



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

The Lifeguarding Experts

Lifeguard Friendly Pool Design A Novel Concept

In the last 5 years many communities in Alberta have built or begun the design of new aquatic facilities. Existing facilities are also being renewed with new finishes, equipment and the addition of more amenities. The result is exciting leisure aquatic facilities with many features to attract a wide variety of customers. Another result is a more complex environment for the lifeguards and managers to keep safe. This complexity will affect the decisions the owners of the facilities will have to consider to ensure that the users have a safe and fun customer experience.

In addition to risk and safety management impacts, design decisions also affect the operating costs of the facility. The largest operating cost of an aquatic facility is staffing. A design decision that increases the number of lifeguards required to adequately supervise the facility or the ability to generate program revenue will have a costly longterm impact on the cost of operation. These considerations should be part of the facility design process. The reality is that this is often missing from the aquatic facility design process. Some designs do not even appear to have considered that the pool will have to be supervised by lifeguards.

The Lifesaving Society is often consulted to help aquatic facility staff solve safety management problems. This consultation usually occurs after the facility has been built or renovated and often focuses on solving safety and operating problems created by the facility design. A better and more cost effective solution is to identify the potential problem early in the design process and fix it before beginning construction.

Design consultation is one of the safety management services offered by the Lifesaving Society. The Society has developed extensive experience in identifying and solving design problems that prevent or reduce aquatic facility safety design problems. These solutions not only make the facility safer, but also can reduce the operating cost of the facility. Some examples of design features that we evaluate are: lighting and glare effects, sightlines and blind spots, focal points, water depth, lifeguard positioning, location and choice of recreational equipment, pool finishes and colors, deck traffic, elevation changes, etc. All of these features affect the ability of lifeguards to provide a safe environment for the customers.

Given the multi-million dollar cost of aquatic facilities and the increasing litigious climate in Canada, it makes sense for the facility owners and designers to invest in risk management throughout the design process. The benefits outweigh the small cost of evaluating and adapting the facility design to ensure that it is safe and cost effective to operate. For more information about designing safe aquatic facilities, contact the Lifesaving Society.

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11759 Groat Road, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5M 3K6
Phone: 780-415-1755; Fax: 780-427-9334
email: experts@lifesaving.org website: www.lifesaving.org