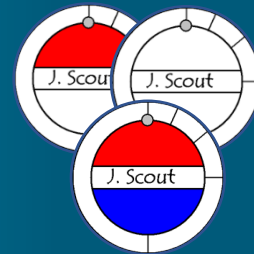


BSA AQUATICS MANAGEMENT GUIDE

A GUIDE FOR MANAGEMENT OF
AQUATICS ACTIVITIES FOR
UNIT, DISTRICT, COUNCIL AND
CAMP MANAGERS:

- COUNCIL:
 - PROFESSIONALS
 - COMMITTEE MEMBERS
- DISTRICT:
 - DAY CAMP DIRECTORS
- CAMP:
 - CAMP DIRECTORS
 - PROGRAM DIRECTORS
 - AQUATICS DIRECTORS
- PACK, TROOP, CREW or SHIP
 - UNIT COMMITTEE
 - UNIT ADULT LEADERSHIP



Preface –

This ***BSA Aquatics Management Guide*** is intended to serve as a guide for those tasked with planning, developing, and delivering aquatics program at all levels of scouting. It will provide guidance for Camp Management and Aquatics Directors while, at the same time, giving Council and District professionals and volunteers direction in developing exciting and safe aquatics programs.

This publication supports and references [*Aquatics Supervision, A leader's guide to youth swimming and boating activities*](#) and [*BSA Aquatics Staff Guide*](#) . Both are available for download by clicking on their title.

The *Aquatics Management Guide* is maintained and updated regularly by the BSA National Aquatics Subcommittee. Please provide comments and recommendations by email to outdoorprograms@scouting.org or to terrells@indy.rr.com .

The *Aquatics Management Guide* is intended to be used digitally. It will be updated as needed and the most current version will be on scouting.org. While it can be printed locally, the user will lose access to the many weblinks in the guide. Also, the material will only be as up to date as the day it was printed.

Please use this guide in developing your local aquatics programs. Council and camp aquatics programs and policies should be consistent with the guidance provided. Please share any best practices and procedures.

BSA National Aquatics Subcommittee
Terry Budd, Chairman

Revision: V 2.0 - 3/1/2024

BSA AQUATICS MANAGEMENT GUIDE

MAIN TABLE OF CONTENTS

DIRECTIONS: The Tables of Content in the *BSA Aquatics Management Guide* are interactive; that is, clicking on a topic in the Table of Contents will jump you to that topic (or maybe to a more detailed Table of Contents). Clicking on a red triangle will jump you back to the previous Table of Contents.

UNIT 1 -- AQUATICS PROGRAM

A discussion of the various **aquatics programs** available in the BSA and how they inter-relate. Major categories include [Youth Camp Programs](#), [Aquatics Program Categories](#) and [Aquatics Continuum](#)

UNIT 2 -- AQUATICS POLICY

A discussion of the BSA aquatics **policies, laws, regulations, and recommended practice**. Major categories are [Government Regulations / Recommendations](#) and [BSA Policies / Recommendations](#). Topics will include *The Guide to Safe Scouting*, NCAP, *Safe Swim Defense*, *Safety Afloat*, *Model Aquatic Health Code*, *National On-Water Standards*, etc. Emphasis is also placed on the process of developing local policies based on Program Hazard Analysis, Decision Matrices and Risk Management practices.

UNIT 3 -- AQUATICS PROCEDURES

A discussion of the various procedures and best practices to allow units, districts, councils and camps to implement the programs and policies. Major categories include [Aquatics Procedures for the Unit](#), [Aquatics Procedures for the Camp](#), and [Aquatics Procedures for the Council or District](#).

UNIT 1 -- AQUATICS PROGRAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BSA YOUTH CAMP PROGRAMS

**AQUATICS PROGRAM
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BSA AQUATICS CONTINUUM



BSA YOUTH CAMP PROGRAMS

IN THIS SECTION:

- OVERVIEW
- THE PURPOSES OF AQUATICS IN SCOUTING
- PREFERRED METHOD OF SCOUT CAMPING
- AGE-APPROPRIATE CAMPING
- CUB SCOUT CAMPS
- SCOUTS BSA RESIDENT CAMPS
- HIGH ADVENTURE CAMPS
- FAMILY ADVENTURE CAMPS

OVERVIEW

All program divisions of the Boy Scouts of America, from Cub Scouting through Venturing, use responsible outdoor adventure programs to promote character development and values-based leadership training.

Many youth join, and remain in, units because Scouting provides fun, exciting, and challenging activities, sometimes on brief excursions but often as part of a camping experience. Aquatics programs are frequently part of a camp outing.

Units, that is, packs, troops, crews, and ships, often conduct their own camping and aquatics programs. Aquatics programs for unit activities are covered in the BSA publication ***Aquatics Supervision- A leader's guide to youth swimming and boating activities***, item 34346, available through Scout shops or online at www.scoutstuff.org. That text is an important component of BSA Aquatics Instructor training at National Camp Schools and should be available to all camp aquatics staff.

Units also take advantage of multi-unit camps organized at district and council levels.

Council-operated camps often provide equipment and programs difficult to manage at the unit level, including staff expertise. Such camps are also



commonly subject to significant government regulation. This publication serves as a guide for aquatics activities for district and council camp programs.

PURPOSES OF AQUATICS IN SCOUTING

All BSA aquatics activities are driven by the following five purposes of BSA aquatics:

- Self-confidence and skill
- Care of self, others, equipment
- Recreation
- Physical fitness and coordination
- Unit training

PREFERRED METHOD OF SCOUT CAMPING

Summer camp programs in the BSA are extensions of a year-round program for youth guided by volunteer adult leaders. Therefore, the preferred method for Scout summer camping is the chartered unit camping under its own leadership.

That is, youth at BSA camps are there with friends from home and are supervised at camp by leaders, both youth and adult, with whom they are familiar. Older youth at the Scouts BSA level and above are encouraged to follow their own customized camp schedule to meet individual interests and advancement needs.

Unit leaders guide and track Scout activities during the day, including supervision at meals, and control campsite activities at night Summer camp staff support unit activities and provide instruction in specialized skills.

The BSA camping model is different from many youth camps where youth join a program with few friends that lasts only a few days or weeks and are supervised at all times by paid staff, often with the entire group doing the same thing at the same time.



AGE-APPROPRIATE CAMPING

All BSA programs, including camping and aquatics, are tailored to the maturity and physical development of youth. Cub Scouting serves youth from kindergarten through fifth grade. Scouts BSA serves those from fifth grade through age 17. Venturing and Sea Scouts are for youth 14 (completion of eighth grade) to 20.

Various council and national high adventure camping programs are limited to youth members past a certain age, typically 13 to 14 as per Venturing.

As stated above, summer camp programs are an integral part of BSA programs, particularly at the Scouts BSA level. Depending on the council, camp aquatics staff may serve more than one program division.



CUB SCOUT CAMPING

OVERVIEW

The basic Cub Scout unit is a den of six to eight youth, either all male or all female, served by an adult den leader. Dens are organized into packs, with dens of both genders, under a Cubmaster. Cub Scouting is the largest Scouting division and provides an excellent opportunity to introduce camping and aquatics skills.

