

The Benefits of Lifeguarding



As this manual has shown, lifeguarding is a challenging and important job. Being an effective lifeguard requires commitment and a lot of work, but the personal and professional benefits are well worth the effort.

PERSONAL BENEFITS

One of the most important personal benefits of being a successful lifeguard is the satisfaction of knowing that a lifeguard's actions can save a life. A related benefit is the self-confidence built by meeting the many physical and mental challenges of the job. Other benefits of lifeguarding include—

- **Improved self-discipline.** Professional lifeguards must be mature and reliable. For example, they must arrive at work on time, accept assignments willingly and respond to incidents quickly and effectively. Lifeguards also must stay healthy and fit in order to react to emergencies with a burst of energy. This requires exercising regularly, eating properly, using sun protection and avoiding the use of alcohol and other drugs.
- **Better decision-making skills.** Decision making is important in lifeguarding, as it is in other areas in life. Lifeguards often make important decisions, many under the intense stress of an emergency. These include—
 - How to prevent a swimmer in trouble from becoming a drowning victim.
 - How to ensure patron safety.
 - When and how to make a rescue.
 - When and how to perform first aid and provide other emergency care.
- **Increased leadership opportunities.** Professional lifeguards are leaders at their facilities and, as such, they are expected to act responsibly, obey all of the facility rules and lead others by their example.
- **Development of public relations, customer service and conflict-resolution skills.** Lifeguards represent their facilities to the public in a professional way. Any time they interact with the public, their actions should promote an atmosphere of trust and goodwill. Lifeguards learn to interact successfully with patrons and deal with both emergency and non-emergency problems.
- **Understanding how to properly enforce the rules.** Among a lifeguard's many responsibilities is enforcing the facility's rules and regulations. However, no matter how fairly a lifeguard enforces the rules, he or she may encounter an uncooperative patron. An effective lifeguard must learn how to resolve these conflicts—as well as conflicts between patrons—in a respectful, positive manner.
- **Teamwork skills development.** Whenever more than one lifeguard is on duty at the same time, those lifeguards are part of a team (**Fig. 11-1**). Learning to work as a member of a team is a very valuable skill because—
 - A team can do its work and accomplish its goals more efficiently than a group of individuals working separately.

Fig. 11-1



- Individuals are better motivated to do a good job when they feel part of a team.
- Everyone has more fun cooperating and working together.

PROFESSIONAL BENEFITS

The skills learned and developed as a lifeguard hold great value, not only for careers in aquatics or recreation, but for any career or life situation that involves working with others. Employers value employees with decision-making, leadership, public relations, customer service, conflict-resolution and teamwork skills. Self-confidence and self-discipline are also highly valued in the workplace.

Using these skills and experiences, many lifeguards have gone on to become successful in a variety of professions including business, law and politics. At least one president of the United States, Ronald Reagan, began his professional career as a lifeguard.

Careers in Aquatics

If aquatics is one's chosen career, consider enrolling in an American Red Cross Lifeguard Management course, which prepares qualified candidates to become lifeguard supervisors (**Fig. 11-2**). Lifeguard supervisors gain experience in minimizing risks—a skill that is crucial for moving into higher positions in both aquatics and recreation. Lifeguard supervisors also take on a higher level of leadership responsibilities, including assisting with staff hiring and recruitment, conducting trainings and developing work schedules.

Employment as a lifeguard supervisor is the next step on a career path at many aquatics facilities, including the following:

- Pool or aquatic facility manager
- Aquatics director
- Aquatics and sports and leisure clubs director

Fig. 11-2



- Aquatics programmer, supervisor or coordinator
- Instructional specialist
- Swim, dive, water polo or synchronized swimming coach

Other Careers

While working as a lifeguard, one may develop an interest in working as an emergency medical technician (EMT). First aid, CPR and AED training will help one prepare and adapt to a career in the emergency medical field.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

To be a successful professional lifeguard, candidates must work hard and be dedicated. However, if a candidate chooses to make the commitment, the personal and professional rewards gained will last a lifetime.

Lifeguarding for Life

It would be hard to find a better example of a successful lifeguard than Luiz Morizot-Leite.

