

Emergency Preparation



A serious incident can happen even when everyone works to prevent injuries. In an emergency, follow the facility's emergency action plan(s). Be prepared to respond to emergencies, such as the following:

- A young child, playing with friends in the water, starts to drown.
- A person has a seizure, heart attack or stroke and slips underwater.
- A young person dives into shallow water, strikes his or her head and becomes paralyzed.
- The facility's power system suddenly fails.
- A hazardous chemical spills, requiring the facility to be evacuated.
- A severe thunderstorm is approaching a facility.

RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

A professional lifeguard is part of a safety team (Fig. 4-1). Also on the team are supervisors, swimming instructors, security guards, concession staff and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel. At waterfronts, other team members may include park rangers, game wardens or marine safety officers. At waterparks, other team members may include equipment rental personnel and admissions personnel.

Even if there is only one lifeguard performing patron surveillance, other staff members can help in an emergency. Although bystanders may not have the training required to handle emergencies, with proper guidance they also can help by controlling a crowd, relaying a message to other team members, getting equipment or supplies or summoning EMS personnel. It is important for a lifeguard to know who is on the safety team and how to respond in an emergency.

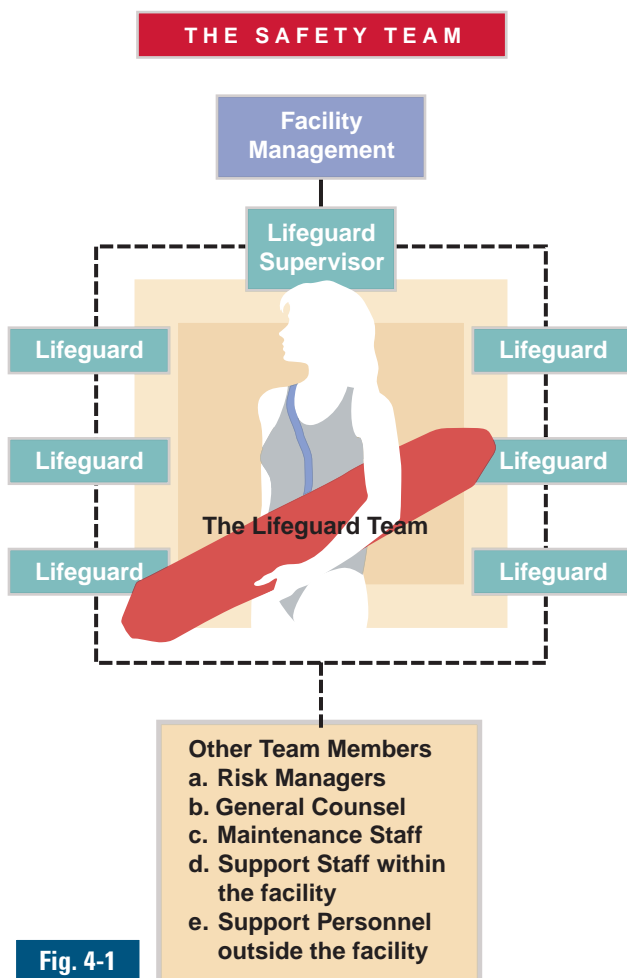


Fig. 4-1

Safety Team Responsibilities

Everyone must know his or her role in an emergency action plan (EAP). Team members may have several different roles in a small facility or one main role in a large facility. When everyone on the team knows his or her responsibilities, the team works together effectively. Responsibilities of the safety team members in an EAP may include—

- Summoning EMS personnel by calling 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
- Performing or assisting with a rescue.
- Providing back-up coverage.
- Controlling bystanders.
- Clearing the pool or facility.

Staff must know where equipment is stored, including the first aid kit, resuscitation mask, disposable gloves, automated external defibrillator (AED) and backboard. The EAP states who is responsible for retrieving equipment and getting it to the injured victim.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

EAPs are detailed plans describing everyone's responsibility in an emergency. EAPs should be in the facility's policies and procedures manual. During orientation and in-service training, lifeguards should learn and practice their assigned responsibilities in the EAPs. In addition, EAPs should be practiced often to develop teamwork.

Emergency Action Plan Steps

A sample EAP for an emergency in the water or on land includes the following steps:

- 1. The lifeguard recognizes that someone needs immediate help.**
The lifeguard recognizes an emergency in the water or on land.
- 2. The lifeguard activates the EAP.**
Before leaving his or her station, the lifeguard first activates the EAP by giving a prearranged signal, such as a long whistle blast, to alert other lifeguards and staff. They provide back-up coverage, give additional help, get additional equipment and call EMS personnel if necessary.
- 3. The lifeguard follows the general procedures for emergencies that occur in the water or on land.**
See Chapter 5 for more information on emergencies that occur in the water and Chapter 6 for more information on emergencies that occur on land.