Cub Scout programming is based on age or school year. A child in the third grade begins the program at that stage without completing the earlier modules. Children in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades work on Lion, Tiger, Wolf, and Bear badges, respectively. Cub Scouts in the fourth and fifth grades undertake more advanced activities while working toward the Webelos and Arrow of Light ranks.

Cub Scouting is a family-based program with limited camping occurring at council-sanctioned, improved sites such neighborhood parks, organized campgrounds, or council camps.

CUB SCOUT CAMPING -- Council-Organized Family Camps

Council-organized family camps are overnight events involving more than one Cub Scout pack. The council provides all the elements of the outdoor experience, such as staffing, food service, housing, and program. These overnights are often referred to as parent/pal or adventure weekends. In most cases, the youth member will be under the supervision of a parent or guardian. In all cases, each youth participant is responsible to a specific adult.

Council-organized family camps must be conducted in accordance with established standards as given in the BSA National Camp Accreditation Program (NCAP) standards. Those standards, covered elsewhere in this publication, mandate how aquatics programs are conducted.

Aquatics staff for longer term council camping programs are sometimes recruited for family camp weekends.

CUB SCOUT CAMPING -- Cub Scout Day Camps

Day camp is an organized one- to five-day program for Cub Scouts, conducted by the council under certified leadership at an approved site during daylight or early evening hours. Day camps do not include any overnight activities.

The day camp is “the camp that comes to the Cub Scout”. Councils should arrange site locations convenient for maximum participation. Some councils have suitable properties near urban areas. Other councils may subcontract with parks or other agencies to use their facilities. NCAP standards specify how to conduct swimming activities when an agency other than the council provides professionally trained lifeguards.

Aquatics activities at day camps are typically limited to short periods for recreational swimming and boating with a minimum of instruction. However, learn-to-swim instruction and elective Cub Scout Adventures in aquatics may be part of the program.

CUB SCOUT CAMPING -- Cub Scout/Webelos Scout Resident Camps

Cub Scout and Webelos Scout resident camping is a council-organized, theme-oriented overnight camping program that operates for at least two consecutive nights and is conducted under certified leadership at a camp approved by the council.

Some councils alternate Cub Scout and Scout BSA camping programs at the same camp property, often with the same staff serving both. Other councils have camps dedicated to Cub Scout camping, often with different theme-oriented structures around which program is conducted. As discussed later, aquatics activities should be adjusted to follow the theme which varies on a multi-year cycle.



SCOUTS BSA RESIDENT CAMPS

Council operated resident camps for Scouts BSA include at least five nights and six days of outdoor activities. Linked troops, that is, all-male and all-female troops with the same sponsor, may attend the same session but will stay in gender specific campsites. Program opportunities are extensive and often include special programs for first year campers and high adventure activities for older youth.

Probably no other youth organization in the world offers the breadth and depth of aquatics programming that may be offered at Scouts BSA resident camps. Options include ten merit badges, from *Swimming* through *Small Boat Sailing*, seven special awards from Snorkeling through Whitewater Rafting, and special activities such as recreational swimming areas with large inflatable play structures or PWC instruction.

Few camps offer all possible BSA aquatics programs, but over 50 percent offer at least nine swimming and boating instructional programs. Doing that effectively and safely requires significant staff resources and training, which is one reason this book is made available.



BSA HIGH ADVENTURE CAMPS

In 2019, there were fifty-five council high adventure camps with treks lasting five days or more. While some feature backpacking, others offer canoeing, kayaking, rafting, or sailing. Some offer scuba certification or other advanced skills as part of resident programs. Most will accept out-of-council troops, crews, or ships.

Special provisions in NCAP apply to the procedures and staff training required to conduct such programs, including aquatics.

There are also four national high adventure bases, three of which feature aquatics programs.



BSA FAMILY ADVENTURE CAMPS

BSA Family Adventure Camps provide outdoor adventures designed for the entire family. The camps will be open to all registered members of the BSA and their families to participate in Scouting's best family vacation. The program began at Philmont in 2019. Councils must have approval from National to participate in this new program.

Since Philmont has no aquatics activities, the impact of Family Adventure Camping on BSA aquatics rules and procedures has not yet been determined, for example, policies on parent supervision of infants and toddlers in swimming areas and the use of "swim" diapers. Stay tuned for additional information.



BSA AQUATICS PROGRAM CATEGORIES

IN THIS SECTION:

- OVERVIEW
- ADVANCEMENT PROGRAMS
- INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS
- RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

A well-rounded aquatic program will consider all three categories of BSA Aquatics programming -- advancement, instruction, and recreation. While advancement seems to drive the action in many scouting programs, especially Scouts BSA, it is important to include instruction / training for both group and individuals as well as fun activities that are included simply for recreation.

BSA AQUATIC ADVANCEMENT PROGRAMS

BSA aquatic advancement ranges from the electives of Cub ranks which are usually completed at the family or den level, to the various levels of Scouts BSA and on to Eagle.

In most of the Scouts BSA advancement it is the responsibility of the individual to seek out instruction and completion; however, many unit, district and council activities can be organized around providing instructors and counselors to assist the Scout in that effort.

BSA AQUATICS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Basic aquatic instructional programs include the instruction necessary to participate safely in recreational programs, such as open boating at camp. They might also include the instruction given to a group of canoeists before setting out on a river trip.

One very important instructional program is that of teaching scouts to swim. While the BSA has no learn-to-swim program it is important to provide program, both at camp and back home, that emphasizes this fundamental skill.

Assuring a safe aquatic program for youth means having well-trained leaders to provide both supervision and instruction to support the youth programs. Encouraging leaders to get training in *Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat* (available on-line) and providing opportunity for training in *Aquatic Supervision* (*Swimming & Water Rescue* or *Paddle Craft Safety*) is inherent in a well-rounded aquatic program.



BSA AQUATICS RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

Some aquatic programming is “just for the fun of it”. Whether it is a group of Cubs swimming at the local pool or a Crew of Venturers kayaking down a river, the purpose is recreation.

Units, districts, and councils (including council camps) should make every effort to make recreational aquatics available to all.



BSA AQUATICS CONTINUUM

IN THIS SECTION:

- OVERVIEW
- AQUATICS FOUNDATIONS
- CUB SCOUT AQUATICS
- SCOUTS BSA AQUATICS
- AQUATICS LEADERSHIP
- COUNCIL AQUATICS

OVERVIEW

Aquatics programs have been developed for every level of Scouting, from Tiger Cubs to Adults. A boy or girl can progress from the basic aquatic skills of the Tiger elective through a continuum of aquatic skills in swimming and boating and on to advanced skills of lifesaving, lifeguarding and supervision. This continuum continues into adult leadership and provides a life-long pattern of aquatic safety and physical fitness.



2-page Graphic Summary
of BSA Aquatics Continuum

AQUATICS FOUNDATIONS

The BSA has an extensive aquatic program which has a long history of safety. The foundation of that safety record lies in adherence to *Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat*. These two programs have been developed to assure that aquatics activities, at any level of Scouting, are conducted in a safe manner.

Please note that both of these programs are covered in greater detail in this document under both *Aquatic Policies* and *Aquatic Procedures*.