Morizot-Leite supervises 40 guards at Haulover Beach, Florida, and trains American Red Cross lifeguards in his spare time.

Morizot-Leite is one of the most sought-after instructors, according to officials at the American Red Cross of Greater Miami and the Keys. The 36-year-old teaches lifeguarding, water safety and other Red Cross courses. People keep asking for him," said Elba Taveras, a Red Cross-coordinator. "Wherever he goes, he keeps the class interesting."

Teaching is only the beginning of Morizot-Leite's efforts to smash stereotypes about lifeguarding and revitalize its appeal. "The public has this image that you're only a lifeguard when you are a kid, but lifeguarding is a professional career," he said. Several career lifeguards work for him. One, a former university teacher with a

master's degree, worked at Morizot-Leite's facility for 18 years until a hip fracture forced him to retire at the age of 69. Morizot-Leite wants to be like him. "I'll be doing this 25 years from now," he said.

Brazilian born, Morizot-Leite was 4 years old when he began dreaming of being a lifeguard like his father, who guarded for several years before entering medical school. After arriving in the United States, Morizot-Leite decided to become an EMT to improve his lifeguard qualifications. In 2003, he completed his master's degree in sports management, which brings up another stereotype. "I hate that people think we become lifeguards because we don't like to study," he said. In fact, he said, his facility may soon require a college degree.

Whatever their education, lifeguards need training, Morizot-Leite believes. "The Red Cross gives lifeguards the foundation they need."

GLOSSARY

Abandonment – Ending care of an ill or injured person without that person's consent or without ensuring that someone with equal or greater training will continue that care.

Abdomen – The middle part of the trunk (torso) containing the stomach, liver and other organs.

Abrasion – A wound in which skin is rubbed or scraped away.

Active drowning victim – A person exhibiting universal behavior that includes struggling at the water's surface for 20 to 60 seconds before submerging.

Anaphylactic shock – A severe allergic reaction in which air passages may swell and restrict breathing; a form of shock. See also anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis – A severe allergic reaction; a form of shock. See also anaphylactic shock.

Anatomic splint – A part of the body used to immobilize an injured body part.

Anatomical obstruction – Complete or partial blockage of the airway by the tongue or swollen tissues of the mouth or throat.

Angina pectoris – Chest pain that comes and goes at different times; commonly associated with cardiovascular disease.

Antihistamine – Drugs used to treat the signals of allergic reactions.

Aquatic environment – An environment in which recreational water activities are played or performed.

Aquatic safety team – A network of people in the facility and emergency medical services system who can plan for, respond to and assist in an emergency at an aquatic facility.

Area of responsibility – The zone or area in which a lifeguard conducts surveillance.

Ashen – A grayish color; darker skin often looks ashen instead of pale.

Assess – To examine and evaluate a situation carefully.

Asthma – A condition that narrows the air passages and makes breathing difficult.

Asystole – A condition in which the heart has stopped generating electrical activity.

Atherosclerosis – A form of cardiovascular disease marked by a narrowing of the arteries in the heart and other parts of the body.

Atria – The upper chambers of the heart.

Atrioventricular node (AV) – The point along the heart's electrical pathway midway between the atria and ventricles that sends electrical impulses to the ventricles.

Automated external defibrillator (AED) – An automatic device used to recognize a heart rhythm that requires an electric shock and either delivers the shock or prompts the rescuer to deliver it.

Avulsion – A wound in which soft tissue is partially or completely torn away.

Backboard – A standard piece of rescue equipment at all aquatic facilities used to maintain in-line stabilization while securing and transporting a victim with a suspected head, neck or back injury.

Bag-valve-mask resuscitator (BVM) – A handheld breathing device used on a victim in respiratory distress or respiratory arrest. It consists of a self-inflating bag, a one-way valve, and a face mask and can be used with or without supplemental oxygen.

Bandage – Material used to wrap or cover an injured body part; often used to hold a dressing in place.

Blind spots – Areas within a lifeguard's area of responsibility that cannot be seen or are difficult to see.

Bloodborne pathogens – Bacteria and viruses present in blood and body fluids, which can cause disease in humans.

Bloodborne pathogens standard – A federal regulation designed to protect employees from exposure to bodily fluids that might contain a disease-causing agent.

