing conditions
- From an elevated chair or standing by pool edge - mobility is okay, but walking hinders scanning
- Never from any standard height chair - ban them from the deck as they impair proper guarding
- Swimming lessons - must have lifeguard(s) guarding the pool in addition to lesson instructor(s)

Life Saving Equipment:

- Tube buoys - straps worn and gathered; always with the guard, in hand when actively guarding
- Blood-borne pathogen equipment - mask and gloves always with the guard (not elsewhere)
- Spinal management equipment - must be readily accessible; head pad must be secured to board
- Statutory equipment - varies by jurisdiction, often shepherd's pole, ring buoy, emergency summons

Swimming Pool:

- Slope change line on bottom - warns swimmers the beginning of the dramatic depth change area
- Rope and float safety line on surface - on shallow side of slope change line, 5 feet maximum depth
- Pool drain covers - check regularly for a secure fit; both pull and push to ensure connection

Deck Area:

- Standing water - squeegee as needed, resurface as necessary; number one cause of pool injuries
- Depth markers - must be visible from in the water (on the pool or building wall) and from on the deck, sides and ends; maximum of 2' depth differential and 25' linear distance between markers
- Pool ladders - proper anchoring critical; if loose, they contribute to slip and fall incidents and can cause entrapment between the ladder

and the pool wall, above or below water

- Electrical - GFCI protection for all electrical circuits on deck and in service areas
- Storage - should be off-deck as much as possible; any on-deck storage should be such that it does not impede movement around the pool or create potential danger for children or other patrons

Operational Protocols:

- Emergency Action Plan - posted where accessible to staff, but staff should know without reading
- In service training - should be regular and documented (names, date, length, topics, leaders, etc.)
- Lifeguard credentials - should be on file and current; list of those expiring next month should be kept
- Observation reports - regular documented observations of guards by staff and/or patrons

Please call us at 800-463-8546 to discuss this or any other risk management safety tip, or visit our web site at www.redwoodsgroup.com to learn more about YMCA risk management issues.