SAFE SWIM DEFENSE

“BSA groups shall use Safe Swim Defense for all swimming activities. Adult leaders supervising a swimming activity must have completed Safe Swim Defense training within the previous two years.

“Safe Swim Defense standards apply at backyard, hotel, apartment, and public pools; at established waterfront swim areas such as beaches at state parks and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes; and at all temporary swimming areas such as a lake, river, or ocean.

“Safe Swim Defense does not apply to boating or water activities such as waterskiing or swamped boat drills that are covered by Safety Afloat guidelines. Safe Swim Defense applies to other non-swimming activities whenever participants enter water over knee deep or when submersion is likely, for example, when fording a stream, seining for bait, or constructing a bridge as a pioneering project.” -- *Guide to Safe Scouting*

SAFETY AFLOAT

“BSA groups shall use Safety Afloat for all boating activities. Adult leaders supervising activities afloat must have completed Safety Afloat training within the previous two years.

“Cub Scout activities afloat are limited to council, district, pack, or den events that do not include moving water or float trips (expeditions).

“Safety Afloat standards apply to the use of canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts, floating tubes, sailboats, motorboats (including waterskiing), and other small craft, but do not apply to transportation on large commercial vessels such as ferries and cruise ships.” -- *Guide to Safe Scouting*

SWIM CLASSIFICATION TESTS

Another basic foundation of BSA aquatic safety is the administration of standardized swim classification tests for those scouts wishing to participate in aquatic activity. The *Beginners Test* and the *Swimmers Test* ensure that all Scouts have the minimum swimming ability necessary to safely participate in a given aquatic activity. These tests are specific and consistent throughout the BSA.



CUB SCOUT AQUATICS



TIGER AQUATICS

Tiger Scouts spend their time doing adventures that move them ahead towards their Tiger rank. By completing seven adventures, the Tiger rank is earned. The Tiger's adult partner participates the entire way, but the recognition items are only for the scouts.



The only aquatics-related adventure for Tiger Cubs is an *elective adventure* called ***Floats and Boats***. This is an introduction to personal water safety and very basic aquatic skills.



WOLF AQUATICS

Wolf Scouts do adventures described in their Wolf handbook that advance them towards their Wolf rank. By completing seven adventures, the Wolf rank is earned.

The aquatics-related adventure for Wolf is also an *elective adventure*. This one is called ***Spirit of the Water***. This elective centers around wise use of water in the home and community, basic swimming safety and an introduction to swimming.



BEAR AQUATICS

The aquatics-related Bear adventure is the *elective* called ***Salmon Run***. This adventure continues with swimming safety and skills. It also introduces Cubs to boating and boating safety.



WEBELOS AQUATICS

Aquanaut, the aquatics-related *elective* for the Webelos and Arrow of Light ranks, is a robust continuation of water safety, swimming, boating, and basic rescue skills and knowledge.



SCOUTS BSA AQUATICS

RANK ADVANCEMENT

Rank advancement in Scouts BSA is dependent upon specific, performance-based requirements or objectives. While instruction and assessment of these requirements usually occurs within the Troop, camps should be prepared to offer instruction and assessment in these skills.

Supporting instructional information for Second and First Class aquatic requirements can be found in the *Scouts BSA Handbook for Boys* and the *Scouts BSA Handbook for Girls*.



SECOND CLASS AQUATICS REQUIREMENTS

- 5a. Tell what precautions must be taken for a safe swim.
- 5b. Demonstrate your ability to pass the BSA beginner test: Jump feetfirst into water over your head in depth, level off and swim 25 feet on the surface, stop, turn sharply, resume swimming, then return to your starting place.³
- 5c. Demonstrate water rescue methods by reaching with your arm or leg, by reaching with a suitable object, and by throwing lines and objects.³
- 5d. Explain why swimming rescues should not be attempted when a reaching or throwing rescue is possible. Explain why and how a rescue swimmer should avoid contact with the victim.



FIRST CLASS AQUATICS REQUIREMENTS

- 6a. Successfully complete the BSA swimmer test.
- 6b. Tell what precautions must be taken for a safe trip afloat.
- 6c. Identify the basic parts of a canoe, kayak, or other boat. Identify the parts of a paddle or an oar.
- 6d. Describe proper body positioning in a watercraft, depending on the type and size of the vessel. Explain the importance of proper body position in the boat.
- 6e. With a helper and a practice victim, show a line rescue both as tender and as rescuer. (The practice victim should be approximately 30 feet from shore in deep water).



AQUATICS MERIT BADGES



There are ten aquatics related merit badges available to Scouts BSA. Two, *Swimming* and *Lifesaving*, can count toward those required for *Eagle*.



Other merit badges available include Canoeing, Rowing, Kayaking, Small Boat Sailing, Motorboating, Whitewater, Water Sports and SCUBA Diving.



Requirements for merit badges are also specific and performance-based. Counselors for merit badges must be approved by the council and offer both instruction and assessment for the given merit badge.



Merit badges are reviewed by National subject matter experts (SME's) on a two-year cycle and approved by the National Merit Badge Subcommittee.



AQUATICS AWARDS

There are seven aquatics awards that are intended to be introductory and experiential for a given activity.

These include *Mile Swim BSA*, *Snorkeling BSA*, *SCUBA BSA*, *Kayaking BSA*, *Boardsailing BSA*, *BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding*, and *Whitewater Rafting BSA*.

Aquatic Supervision is the guide for each of these awards and requirements and applications can be found in that book.



AQUATICS LEADERSHIP

In order to provide a robust but safe aquatic program for youth it is necessary to provide training for adults and older youth to provide necessary supervision for each activity. Supervision requirements for units are specified in *Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat*. The National Camp Accreditation Program (NCAP) specifies supervision requirements for district and council events.

AQUATICS SUPERVISION

SWIMMING AND WATER RESCUE -- Training for BSA *Swimming & Water Rescue* provides BSA leaders with information and skills to prevent, recognize, and respond to swimming emergencies during unit swimming activities. It expands the awareness instruction provided by *Safe Swim Defense* training. Persons completing the training should be better able to assess their preparation to supervise unit swimming events. The BSA recommends that at least one person with this training is present to assist with supervision whenever a unit swims at a location that does not provide lifeguards.



PADDLE CRAFT SAFETY -- Float trips are popular Boy Scout, Venturing, and Sea Scout activities. *Safety Afloat* awareness training provides guidelines for safe float trips and is required of unit leaders but does not provide the skill training mandated by those guidelines. BSA *Paddle Craft Safety* expands *Safety Afloat* training to include the skills, as well as the knowledge, needed for a unit leader to confidently supervise canoeing or kayaking excursions.



BSA LIFEGUARD

The primary purpose of the BSA Lifeguard training program is to provide professional lifeguards for BSA operated facilities, council aquatics committees, and year-round aquatics programming. In addition, this training is intended to meet the requirements of government agencies for operations at a regulated swimming venue.



The program is open to all registered adults and youth, age 15 and older. BSA Lifeguard is recommended for aquatics staff lifeguard training and for those who wish to work as lifeguards for BSA year-round aquatics

programs. For those supporting council aquatics committees, this training is the next step beyond the Aquatics Supervision program for unit leaders.

