



Taking a group to the waterfront for a day of fun? School classes, community groups, day camps and family gatherings often take place around the water and a safe approach will ensure that the day ends in fun, not tragedy. Here are a few tips to help make your next waterfront experience a good one.

As the group organizer or the lifeguard supervising a group at a waterfront outing, it is your responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure safety of the participants. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Lifesaving Society via email at info@lifesaving.bc.ca or call 604-299-5450.

To the Group Organizer:

1. Does your group's insurance policy cover such activity?
2. Do you have an emergency plan?
3. Are there adults accompanying the group who have basic lifesaving or first aid training?
4. Will you be providing lifejackets, a first aid kit and rescue aids?
5. Are all children's (aged 18 and under) swimming activities supervised by:
 - a National Lifeguard (NL) certified lifeguard who is at least 17 years old?
 - a competent adult (if the lifeguard is under 19 years of age)?
6. Are there at least two lifeguards on duty if there are more than 30 swimmers? The maximum swimmer/lifeguard ratio is 40:1.
7. Are all adult's (19 and over) swimming activities supervised by a lifeguard who holds NL certification?
8. Ensure all participants (adults & children) are evaluated as to their swimming ability before participating in swimming.

To the Lifeguard:

1. Clarify the type of event and number of participants with the group organizer.
2. Establish an emergency procedure in case of an incident and discuss it with the group organizer.
 - If lifeguarding a waterfront, it is recommended that you have your National Lifeguard (NL) Waterfront Option; however, NL Pool with additional preparation for a waterfront setting will serve you well.
 - Plan a grid search specific to the venue and be prepared if there is a report of a missing swimmer or a witnessed submersion.
3. Ensure that the group organizer has checked that their insurance covers the type of activity you are overseeing.
4. Purchase personal liability insurance (\$2M policy available from the Lifesaving Society); form is at lifesaving.bc.ca

5. Whenever possible, perform a site visit prior to the event to familiarize yourself with the layout, determine hazard areas and identify safety equipment availability.
 - For a waterfront, ideally the swim area is defined by a float line or other method of confining swim activity to the area for which you are responsible.
 - Check on the safety equipment available at the site or provided to you.
 - Is the waterfront equipped with a minimum of 2 buoyant throwing aids?
6. If no equipment is provided, ensure that you provide your own equipment such as:
 - a first aid kit
 - rescue aid such as a rescue can or rescue tube
 - personal fanny pack containing pocket mask, gloves & pair of goggles
 - a whistle and identifying clothing
 - a communication device (cell phone) for EMS call
 - one set of fins, mask and snorkel for each lifeguard
 - personal protection such as an umbrella or hat, sunglasses and sunscreen
 - each lifeguard must carry a rescue aid such as a rescue can or tube
7. Waterfront emergency procedures must be explained to participants and camp leaders at the start of each new session.
8. Being a waterfront setting, several factors need to be taken into consideration when determining the optimum ratio:
 - is there a clearly designated swim area that participants must stay within?
 - how large is the swim area that you are responsible for supervising?
 - is there a drop-off in the swim area and is it clearly designated with buoys & signs?
 - is the water clear or murky when swimmers are in it?
 - how many participants in various age ranges e.g. predominantly pre-schoolers?
9. Ensure a safe & reasonable ratio of lifeguards to swimmers such as the industry standard of at least two lifeguards are on duty if there are more than 30 swimmers:
 - the maximum swimmer/lifeguard ratio is 40:1.
 - is the lifeguard free of all other duties while lifeguarding?
 - is there at least one 'back-up' person available for the lifeguard on the waterfront at all times? (minimum 16 years old and free from other duties that prohibit immediate response in an emergency situation)
 - all children must be supervised by a lifeguard while swimming
10. Establish a system to monitor entry and exit from the swim area:
 - employ the use of a buddy system and make regular 'buddy checks'
11. Ensure all swimmers are evaluated for their swimming ability prior to entering the water:
 - use the [Swim to Survive standard](#), as a swim evaluation for participants.
 - use some visible means of identifying non-swimmers.
 - keep track of participants, their age and skill level.