



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

The Lifeguarding Experts

BACK-UP POLICY

NL PROGRAM

Revised February 22, 2011

POLICY STATEMENT:

Whenever a lifeguard undertakes a contact rescue, another lifeguard must respond, and should enter the water to provide immediate back-up if required. The purpose of this is to ensure the safety of the rescuer(s) and that the patient's airway is effectively maintained.

BACKGROUND:

The BC & Yukon Branch Back-Up Policy 2010 replaces the Deep Water Back-Up Policy from 1996. The purpose of this change is to make the policy more clear, to provide rationale behind the policy and to reference information in the Alert Manual.

RATIONALE:

Based on the *2009 Lifeguard Research Report*, lifeguards report having difficulty supporting a patient in one out every ten rescues in the pool, but only one in two hundred had difficulty supporting a patient with the help of a back-up lifeguard. These statistics confirm that back-up is an important principle of lifeguarding. According to a recent survey, 69% of affiliates in BC & the Yukon make specific reference to this policy in their procedure manual.

While it is always preferable for a lifeguard to have NL certified back-up immediately available, lifeguards also should be trained in the use of rescue aids. Lifeguards should either be carrying a rescue aid or have one within arms reach in situations where they know that their other staff member is not NL trained or back-up could be delayed.

The policy has been renamed simply the 'Back-up Policy' as a lifeguard should be providing back-up in **deep or shallow** water. The requirement for back-up to respond does not change depending on the depth of the water or type of victim. When responding to a patient in distress, a lifeguard does not know if the patient is going to be okay until they are fully supported.

Although entering the water should be a back-up lifeguard's initial reaction, this is a decision that requires **judgment**. Based on the principles previously mentioned, back-up **must** enter the water immediately if:

- The safety of the rescuer in the water is not confirmed, or
- The patient is not being well-supported with the airway effectively maintained above the water, or
- The rescuer is not making progress towards safety.

Lifesaving Society Back-up Policy

There are times when a back-up lifeguard **may** choose not to enter the water immediately. For example:

- Another back-up lifeguard is already responding (or is in a better position to do so);
- Back-up arrives and the patient is already within reaching distance of the edge;
- The lifeguard(s) in the water communicates that back-up is not required.

In situations where there are two or more lifeguards on duty and the second lifeguard is required to enter the water to help, then a third lifeguard should respond if available and use their judgment to decide if they need to get in the water (using the same decision making criteria as the second lifeguard). If the third lifeguard gets in the water to back up, then a fourth lifeguard should respond in back-up, etc.

According to the NL Award Guide, the purpose of the lifeguarding situations (Item 7), is to "*apply lifeguarding principles*" (such as back-up) to real life situations. The ability of lifeguards to use their **judgment** and to provide immediate back-up if required is an important evaluative item in NL. If a lifeguard fails to respond in back-up or enter the water when required, this would constitute a 'fail' in that situation.

REFERENCES:

Alert Manual (page 45)

Lifesaving Society Lifeguard Research Report 2009

Lifesaving Society Affiliate Survey Results 2010

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