The *BSA Lifeguard Instructors Manual*, along with the BSA Lifeguard Application, test questions, BSA referenced materials, and *American Red Cross Lifeguarding Manual*, are the supporting materials necessary for the instruction of BSA Lifeguard.

AQUATICS INSTRUCTOR BSA

“BSA Aquatics Instructor is the highest level of training, achievement, and recognition for adults in Scouting aquatics. The training prepares adults for leadership roles in year-round aquatics programs and in summer camps.



“Topics include a review of the goals, requirements, policies, and procedures for all Scouting aquatics programs; basic skill review in swimming, lifesaving, and boating; how to teach those skills to participants of various ages; and how to manage the aquatics program at a BSA Cub Scout or Scouts BSA camp facility.

“The training is offered only in conjunction with a BSA National Camping School. The BSA typically conducts National Camping School sessions in the early spring. Participants must be approved by their local council.



“National BSA camp standards require that aquatics directors at BSA camps are 21 years of age or older, have current CPR and first-aid training, and have current BSA Aquatics Instructor training. However, BSA Aquatics Instructor training is available to those 18 or older. Councils are encouraged to send aquatics staff members who are below 21 years of age for Aquatics Instructor training to serve as assistant aquatics directors and to gain experience before becoming a camp aquatics director. Such a succession plan also makes it easier for councils to manage staffing needs.”

-- *Aquatics Supervision*



LOCAL COUNCIL AQUATICS COMMITTEE

“The aquatics committee has overall responsibility for the local council’s aquatics activities in Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Venturing, and Exploring. Within the local council organization, the aquatics committee reports to the vice president of program or to the vice president of health and safety.

”The aquatics committee may be a separate committee or a subcommittee within the camping or health and safety committees. Members of the aquatics committee should be experienced Scouters with a background in aquatics, or aquatics specialists interested in becoming involved in Scouting. The committee should include at least one individual with a current National Camping School BSA Aquatics Instructor training card. Besides swimming and water-rescue specialists, the committee should include specialists for the type of aquatics activities prevalent in the local council (e.g., snorkeling/ scuba, canoe tripping, sailing, whitewater, crew rowing, waterskiing, Sea Scouting, etc.).

“Select committee members should be members of or liaisons to other council committees that touch the aquatics committee’s areas of responsibility including training, advancement, health and safety, camping, etc. Camp aquatics directors hired by the council for the summer should be ex officio members of the committee during their term of employment and afterward encouraged to become full-time, year-round volunteer members.” -- *Aquatics Supervision*

The Aquatics Committee is covered in greater detail later in this guide and in *Aquatics Supervision*.



THE FOLLOWING PAGES
ARE LINKED TO THEIR
ASSOCIATED CONTENT IN
THE TEXT

BSA AQUATICS PROGRAM CONTINUUM

AQUATICS FOUNDATIONS

Safe Swim Defense

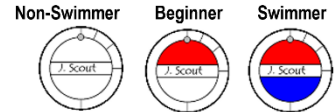
Required training for supervision of swimming activities.
Provides knowledge of policies and procedures.
Available on-line or through council-approved instructor.

Safety Afloat

Required training for supervision of activities afloat.
Provides knowledge of policies and procedures.
Available on-line or through council-approved instructor.

Swim Classification Tests

Ensures consistency and safety
The same at all levels of Scouting



CUB SCOUT AQUATICS

Tiger Cubs Aquatics



Tiger Cub Elective Adventure

Floats and Boats



Wolf Aquatics



Wolf Elective Adventure

Spirit of the Water



Bear Aquatics



Bear Elective Adventure

Salmon Run



Webelos / Arrow of Light Aquatics



Webelos / Arrow of Light Elective Adventure

Aquanaut



SCOUTS BSA AQUATICS

2nd Class Aquatics



How to conduct a safe swim --
Safe Swim Defense
BSA Beginners Test
Reaching and Throwing Rescues
Can be checked off by knowledgeable adult leader
Procedures can be found in the Scout Handbook



1st Class Aquatics



How to conduct a safe boating activity -- Safety Afloat.
BSA Swimmers Test
Line and Tender Rescues
Can be checked off by knowledgeable adult leader
Procedures can be found in the Scout Handbook



Aquatic Merit Badges



Swimming MB ← SATISFY EAGLE REQUIREMENTS



Lifesaving MB ←



Canoeing MB



Rowing MB



Motorboating MB



Small Boat Sailing MB



Water Sports MB



Whitewater MB ← REQUIRE SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION



Scuba Diving MB ←



Kayaking MB

Aquatic Awards



Introduce specialized areas of aquatics
Available to Scouts and Venture Scouts
Can be earned by adults as well as youth
Tied to advancement or simply for recreation



VENTURING AQUATICS



Venturing Aquatics

The Ranger Award has aquatic electives -- Lifesaver, Scuba and Watercraft.
Normal Venture Crew activities could also be aquatic oriented.



SEA SCOUTS AQUATICS



Sea Scouts

Sea Scouts is a specialized segment of the BSA aquatics program
Organized to address members' boating skills and promote knowledge of our maritime heritage.
Sea Scout units are called "Ships"



AQUATICS LEADERSHIP

Swimming and Water Rescue



Recommended training for supervision of swimming activities
Ties Safe Swim Defense to the advanced skill training of lifeguarding
Open to adults and older youth
Instruction must be provided by an SWR Instructor or an Aquatics Instructor BSA.

Paddle Craft Safety



Recommended training for supervision of boating activities
Can be earned in either a canoe or a kayak - also either flat or moving water
Open to adults and older youth
Instruction must be provided by a PCS Instructor or an Aquatics Instructor BSA.

BSA Lifeguard



Designed to meet the training requirements of government agencies for those in professional lifeguarding situations -- such as summer camp.
Open to adults and older youth.
Program is closely aligned with American Red Cross Lifeguarding.



National Camping School



Aquatics Instructor, BSA is the highest level of training available for adults in BSA Aquatics. This training is required for summer camp Aquatics Directors.
The training can only be earned at a National Camping School.
These national training schools are offered annually in each region.

COUNCIL AQUATICS



Council Aquatics Committee



Committee promotes aquatic activities, helps procure equipment and instructors, and provides guidance to unit leaders or council professional.
Committee has overall responsibility for the local council's aquatic activities in Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturing and Exploring.
Committee is made up of local volunteers and professionals and aligned with the council's committee structure.



Summer Camp Aquatics



Primary purpose is to support the unit's year-round aquatic program.
Can also provide aquatic opportunities not available elsewhere.
Program varies with a camp's facility, staff, and location.
National Camp Standards require 50% of a camp's aquatic staff to be certified as lifeguards.



BSA AQUATICS POLICY TABLE OF CONTENTS

REGULATORY HEIRARCHY

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND
REGULATIONS**

**BSA POLICIES AND
REGULATIONS**

**CAMP POLICIES AND
RECOMMENDED PRACTICES**



REGULATORY HEIRARCHY

There are three levels at which rules and procedures are established in the Aquatics area:

- **Laws and Ordinances** -- this is usually established at the state level, often through the Health Department. Occasionally, a local ordinance will be in effect that is not covered by state law.
- **BSA National Policies** -- The most obvious of these policies are Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. Occasionally there are BSA policies that apply to specific activities -- SCUBA for instance.
- **Local Camp or Council Policies** -- Each camp, being a unique facility, will have some policies and procedures that are in effect to make that particular facility operate more efficiently or for an added measure of safety. These local policies or rules should be written but are sometimes passed on verbally. If possible, specific rules for a given facility should be posted so that all participants can review them.

