

OFFICIAL POSITION



Date: June 9th 2011

To: Safety supervisors, lifeguards, affiliate members

Subject: Thunderstorms in outdoor aquatic facilities

As a safety measure in order to insure protection against hazards associated with thunderstorms and especially with lightning, the safety supervisors must follow a procedure aiming to determine when an outdoor aquatic facility should be evacuated and when the patrons may be permitted to go back in the water.

Statement of position

Procedure to follow when there is an electric storm near an outdoor swimming facility, such as a pool, a wading pool, a waterfront or an aquatic park.

1. When you hear thunder, immediately evacuate the outdoor aquatic facility, including the bathing area, the deck or the waterfront. Ask the patrons to go to a safe shelter which has been determined by the owner or the operator of the facility.
2. If there is no shelter on the premises, close the aquatic facility and conduct the patrons to a safe shelter such as their cars.
3. The pool staff and the patrons must stay away from objects that are conductors of electricity such as the reaching poles, umbrellas, supervision chairs and metallic fences.
4. After evacuation, the staff must ensure that the pool or the body of water is not accessible.
5. The patrons will be allowed to go back in the water 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.

Basic data & justification

In Canada lightning may cause the death of up to 10 people each year and serious injuries to about 100 to 150 other persons, which means that it is a dangerous weather condition.

Accordingly with the Environment Canada recommendations, the Lifesaving Society established guidelines on when and how long an aquatic facility should be evacuated in order to prevent injuries from lightning. When you hear thunder, you are within striking distance.

Implementation

The Lifesaving Society recommends to the operators to include this procedure in the facility regulation and in the procedures and staff handbooks.

All staff members must review this procedure and its application at least once a year during a training period.

You can obtain more information about lightning in: Environment Canada : www.ec.gc.ca – Lightning in Canada.

First Aid

A person struck by lightning carries no electrical charge and can be touched without risk. A victim of lightning can suffer from burns or have received a shock and should receive medical attention as soon as possible. If a person received an electric shock, you must activate the Emergency Medical Service immediately and apply the appropriate follow up.

Definitions

Lightning: lightning flash accompanying an electrical discharge that occurs between clouds or between clouds and ground

Operator: person designated by the facility owner who is responsible for the activities of the aquatic facility

Shelter: installation designed to protect (from danger, weather) preferably a house or a car with a hardtop

Outdoor aquatic facility: may include but not limited to, wading pools, water games, water slides, beaches, lakes, pools, spas, etc.

Thunder: noise that accompanies lightning

References:

1. Canadian Centre for Occupational health and Safety – http://www.cchst.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/lightning.html (2011)
2. Environment Canada – www.ec.gc.ca (2011)
3. <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/overview.htm> (2011)
4. Regulation respecting safety in public baths S-3,s.39, s. 31

Every Lifesaving Society's OFFICIAL POSITION must be put to use by all certified members (Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, National Lifeguard, Instructor, etc.) and its affiliate members, as soon as it is made public.

Lifesaving Society

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The Lifesaving Society is a charitable organization whose mission is the preservation of human life and to offer help to victims of water-related traumas.
