

Scanning 101: Environmental Factors

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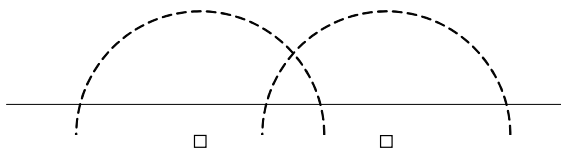
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As a part of scanning preparation, lifeguards should be trained in the supervision challenges of the aquatic environment where they plan to work. At a minimum, this training should include an orientation to the general and facility-specific characteristics of the aquatic environment, shadowing a seasoned lifeguard to learn effective supervision practices, and oversight on the job with periodic evaluation.

Adapting Surveillance to the Environment

Different aquatic environments present unique surveillance challenges. Oceans and waterfronts, for example, can have long shorelines with waves, currents, rising and falling murky water, and unseen obstructions. Scanning these areas may be limited to surveying the beach and surface of the water within an assigned zone.



In contrast, waterparks have isolated catch pools and flumes; winding rivers of slowly moving water; play areas with sprays, fountains, and other obstructions; and wave pools with zero-depth entrances and crowded wave zones. With the exception of winding rivers and wave pools (usually handled with zone coverage), each of these areas is supervised by a single lifeguard who provides total coverage. In some cases, the lifeguard is positioned in a catch pool or next to the flumes of a speed slide to assist participants as they exit.

Swimming pools provide an environment that necessitates effective scanning. Hundreds of participants of differing abilities crowd into the water to enjoy various water-based activities (e.g., swimming, diving, water polo, cooling off and splashing around, etc.). When you factor in the slippery decks, shallow water, deep water, diving boards and play structures, adventurous preschoolers, underwater swimmers, etc., there are literally millions of ways for people to hurt themselves and others in a swimming pool. Through surveillance, rule enforcement, and emergency response, lifeguards prevent injuries and save many lives. (For an ideal surveillance strategy for most swimming pools, see the box at the top of page 2.)



As a part of their preparation for scanning..., lifeguards should be trained in the supervision challenges of the aquatic environment where they plan to work.

Lifeguard Oversight and Evaluation

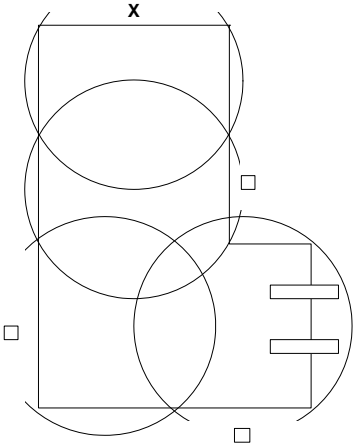
For the most part, lifeguards do an effective job of supervising the public in all aquatic environments. Even at peak efficiency, however, a lifeguard's attention is focused on the swimming area around him or her and not on the bigger picture. Although there may be signs that lifeguards can pick up on that they are being overwhelmed, they may not realize how much they are missing.

Lifeguard oversight is a supervision tactic used by the head lifeguard or person in charge to evaluate the effectiveness of the lifeguards on duty. To properly provide lifeguard oversight, the supervisor must evaluate the "big picture" view of lifeguard surveillance, environmental conditions, and patron demographics and behavior patterns. The supervisor should never go into the rotation; he or she needs to maintain a broader vantage point that takes into consideration lifeguard effectiveness and deployment, crowd density, undetected hazards, etc.

As a result of lifeguard oversight, the supervisor may replace a lifeguard, add/subtract lifeguards, change lifeguard station locations, etc.

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The diagram shows a rectangular pool boundary with a width labeled 'x'. Inside, three overlapping circles represent the surveillance zones of lifeguards. The circles overlap in various ways, creating primary zones (individual circles), secondary zones (overlapping areas), and tertiary zones (areas outside primary zones but within the pool boundary). Small squares are placed at the corners of the pool to indicate lifeguard stations.

Zoned Total Coverage™

Zoned Total Coverage is a surveillance strategy for swimming pools that combines the elements of classic zone coverage and total coverage. Assigned lifeguards survey the entire pool area or as much of it as they can see (total coverage) while focusing primary attention on the zone nearest them (zone coverage). This creates primary, secondary (overlapping areas) and tertiary areas of the pool to include in each scan.

In each primary zone, the assigned lifeguard actively enforces rules and responds to emergencies. In overlapping areas of primary zones (secondary zones), the assigned lifeguards provide the same level of surveillance but defer emergency response to the lifeguard that recognizes the emergency first and activates the emergency action plan.

The entire pool outside the primary zone (the tertiary zone) should also be included in each lifeguard's scan, but this is mainly to detect hazards the primary lifeguard cannot easily see. Rule violations can be enforced by any lifeguard, but emergencies detected outside the primary and secondary zones should be pointed out to the primary lifeguard for an appropriate response.

Improving Environment-Specific Surveillance

Some general techniques for improving lifeguard surveillance include adding lifeguards to reduce the area and/or number of individuals being supervised; repositioning lifeguard stations to be closer to the public and to minimize blind spots and glare; and designating the most appropriate rotation schedule.

Adding Lifeguards. Lifeguard can be assigned as a rover along the beach, throughout the waterpark, or around the perimeter of the swimming pool, wave pool, or winding river. In addition, lifeguard can be positioned opposite existing stations at a pool, in the surf zone in the ocean or a wave pool, or in a boat at the outer edge of a waterfront swimming area.

Repositioning the Lifeguard Station. To improve visibility, lifeguard stations can be moved or lifeguards can patrol on foot.

The Most Appropriate Rotation Schedule. The right number of lifeguards must be deployed and rotated at an appropriate interval. Having too many or too few lifeguards deployed and/or keeping them in one station too long can lead to lapses in coverage. ♦



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