In cases where policies overlap, for instance BSA Policy and state law might cover the same topic. In these cases, go with the more stringent policy.



GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

IN THIS SECTION

- OVERVIEW
- GOVERNMENT SWIMMING CODES
- MODEL AQUATIC HEALTH CODE (CDC)
- STATE AND FEDERAL BOATING REGULATIONS
 - US COAST GUARD / ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
 - NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATORS (NASBLA)
 - NATIONAL ON-WATER STANDARDS (NOWS)
- OTHER GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS
 - DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
 - OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (OSHA)
 - AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)


OVERVIEW

NCAP standard AO-801: *Permits and Compliance* requires BSA camps to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. **NCAP standards acknowledge various regulatory requirements.** For example, PS-201:C states that safety and emergency equipment at swimming areas is provided as specified by the CDC Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC) or local authority, whichever is more stringent. SQ-406:F notes that camps with pools may be required to have a licensed pool operator in charge of pool operation and maintenance. Specifics of how the pool operator maintains water sanitation are often included in government codes but not in NCAP. The following sections should assist in finding the pertinent codes.

When NCAP standards and government regulations overlap, whichever is the most stringent applies. For example, many states require lifejackets to be worn by all those 12 years old or younger while boating. Those 13 and older are required to have a lifejacket within easy reach but need not wear it. NCAP imposes BSA Safety Afloat procedures which require all participants in small boats to wear a lifejacket. The BSA standard applies since it both satisfies and exceeds regulations in many jurisdictions.

As another example, NCAP standards require BSA camp aquatics directors to have both a valid lifeguard certification and BSA Aquatics Instructor training. CPR Pro training for both BSA and American Red Cross lifeguard is valid for two years. New York State requirements for aquatics certifications for bathing facilities require lifeguards to be certified in CPR every year. That state recognizes BSA Aquatics Instructor as a valid credential but requires those who supervise lifeguards to have at least two seasons of experience. In this example, the state requirements, which must be followed, are more stringent than similar NCAP standards.

Government codes must be observed as a matter of law. Failure to do so can result in fines and/or closure by government inspectors. Some codes are very specific, others are general: for example, codes may list valid lifeguard training agencies but not provide a detailed list of course content or exit skills. Even though the code does not specifically address course content or skills, those set an expectation for the standard of care imposed on lifeguards. ***Failure to follow industry best practices covered during training may be cited as evidence of negligence in civil suits.***

For example, elements of the MAHC code are becoming industry standards even though not all states have adopted the code. ***Since the BSA provides services nationwide, BSA aquatics policies and procedures address an evolving duty of care. That is one reason BSA policies and procedures may exceed rules imposed by some regulatory agencies.*** The MAHC and other industry best practices are discussed in more detail in this chapter. 

GOVERNMENT SWIMMING CODES

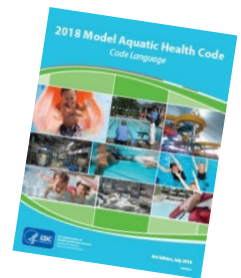
State legislation often authorizes various organizations to produce and enforce codes for swimming pools and beaches. The agency having jurisdiction, or AHJ, may be at the state, county, or city level and is generally associated with a health department. Some agencies only regulate swimming pools, others cover both pools and natural bodies of water. Some jurisdictions have separate codes for public swimming areas and swimming at youth camps.

Councils should identify appropriate agencies during the NCAP process. The following link to Pool & Hot Tub Alliance should help find the appropriate agency:

<https://www.phta.org>

MODEL AQUATIC HEALTH CODE

Except for the federal Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act, which mandates anti-entrapment drains, regulation of swimming pools is left to state and local jurisdictions. That means national organizations such as the YMCA of the USA, the Boy Scouts of America, and agencies offering pool operator training must deal with a plethora of regulations which can vary significantly from area to area.



The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC, recognized that uniform codes would allow a better nationwide response to fecal contamination and other risks. With industry and state input, the CDC issued a set of voluntary guidelines in 2014 called the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC). That code has since been adopted, in whole or in part by various state agencies and continues to be addressed by others. It is a living document with updates proposed to the CDC every three years by the Council for the Model Aquatics Health Code (CMAHC).

MAHC regulations are published in a 195-page PDF file. There is also a 270-page support document providing scientific rationale and clarification. Both are available for free download at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/mahc/index.html>

Most of the code concerns swimming pool design, maintenance, and water quality. In camps with existing swimming pools, the majority of those items will be addressed by a certified pool operator, which is normally the ranger. However, the MAHC is also very specific about swimmer supervision and has significant detail on lifeguard training, equipment, and performance. Those items are summarized [here](#).



STATE AND FEDERAL BOATING REGULATIONS

State legislation also authorizes various organizations to produce and enforce codes for boating. Those are typically assigned to departments or commissions such as public safety, parks and wildlife, fish and game, or a lake patrol division of the highway patrol. Coastal and some inland waters may be under federal jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard or Army Corps of Engineers.

Councils should determine what agency has jurisdiction for boating at lakes, rivers, and/or beaches at their camps and determine what rules apply to their program. For example, some states have licensing requirements for whitewater guides which may impact high-adventure river treks.



US COAST GUARD / ARMY CORP OF ENGINEERS

Depending on the location, aquatic facilities and/or activities may be governed in part by either the U. S. Coast Guard or the Army Corp of Engineers.



More info:

<https://www.uscg.mil> or <https://www.usace.army.mil>

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATORS

The websites of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) or Boat-ed.com provide summary information for all the states:

<https://www.nasbla.org/nasblamain/nasbla-resources/state-boating-laws>

<https://www.boat-ed.com/>



NASBLA is a professional community that serves a similar purpose for boating regulations that the MAHC does for swimming. That is, it serves as a forum among states for innovation and collaboration in policy development, code uniformity, and best practices. There is still a wide variance in regulations from state-to-state, but the move is toward standardization. NASBLA also certifies educational courses for both professionals and the general public.

Thanks in part to lobbying by lifejacket manufactures, states decades ago adopted similar requirements for lifejackets for all vessels, guided by the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety. Beyond that , state regulations tended to focus on motorboats. Many states have requirements for motorboat operators based on completion of classroom or online courses. Today, regulators are turning attention more and more to paddlecraft as well as motorboats and are considering skill courses to compliment classroom courses.

NATIONAL ON-WATER STANDARDS

National On-Water Standards (NOWS) are voluntary standards for on-water skill courses for beginner students in the recreational operation of powerboats, sailboats, and human-propelled craft. NOWs are American National Standards (ANSs) approved and published by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The program is funded in part through US Coast Guard grants to US Sailing. Additional information is available at: <https://www.usnows.org>



The NOWS program is designed to help course providers improve course quality, attract new customers, and grow their business. Eventually, the standards may be recognized and/or required by regulatory agencies.