General Procedures

Water Emergencies

- Assesses the victim's condition.
- Safely enters the water, if needed.
- Performs the appropriate rescue.
- Moves the victim to safety.
- Removes the victim from the water.
- Provides emergency care, if needed.
 - Performs an initial assessment.
 - Summons EMS personnel.
 - Performs a secondary assessment.

Land Emergencies

- Sizes up the scene and approaches the victim.
- Provides emergency care, if needed.
 - Performs an initial assessment.
 - Summons EMS personnel.
 - Performs a secondary assessment.

4. Safety team members assist in the emergency.

Depending on the emergency, safety team members may assist with the rescue, provide back-up coverage, clear the facility, retrieve equipment or call EMS personnel.

5. The chain of command is notified.

The lifeguard supervisor or facility manager is notified. With a serious injury or death, the lifeguard supervisor or facility manager notifies the appropriate management administrator(s) as soon as possible. This supervisor contacts the victim's family.

6. Witnesses are interviewed.

As soon as possible, the designated safety team member individually interviews witnesses who saw the incident. Interviews are done privately and documented in writing.

7. Reports are completed.

The lifeguard who made the rescue fills out an incident report as soon as possible. Other lifeguards and other staff involved in the incident must also fill out separate incident report forms.

8. Equipment is checked.

The staff checks the equipment and supplies used in the rescue. Any damaged or missing items are reported or replaced. Any equipment exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials is properly cleaned and disinfected. If the facility was cleared during the incident, all required equipment must be back in place before reopening the facility.

9. Corrective action taken.

Any situation that may have contributed to the incident is corrected before the facility is reopened or as soon as possible. If needed, restrict access to any unsafe area.

10. Follow-up staff discussion.

If the incident involved a serious injury or death, a professional may help facility personnel and lifeguards cope with the experience.

Emergency Preparation for Waterfronts

EAPs at waterfronts and camps may include additional steps because of the environment, the weather or the size of the waterfront and its surroundings. In rural areas, it may take longer for EMS personnel to arrive than at an urban pool setting. Therefore, the waterfront's EAP should factor in a longer response time.

Emergency Preparation for Waterparks

Factors to consider in an EAP for waterparks include—

- Stopping the waves or slide dispatch.
 - At a wave pool, pushing the emergency stop button to stop the waves (Fig. 4-2).
 - The lifeguard stationed at the top of an attraction not dispatching any more riders.
- Having set whistle signals, hand signals, flags or lights to communicate with other lifeguards.
- If another lifeguard is making a rescue, making sure that the lifeguard's area of responsibility is covered.
- In a deep water attraction, having all lifeguards stand in their chairs and adjust their zone coverage to cover the area of responsibility of the lifeguard making the rescue.
- In a shallow water attraction, having a nearby lifeguard move to cover both his or her area of responsibility and the rescuing lifeguard's area of responsibility.

Fig. 4-2



Missing Person Procedure

All staff should be trained in missing person procedures. Time is critical because the “missing person” may be in the water or it may be a child who wandered off and cannot be found by his or her parent. Therefore, every missing person report is serious. During all missing person search procedures, one person is in charge of the search to avoid confusion and wasted time. This may be the lifeguard supervisor or facility manager.

If the missing person is not found immediately, additional support may be needed from other EMS personnel. Continue the search until EMS personnel arrive on the scene to assist with the search. The EMS response can be canceled if the victim is found and does not need medical assistance. The facility’s EAP for a missing person search may include some of the following actions:

- Use of a predetermined signal that alerts all staff that a person is missing. Lifeguards should clear the swimming areas. In clear water, all swimming areas can be quickly scanned from the surface to determine if the person is in the water. At facilities with turbid water or with limited visibility, lifeguards report to a designated area.
 - All support staff should report immediately to the designated location. The individual who reported the missing person should give a detailed description of the person and wait to identify the person.
 - A public address system announcement should be made describing the missing person.
- Follow facility policy whether to describe a missing child. Ask everyone to stay calm, and ask for volunteers if needed. Tell the missing person to report to the main lifeguard area. Often the person does not know someone reported him or her missing.
- All other lifeguards should search the swimming area, starting where the missing person was last seen. At waterfront facilities:
 - One lifeguard acts as the lookout above the water level on a pier, raft or water craft with rescue equipment.
 - Lifeguards should look under piers, rafts and in other dangerous locations.
 - Adult volunteers can help search shallow areas, but only lifeguards should search beyond chest-deep water.
 - Other facility staff should check the bathrooms, showers, locker rooms, dining areas and other locations.
 - At a camp, staff should quickly check the missing person’s cabin or tent and other areas.
 - At a camp, all campers should be moved to a central location to do a count. Lifeguards should continue to search the entire waterfront until every person has been accounted for or until proper authorities take over.
 - At parks, staff should search playgrounds, campsites and wooded areas. Park rangers, maintenance staff and volunteers can help while lifeguards search the water areas.