Body substance isolation (BSI) precautions – An approach to infection control that considers all body fluids and substances to be infectious.

Bone – A dense, hard tissue that forms the skeleton.

Buddy board – A board with identification tags used to keep track of swimmers and reinforce the importance of the buddy system.

Bulkhead – A moveable wall placed in a swimming pool to separate activities or water of different depths.

Buoy – A float in the water anchored to the bottom.

Buoyancy – The tendency of a body to float or to rise when submerged in a fluid.

Buoyant – Tending to float, capable of keeping an object afloat.

Bystanders – People at the scene of an emergency who do not have a duty to provide care.

Carbon dioxide – A colorless, odorless gas; a waste product of respiration.

Carbon monoxide (CO) – A clear, odorless, poisonous gas produced when carbon or other fuel is burned, as in gasoline engines.

Cardiac arrest – A condition in which the heart has stopped or beats too ineffectively to generate a pulse.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) – A technique that combines chest compressions and rescue breaths for a victim whose heart and breathing have stopped.

Cartilage – An elastic tissue in the body; in the joints, it acts as a shock absorber when a person is walking, running or jumping.

Catch pool – A small pool at the bottom of a slide where patrons enter water deep enough to cushion their landing.

Chain of command – The structure of employee and management positions in a facility or organization.

Chemical hazard – A harmful or potentially harmful substance in or around a facility.

Chest – The upper part of the trunk (torso), containing the heart, major blood vessels and lungs.

Chronic – Persistent over a long period of time.

Closed wound – An injury that does not break the skin and in which soft tissue damage occurs beneath the skin.

Concussion – A temporary impairment of brain function.

Conduction system – Specialized cells of the heart that initiate and carry on electrical activity.

Confidentiality – Protecting a victim's privacy by not revealing any personal information learned about a victim except to law enforcement personnel or emergency medical services personnel caring for the victim.

Consent – Permission to provide care given by an ill or injured person to a rescuer.

Convulsions – Sudden, uncontrolled muscular contractions.

Critical incident – Any situation that causes a person to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that interfere with his or her ability to function during and after a highly stressful incident.

Critical incident stress – The stress a person experiences during or after a highly stressful emergency.

Cross bearing – A technique for determining the place where a submerged victim was last seen, performed by two persons some distance apart, each pointing to the place such that the position is where the lines of their pointing cross.

Cryptosporidium – A parasitic disease found in the feces of infected humans or animals. It can be spread by swallowing water that has been in contact with the contaminated feces and is difficult to kill with chlorine.

Current – Fast-moving water.

Cyanosis – A blue discoloration of the skin around the mouth and fingertips resulting from a lack of oxygen in the blood.

Daily log – A written journal kept by lifeguards, the head lifeguard and management containing a daily account of safety precautions taken and significant events.

Deep-water line search – An effective pattern for searching in water that is greater than chest deep.

Defibrillation – An electrical shock that disrupts the electrical activity of the heart long enough to allow the heart to spontaneously develop an effective rhythm on its own.

Diabetes – A condition in which the body does not produce enough insulin or does not use insulin effectively enough to regulate the amount of sugar (glucose) in the bloodstream.

Diabetic – A person with the condition called diabetes mellitus, which causes a body to produce insufficient amounts of the hormone insulin.

Diabetic emergency – A situation in which a person becomes ill because of an imbalance of sugar (glucose) and insulin in the bloodstream.

Direct contact transmission – Occurs when infected blood or body fluids from one person enter another person's body at a correct entry site.

Disability – The loss, absence or impairment of sensory, motor or mental function.

Dislocation – The movement of a bone away from its normal position at a joint.

Disoriented – Being in a state of confusion; not knowing place, identity or what happened.

Dispatch – The method for informing patrons when it is safe to proceed on a ride.

Distressed swimmer – A person capable of staying afloat, but likely to need assistance to get to safety. If not rescued, the person becomes an active drowning victim.

Dressing – A pad placed on a wound to control bleeding and prevent infection.

Drop-off slide – A slide that ends with a drop of several feet into a catch pool.

Droplet transmission – Transmission of disease through the inhalation of droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze.

Drowning – Death by suffocation when submerged in water.