The BSA is not a commercial concern competing with others to offer courses for profit. However, the BSA does provide a wide array of entry-level instruction programs in boating skills which could benefit from a comparison with the NOWS program standards. Course providers can perform a self-assessment of course content, update the material to the standards, and then make a self-declaration of conformity.

The national BSA Aquatics Subcommittee has completed the self-assessment phase and is in the process of updating merit badge and other course content. For the most part, only minor changes are indicated, such as making sure someone launching a canoe knows how to do so near a high traffic, marked channel.

OTHER GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

In addition to state and local agency codes governing youth camp operation of swimming and boating programs, various federal regulations also apply:

Department of Labor



The US Department of Labor (DOL) has ruled that: “Youth under 16 years of age may not be employed as lifeguards at natural environment facilities such as rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, quarries, reservoirs, wharfs, piers, or ocean-side beaches.” Additional detail available at: <https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs60.htm>.

(This item is covered by NCAP standard SQ-406: C-3.)

The DOL also stipulates that properly certified 15-year-old lifeguards may test and record water quality, using all the tools of the testing process including adding chemicals to the test sample. However, such youth are prohibited from entering or working in any chemical storage areas, including any areas where filtration and chlorinating systems are housed.

Another DOL rule prevents 14- and 15-year-old employees from operating power-driven machinery. That includes using power-driven lawn mowers or trimmers to cut grass and brush at aquatics areas. *(Covered by NCAP standard SQ-401: C)*



Occupational Safety and Health Administration



Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules cover paid employees at summer camps. Several of those regarding exit signs, fire-extinguishers, electrical circuits, etc, apply to buildings at aquatics areas. OSHA also mandates written emergency action plans as appropriate for fires, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc. Several OSHA requirements are covered in NCAP standards. A summary of OSHA rules affecting council camps is available at:

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/680-047.pdf>.

Employees who may be exposed to chemicals, such as chlorine compounds and acids used in pools, must be trained in the hazards of those chemicals, have ready access to Safety Data Sheets (SDSs or

MSDSs), and be provided with personal protective equipment when appropriate. Both original and secondary chemical containers must be properly labeled. *(Covered by NCAP standard FA-713.)*

OSHA considers lifeguards at summer camps to have occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious material. Those employees must be provided with training regarding bloodborne pathogens and the camp's written exposure control plan. *(Covered by NCAP standard SQ-406: C1f.)*

OSHA rules concerning bloodborne pathogens state that hepatitis B vaccinations must be made available at no cost to all occupationally exposed employees, e.g., camp lifeguards.



Americans With Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) administered by the US Department of Justice prohibits discrimination based on disabilities in places of public accommodation. Public swimming pools, depending on size, are required to have one or more means of accessible entry, such as a pool lift or sloped entry. State and local swimming pool codes, including the MAHC, often mimic ADA requirements.

Council camps open only to members are not considered places of public accommodation and are thus exempt from ADA guidelines. However, [NCAP standard PD-110: Program Accessibility for Persons with Special Needs](#) requires councils to develop a plan for making camp programs accessible to the extent feasible. Therefore, it is common for Scout camp pools to be fitted with lifts. Any camp so equipped should train the aquatics staff in the proper use of such equipment.



BSA POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IN THIS SECTION:

- RISK MANAGEMENT
 - *Legal Concepts*
 - *Incident Reporting*
- SAFE SWIM DEFENSE / SAFETY AFLOAT
 - *Qualified Supervision (Multiple Waterfronts)*
 - *Swim Classification Tests*
- THE GUIDE TO SAFE SCOUTING
 - *Age-Appropriate Activities*
 - *Prohibited Activities*
 - *Aquatic Play Structure Policy*
 - *BSA SCUBA Policy*
- NATIONAL CAMP ACREDITATION PROGRAM (NCAP)
- EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS
- PROGRAM HAZARD ANALYSIS
- DECISION FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL POLICIES



RISK MANAGEMENT

LEGAL CONCEPTS

DUE DILIGENCE -- “the care that a reasonable person exercises to avoid harm to other persons or their property” -- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

As our aquatics activities become more varied and complex it becomes more important to exercise *due diligence* in planning and preparation. This could be a group of pack or troop leaders meeting to discuss a swim at the local pool or it could be the Council Aquatics Committee meeting to plan and develop a lifeguard training program for summer camp staff.

STANDARD OF CARE -- “the degree of care or competence that one is expected to exercise in a particular circumstance or role.” -- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/legal>

Standard of Care has evolved in the past twenty years or so. When it comes to the safety and well-being of Scouts in aquatics activities the expectations are quite high. The National Aquatics Subcommittee is constantly monitoring these expectations and making needed changes to its guidance where appropriate.

Lifeguards are expected to meet a minimum *Standard of Care*, which may be established in part by their training program and in part by state or local authorities. This standard requires lifeguards to –

- Communicate proper information and warnings to help prevent injuries,
- Recognize a victim in need of care
- Attempt to rescue a victim needing assistance,
- Provide emergency care according to their level of training

Due Diligence and *Standard of Care* could also apply to those who plan, organize, or supervise aquatics events outside of camp. It is important to be familiar with the policies, recommendations, and best practices.

The following legal concepts apply specifically to lifeguards but could have ramifications in other supervisory situations.

“DUTY TO ACT

While on the job, a lifeguard has a legal responsibility to act in an emergency

NEGLIGENCE

If a lifeguard fails to follow the *standard of care* or fails to act, which results in someone being injured or causes further harm to the victim, the lifeguard may be considered negligent.

Negligence includes –

- Failing to provide care
- Providing care beyond the scope of practice or level of training
- Providing inappropriate care
- Failing to control or stop any behaviors that could result in further harm or injury”

Other legal considerations which are also discussed in lifeguard training include:

ABANDONMENT

Once you begin a rescue or care of a victim you must continue that care until someone with equal or greater training takes over.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is often necessary for aquatics staff members to have health information about scouts which might affect their well-being at the waterfront. This information must be kept in strict confidence and only shared with those who need to know.

DOCUMENTATION

Accidents and incidents involving the health and safety of scouts must be documented. Camp management will have instructions for you should this become necessary.

Bear in mind that questions about an incident might not arise until weeks or even months after the fact. It is always good practice to make notes that include scouts name, unit number, date and time of incident, witnesses, care given, events that led up to the incident, follow-up care and who took over from you. Keep a copy of these notes.

Always inform your director and/or health officer of any first aid or rescue given, no matter how simple it seems at the time. Even the application of a band-aid needs to be entered in the camp’s first aid log.

Source: *Lifeguarding Manual*; © American Red Cross, 2012, 2016



INCIDENT REPORTING

While our hope is that all Scouting activities are conducted safely and without incident, we all know that things don't always go as planned. These incidents must be reported. [Scouting.org](https://www.scouting.org) has excellent guidance and tools to help in this process. (Link below)

“Timely, clear, concise, and complete incident reports allow for an appropriate response and an opportunity for analysis while promoting continuous improvement of our programs. You can report incidents, near misses, and youth protection / membership infraction incidents to your local council or enter them yourself.” – *Scouting.org*

Incident – “,,, injuries, illnesses, and incidents during Scouting activities or on council-owned properties that require the intervention of a medical provider beyond basic Scout-rendered first aid.”