During an Emergency

Being prepared for an emergency is more than knowing how to rescue someone. It also means understanding the communication systems used at the facility, including any back-up systems. When first recognizing an emergency, signal other lifeguards and staff. The signal tells other lifeguards there is an emergency and that they should cover the lifeguard’s area of responsibility (back-up cov-

erage). If there is only one lifeguard on patron surveillance duty, patrons should be signaled to leave the water.

All communications need to be simple and clear. The signals used depend on the nature of the facility and the number of staff. Common signals are—

- Whistles.
- Hand signals.
- Public address systems.

- Telephones.
- Two-way radios.
- Flags.
- Megaphones.

Summoning EMS Personnel

Many areas have a 9-1-1 emergency telephone system for summoning EMS personnel. In some communities, a local emergency number is used. In some facilities, an 8, 9 or other number must be dialed first for an outside line. Emergency numbers should be posted on or near all telephones, along with the information to give the dispatcher (Fig. 4-3). Wasting minutes to find the emergency number could cost a life.

LIFEGUARDING TIP: Summoning EMS personnel is important in all EAPs. Everyone, including patrons, should be able to call EMS personnel immediately and give correct information to the dispatcher.

If a victim's injury is determined not to be serious enough to summon EMS personnel, provide the necessary first aid and follow facility procedures. Decide if the person should or should not go back in the water. In some cases, the person should be advised to see a health-care professional.

Some waterparks and remote youth camps may have medical equipment and staff, such as emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or nurses, on site. In this case, these members of the safety team may be contacted first. The facility's EAP will outline the procedures when medical personnel are on staff.

Controlling Bystanders

Lifeguards and/or safety team members in an emergency are responsible for controlling bystanders to prevent in-

terference with a rescue or emergency care. Controlling bystanders might involve—

- Using a firm, but calm voice to ask bystanders to move back so that care can be given. Do not yell at patrons.
- Roping off areas or positioning chairs around the emergency site.
- Recruiting bystanders so they can assist lifeguards and facility staff in crowd control.
- Using the public address system to help control bystanders.
- Repeating commands and requests as often as necessary.
- Ensuring that EMS personnel have a clear path.
- Keeping bystanders and any children away from the water's edge if the facility is cleared.

AFTER AN EMERGENCY

After a victim has received care or has been released to EMS personnel, lifeguards and other members of the safety team still have several tasks to complete.

Completing Reports

After the emergency, lifeguards and other staff involved in the incident must fill out an incident report form (see Sample Incident Report Form on pages 54-55). Write down only factual information, not personal opinion or anything heard from someone else.

Witness statements may also be required. Getting a statement or witnesses' names, addresses and phone numbers may be the responsibility of a lifeguard, although usually a lifeguard supervisor or facility manager does this. Witnesses write their statements on separate, dated forms. They describe the incident in their own words. Lifeguards and other staff should not tell witnesses what to say in this statement. Witnesses should not be together when completing their statements as they may talk to each other and may begin to doubt what each has seen.

Checking Equipment

All equipment and first aid supplies used in the emergency must be replaced. Use the facility's safety checklist to check equipment and supplies. Equipment involved in the emergency, such as a tube, sled or mat, should be removed from rotation until cleared by the lifeguard supervisor or facility manager. If an injured victim was put on a backboard, EMS personnel will usually use that backboard while transporting the victim to a hospital. If that happens, ask EMS personnel to temporarily exchange backboards with the facility. Otherwise, the backboard must be immediately replaced or the facility closed until a backboard is available on site. Equipment exposed to blood or other potentially infectious materials

Fig. 4-3



Sample Incident Report Form

Date of Report: _____ Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____ AM PM

Facility Information

Facility: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Information on Person Assisted (Complete a separate form for incidents involving more than one person)

Name: _____ Age: _____ Gender: Male Female

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number(s): Home: _____ Work: _____

