

POSITION STATEMENT

SWIM TEST

The Lifesaving Society recommends that all aquatic facilities in Alberta and the Northwest Territories implement the Society's Swim Test as a means to establish a common industry practice in regards to swimming skill competency and admission criteria.

The Lifesaving Society's recommended Swim Test is performed as a sequence of skills:

- Safe entry into shallow water;
- Swim 25 metres without stopping or resting (any style);
- Exit the pool from deeper water;
- Jump (foot first entry) into deep water; and
- Recover, and tread water for 30 seconds, maintaining the mouth and nose above the water at all times

BACKGROUND:

Since 2001, the Lifesaving Society has asserted that all public swimming pools should have established admission policies through its Alberta Public Pool Safety Standards (previously titled, 'Public Aquatic Facility Safety Standards') publication. National Lifeguards and Swim & Lifesaving Instructors use Swim Tests to evaluate skill, comfort, confidence, and competency. This practice increases safety and allows for effective supervision. Currently facilities may use a wide variety of means to establish swimming skill competency. Research indicates that Lifesaving Society affiliates are seeking very clear guidance on admission policies and/or Swim Tests. In the past the Lifesaving Society has recommended the Swim to Survive® standard. It is clear that this is most applicable in "unsupervised or minimally supervised" situations. Affiliates have requested a Swim Test suitable for lifeguard supervised environments.

RATIONALE:

The Lifesaving Society's recommended Swim Test can be used as a screening tool to determine who can use certain amenities or equipment and participate in specific programs. The Swim Test can also be used as a screening tool for school or rental groups, or as a part of the facility's admission criteria.

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RATIONALE (CONT):

The Lifesaving Society's recommended Swim Test may be implemented according to each facility's unique needs. While testing the swimming ability of specific age groups is common practice, it is not the only determining factor for effective incident prevention. Before implementing a Swim Test, it is recommended that the risk factors for each individual facility be analyzed along with current risk management processes. Clear guidelines must be provided to staff if there is to be any flexibility permitted when following the facility's policies.

DEFINITIONS:

Lifeguard: A person holding a current Lifesaving Society National Lifeguard certification appointed by the owner or owner's agent to maintain bather surveillance.

REFERENCES:

1. Alberta Public Pool Safety Standards, January 2020 revision.
2. Alert Manual.
3. Lifesaving Society Canada, Bather Admission Standard.

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