Youth Protection/Membership Infraction – “... allegations of abuse, violations of BSA guidelines or policies, inappropriate behavior by a Scout / Scout leader / parent / other.”

Near Miss Incident -- “A near miss is an incident that did not result in injury, illness, or damage by definition but that had the potential to have done so.”

Some incidents must be reported to a government agency as well as the BSA :

Occupational Injury: -- employers are required to notify OSHA in certain situations. This required report is time-sensitive.

US Coast Guard Required Reporting: Federal law requires the operator or owner of a recreational vessel to file a boating accident report in some situations. This requirement is the same regardless of vessel makeup: sail, canoe, paddleboard, kayak, and powerboat.

Report all incidents to your local council.

For more info or guidance:

<https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/incident-report>

SAFE SWIM DEFENSE / SAFETY AFLOAT

Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat procedures are the backbones of BSA aquatics safety and must be observed for all unit and camp swimming and boating programs. The Prohibited Activities section of the *Guide to Safe Scouting* states: “Activity components outside of BSA program guidelines are prohibited as follows: ... 3. Aquatic activities that fail to comply with Safe Swim Defense and/or Safety Afloat...” NCAP standard PS-201: A states “Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat procedures are used for all on-site and off-site swimming and boating activities...” In addition, there are numerous references to both in program materials such as merit badge pamphlets.

All camp aquatics staff should be familiar with all details of both Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat as provided in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. Ideally, all aquatics staff should have current online training in both, available at <https://my.scouting.org/>. A log-on account is necessary but is available to anyone.

Posters with a simple listing of the eight components of Safe Swim Defense and the nine components of Safety Afloat are reproduced as reminders. Whenever there is a question about detail, the online version of the *Guide to Safe Scouting* should be consulted. That version will always be the most up to date. (Copies of the posters are provided at the links below.

[SAFE SWIM DEFENSE](#)

[SAFETY AFLOAT](#)

QUALIFIED SUPERVISION – CONSIDERATIONS FOR SEPARATE AREAS AND REMOTE TREKS

Both Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat specify a minimum age of 21 for the person responsible for a swimming or boating activity. At camp, the aquatics director is often the only aquatics staff member 21 or older. The aquatics director assumes a supervisory role for all aquatics programs but cannot be physically present at more than one location.

When the camp aquatics director is not providing direct supervision, NCAP standard 406: B kicks in:

B. Camps with separated aquatics areas. Each aquatics area shall be supervised by a person, 18 years of age or older, who holds the following training and credentials when the aquatics director is not present at the area:

1. A valid lifeguard certification

2. *Current certification in American Red Cross BLS for Health Care Providers and American Red Cross First Aid (or equivalents)*
3. *For a swimming area, either a current BSA Aquatics Instructor card from National Camping School or American Red Cross Lifeguard Management training*
4. *For a boating area, at least one of the following: (a) a current BSA Aquatics Instructor card from National Camping School, (b) current BSA Paddle Craft Safety training, or (c) an instructor rating from the American Canoe Association or other national boating organization appropriate for the activity*

Some BSA high-adventure bases place responsibility for compliance with Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat during treks with volunteer crew leadership rather than a paid staff member accompanying the crew. In that circumstance, the minimum supervisor age of 21 specified for unit activities applies. However, such delegation to volunteers may not be allowed in some jurisdictions. Councils should check with local regulatory agencies for applicable rules for youth camp supervision by camp staff.

It should be noted that NCAP 406-B only applies if the fully qualified 21-year-old Aquatics Director is on-duty and on-site at the other camp aquatics facility.



SWIM CLASSIFICATION TESTS

The swim classification of individuals participating in a Boy Scouts of America activity is a key element in both Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. These swim classification tests are a foundational unit of the Aquatics Continuum.

All persons participating in BSA aquatics are classified according to swimming ability. The classification tests and test procedures have been developed and structured to demonstrate a skill level consistent with the circumstances in which the individual will be in the water.

SWIM TEST PROCEDURE

UNIT SWIM TESTS

Swim tests for **unit activities** (pack, troop, crew) and / or for **advancement** may be conducted by the unit using the guidance contained in *Aquatics Supervision - a leaders guide to youth swimming and boating activities* (#34346) and following Safe Swim Defense.

SWIM TESTS FOR DISTRICT, COUNCIL AND NATIONAL LEVEL EVENTS

Swim tests for **district, council** and **national level events** may be conducted following procedures approved by a council-level committee, preferably the Council Aquatics Committee. The council committee should use the guidance contained in this *BSA Aquatics Management Guide*.

If approval is by a council committee other than the Aquatics Committee, trained aquatics volunteers should be consulted. Approval by an individual (volunteer or professional) is not recommended. The approval process should be determined by that committee and communicated within the council. An annual review of this process is recommended.

Notes:

- The council committee is approving the *process*. It doesn't necessarily need to approve each individual testing event.
- The procedure for all individual tests should follow *Aquatics Supervision* guidelines.
- National events or venues (High Adventure / Jamboree) might have their own processes and/or forms. It is OK to defer to those in those circumstances.

Some things for the committee to consider:

Facility -- the ideal facility for swim tests is a swimming pool such as those used for swimming competition. 25 or 50 yards/meters in length allows easy calculation for starting and stopping points. Decks for walking alongside a swimmer should not have unnecessary obstructions. These pools will also have a deep end which satisfies the need for jumping into water over the head in depth.

Any natural body of water that satisfies Safe Swim Defense requirements may also be used for swim classification tests. Clear water is preferred over murky water, warm water over cold water. A pier that extends from shore to deep water is ideal for the feetfirst entry in the requirements, but a floating platform can also be used. Other guidance for testing facility is covered in *Aquatics Supervision*.

Test Supervisor -- is on-site and able to visually oversee all aspects of the testing process. This person should be trained in *BSA Swimming and Water Rescue* or as an *Aquatics Instructor BSA*. Other approved training for test supervisor includes *BSA Lifeguard*; or, lifeguards / instructors certified by other agencies (American Red Cross, YMCA, etc.) who are familiar with the BSA process.

Lifeguards / Response Personnel -- In addition to supervisors and testers, separate persons trained in water rescue should provide surveillance following Safe Swim Defense guidelines. At public and semi-public facilities, including most council camps, where professionally trained lifeguards are required by local and state codes, the number and distribution of lifeguards will be determined by those facilities. At a private facility the training, number and distribution of lifeguards / response personnel is determined by the Test Supervisor serving as the Qualified Supervisor for Safe Swim Defense.

Testers / Test Administrators -- these are the individuals who administer the tests. They should be experienced in aquatic safety, mature and trained in the testing process as outlined in *Aquatics Supervision*. The Test Supervisor provides or reviews that information and observes and monitors the execution of the tests.