Family Contact (name and phone number): _____

Incident Data

Location of Incident: _____

Description of Incident: _____

Did an injury occur? Yes No

If yes, describe the type of injury: _____

Witnesses (Attach witness descriptions of incident)

1. Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Witness description of incident: _____

2. Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Witness description of incident: _____

Care Provided

Did victim refuse medical attention by staff? Yes No

If yes, have victim (parent or guardian for a minor) sign here: _____ Date: _____

Signature of witness to the refusal of care: _____ Date: _____

Did facility provide care? Yes No

Name of person(s) who provided care: _____

Describe in detail the care provided: _____

Were emergency medical services (EMS) personnel called? Yes No

If yes, by whom? _____

Time EMS personnel called: _____ AM PM

Time EMS personnel arrived: _____ AM PM

Was the victim transported to an emergency facility? Yes No

If yes, where? _____ If no, person returned to activity? Yes No

If the victim is a minor, were the minor's parents contacted (if not present)? Yes No

Facility Data

Number of lifeguards on duty at time of incident: _____

Number of patrons in facility at time of incident: _____

Weather condition at time of incident: _____

Water condition at time of incident: _____

Deck condition at time of incident: _____

Name(s) of lifeguard(s) involved in incident: _____

Report Prepared By:

Name: _____ Position: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attachments

Note any attachments such as an EMS personnel report or follow-up conversations with victim and/or parents or guardian.

must be properly cleaned and disinfected. Report other missing or damaged items to the lifeguard supervisor or facility manager.

Reopening the Facility

During or after a significant incident, the lifeguard supervisor, facility manager or another individual as identified in the EAP decides whether to close the facility temporarily and then, when to reopen. The decision may depend on if enough lifeguards are ready to go back to surveillance, if all the required equipment is in place, if spills involving blood or other potentially infectious materials have been cleaned up or if the facility is safe to reopen. Lifeguards must inform their supervisors if they are too upset by the incident to do a good job of surveillance.

Staff Debriefing

This meeting usually is held after incident reports are completed. The entire safety team attends the meeting. The staff talks about what happened before, during and after the emergency (Fig. 4-4). Avoid assigning blame or criticizing anyone's actions. Goals of the debriefing are to—

- Examine what happened.
- Assess the effectiveness of the EAP.
- Consider new ways to prevent similar incidents in the future.
- Be alert for critical incident stress reactions.

Dealing with Questions

Television or newspaper reporters, insurance company representatives, attorneys and curious people may ask questions about the emergency. Do not give out any information about an injured person. Only management or a designated spokesperson should talk to the media or others about an incident. Talking about what happened can lead to legal action. The procedure for dealing with the media and others should be in the policies and procedures manual and the EAP. If people ask questions, refer them to the manager or spokesperson. Do not discuss the

emergency with anyone not on the facility staff, except for counselors who are there to assist staff. If the area where the incident happened is visible from public property, individuals cannot be prevented from taking a picture from a public area. Anyone requesting to take a photo in the facility, however, needs permission from management.

Critical Incident Stress

In an emergency, the body reacts in several ways. The muscles tense, the heart rate and breathing increase and other reactions occur. The stress of the emergency can cause distress or disruption in a person's mental or emotional balance. The stress can cause sleeplessness, anxiety, depression, exhaustion, restlessness, nausea, nightmares and other problems. Some effects may happen right away, but others may appear days, weeks or even months after the incident. People react to stress in different ways, even with the same incident. Someone may not even recognize that he or she is suffering from stress or know its cause.

A critical incident may cause a strong emotional reaction and interfere with a lifeguard's ability to cope and function during and after the incident. For lifeguards, critical incidents include—

- A patron's death, especially the death of a child or a death following a prolonged rescue attempt.
- An event that endangers the rescuer's life or threatens someone important to the rescuer.
- The death of a co-worker on the job.
- Any powerful emotional event, especially one that receives media coverage.

Rescues involving severe injury or death are stressful for lifeguards. Rescues are especially stressful if the lifeguard believes he or she did something wrong or failed to do something—even after doing exactly what he or she was trained to do. This stress is called *critical incident stress*. It is a normal reaction. Someone experiencing this usually needs help to recognize it, understand it and cope with it. If this type of stress is not identified and managed, it can also disrupt a lifeguard's personal life and his or her effectiveness on the job. Facility management should help by contacting a licensed mental health professional.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

EAPs are blueprints for handling emergencies. Everyone must know his or her role in an EAP. Teamwork and practice of the EAP helps members of the safety team know how to respond in an emergency and how to manage the stress it may cause.



Fig. 4-4