Drug – Any substance other than food intended to affect the functions of the body.

Duty to act – A legal responsibility of certain people to provide a reasonable standard of emergency care; may be required by case law, statute or job description.

Elapid snake – Family of venomous snakes that includes coral snakes, cobras, mambas and others, such as the Australian brown snake or death adder.

Electrocardiogram (ECG) – A graphic record produced by a device that records the electrical activity of the heart from the chest.

Embedded object – An object that remains embedded in an open wound.

Emergency – A sudden, unexpected incident demanding immediate action.

Emergency action plan (EAP) – A written plan detailing how facility staff are to respond in a specific type of emergency.

Emergency medical services (EMS) personnel – Trained and equipped community-based personnel dispatched through an emergency number, usually 9-1-1, to provide medical care for ill or injured people.

Emergency medical technician (EMT) – A person who has successfully completed a state-approved emergency medical technician training program; paramedics are the highest level of EMTs.

Emergency stop button – A button or switch used to immediately turn off the waves or water flow in a wave pool, water slide or other water attraction in the event of an emergency.

Emphysema – A disease in which the lungs lose their ability to exchange carbon dioxide and oxygen effectively.

Engineering controls – Safeguards intended to isolate or remove a hazard from the workplace.

Epilepsy – A chronic condition characterized by seizures that vary in type and duration; can usually be controlled by medication.

Exhaustion – The state of being extremely tired or weak.

Facility surveillance – Checking the facility to help prevent injuries caused by avoidable hazards in the facility's environment.

Fainting – A temporary loss of consciousness.

Fibrillation – A quivering of the heart's ventricles.

Forearm – The upper extremity from the elbow to the wrist.

Fracture – A chip, crack or complete break in bone tissue.

Free-fall slide – A type of speed slide with a nearly vertical drop, giving riders the sensation of falling.

Frostbite – The freezing of body parts exposed to the cold.

Heat cramps – Painful spasms of skeletal muscles after exercise or work in warm or moderate temperatures; usually involve the calf and abdominal muscles.

Heat exhaustion – The early stage and most common form of heat-related illness; often results from strenuous work or exercise in a hot environment.

Heat stroke – A life-threatening condition that develops when the body's cooling mechanisms are overwhelmed and body systems begin to fail.

Heat-related illnesses – Illnesses, including heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat stroke, caused by overexposure to heat.

Hepatitis B – A liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus; may be severe or even fatal and can be in the body up to 6 months before symptoms appear.

Hepatitis C – A liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus; it is the most common chronic bloodborne infection in the United States.

Hull – The main body of a boat.

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) – A virus that destroys the body's ability to fight infection. A result of HIV infection is referred to as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

Hydraulic – Strong force created by water flowing downward over an obstruction and then reversing its flow.

Hypothermia – A life-threatening condition in which the body is unable to maintain warmth and the entire body cools below normal temperature.

Hypoxia – A condition in which insufficient oxygen reaches the cells, resulting in cyanosis and changes in consciousness and in breathing and heart rates.

Immobilize – To use a splint or other method to keep an injured body part from moving.

Implied consent – Legal concept that assumes a person would consent to receive emergency care if he or she were physically able to do so.

Incident – An occurrence or event that interrupts normal procedure or brings about a crisis.

Incident report – A report filed by a lifeguard or other facility staff who responded to an emergency or other incident.

Indirect contact transmission – Occurs when a person touches objects that have the blood or body fluid of an infected person, and that infected blood or body fluid enters the body through a correct entry site.

Inflatables – Plastic toys or equipment that are filled with air to function as recommended.

Inhaled poison – A poison that a person breathes into the lungs.

Injury – The physical harm from an external force on the body.

In-service training – Regularly scheduled staff meetings and practice sessions that cover lifeguarding information and skills.

Instinctive drowning response – A universal set of behaviors exhibited by an active drowning victim that include struggling to keep the face above water, extending arms to the side and pressing down for support, not making any forward progress in the water and staying at the surface for only 20 to 60 seconds.

Joint – A structure where two or more bones are joined.

Laceration – A cut.

Laryngospasm – A spasm of the vocal cords that closes the airway.

Life jacket – A type of personal flotation device (PFD) approved by the United States Coast Guard for use during activities in, on or around water.

