



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

*The Lifeguarding Experts*

## **Are Your Lifeguards in the Best Position**

The positioning of lifeguards is a critical factor that contributes to lifeguard effectiveness in preventing injuries at public swimming pools and waterparks. If the lifeguards cannot see all of the customers using the facility, the lifeguards cannot effectively supervise the facility and protect the customers.

The Lifesaving Society's Public Aquatic Facility Safety Standards state:

“The supervision position(s) of lifeguards must be designed to eliminate blind spots in the pool area. It must be possible for the lifeguard team to observe all bathers in the pool area. Facility management and staff must analyse the pool area and implement systems that provide coverage of blind spots. These systems might include the use of elevated lifeguard stations, walking lifeguard patrols or the use of observation tools such as large mirrors or video cameras and monitors. A system must be implemented to provide regular observation of off-deck areas such as changerooms, saunas and steamrooms, exercise facilities, etc.”

To develop a system of effective lifeguard positions and patrols, the staff of public aquatic facilities should carry out a systematic analysis of the pool environment. The analysis should evaluate how the physical design of the pool, the pool equipment as well as the customer activities impact the lifeguarding requirements. This analysis can be used to determine the positioning of the lifeguards and also consider the number of lifeguards required to safely supervise the pool customers.

Analysis of the pool environment should include creating maps of the pool which examine sightlines from all potential lifeguard positions. These maps should identify blindspots from each location. They should also identify locations where glare and other light effects interfere with lifeguard supervision. Each piece of pool equipment should be evaluated to understand how it affects the behavior of customers and the types of lifeguard interventions that may be required. The types of customer activities (e.g. public swim vs fitness swim vs swimming lessons) should also be considered. Different activities may need different lifeguard positions.

Developing maps of the pool showing the affect of each of the factors will provide the staff with the information needed to develop a system of lifeguards positions for the facility. The Lifesaving Society's experience has been that in many situations the result of the analysis is that fixed lifeguard stations do not provide adequate supervision of the customers. Often the most effective solution is a system of lifeguard patrols. With a lifeguard patrol the lifeguard patrols along a path which is designed to eliminate blind spots and manage the affects of pool equipment and customer activities.

For more information about strategies that can be used to develop an effective system for lifeguard positioning, contact the Lifesaving Society.

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