Lifeguard – A person trained in lifeguarding, CPR and first aid skills who ensures the safety of people at an aquatic facility by preventing and responding to emergencies.

Lifeguard competitions – Events and contests designed to evaluate the skills and knowledge of individual lifeguards and lifeguard teams.

Lifeguard team – A group of two or more lifeguards on duty at a facility at the same time.

Ligaments – A tough, fibrous connective tissue that holds bones together at a joint.

Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) – A form that provides information about a hazardous substance.

Mechanical obstruction – Complete or partial blockage of the airway by a foreign object, such as a piece of food or a small toy, or by fluids, such as vomit or blood.

Muscle – Tissue in the body that lengthens and shortens to create movement.

Myocardial infarction – A heart attack.

Nasal cannula – A device used to deliver oxygen to a breathing person; used mostly for victims with minor breathing problems.

Negligence – The failure to follow the standard of care or to act, thereby causing injury or further harm to another.

Nonfatal submersion – To survive, at least temporarily, following submersion in water (drowning). Also known as near drowning.

Non-rebreather mask – A mask used to deliver high concentrations of oxygen to breathing victims.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) – A government agency that helps protect the health and safety of employees in the workplace.

Open wound – An injury to soft tissue resulting in a break in the skin, such as a cut.

Opportunistic infections – Infections that strike people whose immune systems are weakened by HIV or other infections.

Oxygen – A tasteless, colorless, odorless gas necessary to sustain life.

Paralysis – A loss of muscle control; a permanent loss of feeling and movement.

Partial thickness burn – A burn that involves both layers of skin. Also called a second-degree burn.

Passive drowning victim – An unconscious victim face-down, submerged or near the surface.

Pathogen – A disease-causing agent. Also called a microorganism or germ.

Patron surveillance – Maintaining a close watch over the people using an aquatic facility.

Peripheral vision – What one sees at the edges of one's field of vision.

Personal flotation device (PFD) – Coast Guard-approved life jacket, buoyancy vest, wearable flotation aid, throwable device or other special use flotation device.

Personal water craft – A motorized vehicle designed for one or two riders that skims over the surface of the water.

Pier – A wooden walkway or platform built over the water supported by pillars that is used for boats to dock, fishing or other water activities.

Poison – Any substance that causes injury, illness or death when introduced into the body.

Poison Control Center (PCC) – A specialized kind of health center that provides information in cases of poisoning or suspected poisoning emergencies.

Policies and procedures manual – A manual that provides detailed information about the daily and emergency operations of a facility.

Preventive lifeguarding – The methods that lifeguards use to prevent drowning and other injuries by identifying dangerous conditions or behaviors and then taking steps to minimize or eliminate them.

Professional rescuers – Paid or volunteer personnel, including lifeguards, who have a legal duty to act in an emergency.

Public address system – An electronic amplification system, used at an aquatic facility so that announcements can be easily heard by patrons.

Puncture – An open wound created when the skin is pierced by a pointed object.

Purkinje fibers – A vast network of microscopic fibers, which spread electrical impulses across the heart.

Rapids ride – A rough-water attraction that simulates white-water rafting.

Reaching assist – A method of helping someone out of the water by reaching to that person with your hand, leg or an object.

Reaching pole – An aluminum or fiberglass pole, usually 10- to 15-feet long, used for rescues.

Refusal of care – The declining of care by a victim; the victim has the right to refuse the care of anyone who responds to an emergency.

Rescue board – A plastic or fiberglass board shaped like a surf board that is used by lifeguards to paddle out and make a rescue.

Rescue tube – A 45- to 54-inch vinyl, foam-filled tube with an attached tow line and shoulder strap that lifeguards use to make rescues.

Respiratory arrest – A condition in which breathing has stopped.

Respiratory distress – A condition in which breathing is difficult.

Resuscitation mask – A pliable, dome-shaped device that fits over a person's mouth and nose; used to assist with rescue breathing.

RID factor – Three elements—recognition, intrusion and distraction—related to drownings at guarded facilities.

Ring buoy – A buoyant ring, usually 20 to 30 inches in diameter; with an attached line, allows a rescuer to pull a victim to safety without entering the water.

Risk management – Identifying and eliminating or minimizing dangerous conditions that can cause injuries and financial loss.

Rules – Guidelines for conduct or action that help keep patrons safe at pools and other swimming areas.

Runout – The area at the end of a slide where water slows the speed of the riders.

Safety check – An inspection of the facility to find and eliminate or minimize hazards.

Scanning – A visual technique used by lifeguards to properly observe and monitor patrons participating in water activities.

Seizure – A disorder in the brain's electrical activity, marked by loss of consciousness and often by convulsions.

Shepherd's crook – A reaching pole with a large hook on the end. See also reaching pole.

Shock – A life-threatening condition in which the circulatory system fails to deliver blood to all parts of the body, causing body organs to fail.

Sighting – A technique for noting where a submerged victim was last seen, performed by imagining a line to the

opposite shore and estimating the victim's position along that line. See also cross bearing.

Sink – To fall, drop or descend gradually to a lower level.

Sinoatrial (SA) node – The origin of the heart's electrical impulse.

Soft tissue – Body structures that include the layers of skin, fat and muscles.

Spa – A small pool or tub in which people sit in rapidly circulating hot water.

Spasm – An involuntary and abnormal muscle contraction.

Speed slide – A steep water slide on which patrons may reach speeds in excess of 35 mph.

Spinal column – Small bones that extend from the base of the skull to the tip of the tailbone that protect the spinal cord.

Spinal cord – A bundle of nerves extending from the base of the skull to the lower back and protected by the spinal column.

Splint – A device used to immobilize body parts; applying such a device.

Spokesperson – The person at the facility designated to speak on behalf of others.

Sprain – The stretching and tearing of ligaments and other tissue structures at a joint.

Standard of care – The minimal standard and quality of care expected of an emergency care provider.

Standard precautions – Safety measures, such as body substance isolation, taken to prevent occupational-risk exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials, such as body fluids containing visible blood.

Starting blocks – Platforms from which competitive swimmers dive to start a race.

Sterile – Free from germs.

Stern – The back of a boat.

Stoma – An opening in the front of the neck through which a person whose larynx has been removed breathes.

Strain – The stretching and tearing of muscles or tendons.

Stress – A physiological or psychological response to real or imagined influences that alter an existing state of physical, mental or emotional balance.

Stroke – A disruption of blood flow to a part of the brain, causing permanent damage.

Submerged – Underwater, covered with water.

Sun protection factor (SPF) – The ability of a substance to prevent the sun’s harmful rays from being absorbed into the skin; a concentration of sunscreen.

Sunscreen – A cream, lotion or spray used to protect the skin from harmful rays of the sun.

Superficial burn – A burn involving only the outer layer of skin, the epidermis, characterized by dry, red or tender skin. Also referred to as a first-degree burn.

Surveillance – A close watch kept over someone or something, such as patrons or a facility.

Thermocline – A layer of water between the warmer, surface zone and the colder, deep-water zone in a body of water in which the temperature decreases rapidly with depth.

Throwable device – Any object that can be thrown to a drowning victim to aid him or her in floating.

Throwing assist – A method of helping someone out of the water by throwing a floating object with a line attached.

Tornado warning – A warning issued by the National Weather Service notifying that a tornado has been sighted.

Tornado watch – A warning issued by the National Weather Service notifying that tornadoes are possible.

Universal precautions – Practices required by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to control and protect employees from exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials.

Vector-borne transmission – Transmission of a disease by an animal or insect bite through exposure to blood or other body fluids.

Ventricles – The two lower chambers of the heart.

Ventricular fibrillation (V-fib) – An abnormal heart rhythm characterized by disorganized electrical activity, which results in the quivering of the ventricles.

Ventricular tachycardia (V-tach) – An abnormal heart rhythm characterized by rapid contractions of the ventricles.

Vertebrae – Small bones that make up the spinal column. See also spinal column.

Waterfront – Open water areas, such as lakes, rivers, ponds and oceans.

Waterpark – An aquatic theme park with attractions such as wave pools, speed slides or winding rivers.

Work practice controls – Employee and employer behaviors that reduce the likelihood of exposure to a hazard at the job site.

Wound – An injury to the soft tissues.

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