Documentation

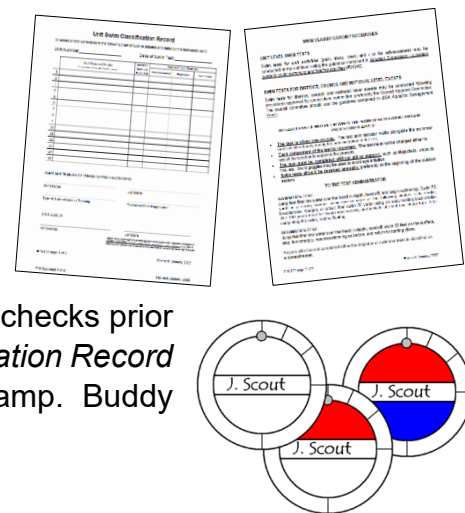
Health Review -- Parts A and B of the Annual Health and Medical Record are completed annually for all Scouting events. This should be completed and documented by unit leadership before swim tests commence.

For camp, Part C, physical exam, will also need to be completed. Camp health review will be completed by camp Health Officer upon the Scout's arrival in camp.

For all aquatics activity, including swim checks, the supervisor should be made aware of any health conditions that might limit or prohibit a Scout's participation in aquatics. See *Aquatics Supervision* for additional guidance.

Swim Classification Form -- The unit should record swim checks on the *Unit Swim Classification Form* (#19-122, Rev 2022) available [here](#).

Buddy Tag -- Most camps and some units will use the Buddy Tag to check into aquatic activities. Units completing council-level swim checks prior to camp should present the *Unit Swim Classification Record* to the camp Aquatics Director upon arrival in camp. Buddy Tags will be issued for use in camp.









GUIDE TO SAFE SCOUTING

The *Guide to Safe Scouting* is an overview of Scouting policies and procedures gleaned from a variety of sources. This is a good place to start in all matters pertaining to policy.

GUIDE TO SAFE SCOUTING

AGE-APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

As stated earlier, all BSA programs, including camping and aquatics, are tailored to the maturity and physical development of youth. Toward that goal the following chart has been provided to illustrate which activities are allowed for each program level. Here is the section that concerns aquatics:

AGE APPROPRIATE GUIDELINES FOR SCOUTING ACTIVITIES	 LIONS <small>(WITH ADULT PARTNER)</small>	 TIGERS <small>(WITH ADULT PARTNER)</small>	 WOLF/BEAR SCOUTS	 WEBELOS SCOUTS	 SCOUTS BSA	 OLDER SCOUTS BSA, SEA SCOUTS, VENTURERS <small>(*Older Scouts BSA* are age 13 and have completed eighth grade or 14 years old and up.)</small>
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Aquatics (See <i>Safe Swim Defense</i> , and <i>Safety Afloat</i> for restrictions based on skills, such as swimming ability, rather than age.)						
Aerial Towed Activities (kitesurfing, parasails)	Not Authorized					
Cliff Jumping, High Dives	Not Authorized					
Triathlon: Swim Races in Open Water						Sanctioned Events
Paddle Sports: Youth Operated on Class III or Above Whitewater						√
Personal Water Craft (PWC)						Approved Council Programs Only
Paddle Sports: Whitewater With Professional Guide on Board					√	√
Paddle Sports: Youth Operated on Class I or II Whitewater					√	√
Motorboats: Youth Operated (check state regulations)					√	√
Overnight Cruise on Live-Aboard Vessel					√	√
Sailboats and Sailboards: Youth Operated					√	√
Snorkeling in Open Water					√	√
Scuba					√	√
Surfing					√	√
Towed Activities (waterskiing, knee boarding, floats)					√	√
Tubing (floating in gently flowing water)			√	√	√	√
Paddle Sports: Youth Operated on Calm or Gently Flowing Water						Passengers Only Paddle Sports Include Canoes, Kayaks, Pedal Boats, Rafts, Rowboats, SUP
Commercial Marine Transport (ferries, excursion ships)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Day Rides on Large Private Craft With Trained Adult Operator	√	√	√	√	√	√
Swimming	√	√	√	√	√	√
Snorkeling in Confined Water	√	√	√	√	√	√
Water Parks, Slides, and Floating Attractions	Appropriate Age Varies by Feature					

CLICK HERE FOR ONLINE VERSION OF FULL CHART


PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Before getting too deep into a local program hazard analysis, those considering new camp aquatics programs should review the results of analysis at the national level. Any item on the Prohibited Activities list in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* is off limits. Items pertaining to aquatics (2019) include:

Any activity that is not aligned with the current *Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities* (See above)

Aquatic activities that fail to comply with Safe Swim Defense and/or Safety Afloat

- Motorized vehicles used as program or activities—including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-road vehicles, motorized personal watercraft (PWC), and motorized speed events (*exceptions: council-approved ATV and PWC programs that comply with National Camp Accreditation Program [NCAP] standards; go-karting conducted at a commercial facility that provides equipment and supervision of cart operation; youth completing the Motorboating merit badge*)
- Cliff diving or jumping
- Whitewater paddling on rapids rated Class V or above
- Aerobatics while snowboarding, skiing, wakeboarding, or mountain biking.
- Parasailing or any activity in which a person is carried aloft by a parachute, parasail, kite, flying tube, or other device.
- Bubbleball, Knockerball®, zorbing, Battle Balls™, bubble soccer, bubble football, and similar orb activities where participants collide or roll around on land or water
- Flyboarding/jet-boarding

The exception for a camp PWC program, which requires written preapproval from the National Outdoor Program Group, is covered in NCAP standard PS-201: K. 

NATIONAL CAMP ACREDITATION PROGRAM (NCAP)

Overview

BSA programs are administered through local councils, each covering a specific geographic area. Each council is usually incorporated as a separate charitable organization but is required by the National Council to follow certain rules and procedures to maintain an annual charter to represent the brand. The BSA National Camp Accreditation Program (NCAP) is one such process designed to elevate camps to levels of excellence in delivering Scouting's promise to youth.

The NCAP achieves that purpose through the following:

- **National camp standards** that ensure each camper and leader has a fun, high-quality program and that the health, safety, and well-being of every camper, leader, visitor, and staff member is maintained.
- **Application and Authorization to Operate.** Councils must complete an Intent to Operate for each and every camp. The application is reviewed by a regional NCAP Committee which will issue an authorization to operate when documentation is complete.
- **Camp Strategic Analysis.** The council should complete the Camp Facilities Evaluation Tool at least every other year.
- The **Continuous Camp Improvement Program** has the council conduct an annual review of camp program, facilities, finances, and staffing leading to a plan for improvements.
- **Annual Camp Assessment Process.** All BSA accredited camps undergo an annual assessment process. Resident and high-adventure camps are subject to a third-party assessment conducted by an area NCAP team. Day and Family camps undergo a self-assessment that is reviewed as part of the authorization to operate process.

The camp standards are divided into two parts: **standards** that are mandatory when applicable, sorted by a two-letter code depending on type, such “PD” for *Program Design* and “SQ” for *Staff Qualification*; and **recommended best practices** that camps are encouraged to follow. The latter are designated by “RP” and follow each type of standard. The NCAP process and complete standards are updated annually.

Compliance with aquatics standards is the joint responsibility of the volunteer council committee with oversight of aquatics, the camp director, the camp program director, the camp ranger, and the camp aquatics director. The process should be integrated into overall camp operation, not a last-minute scramble to ensure compliance just before the assessment team arrives.

[NCAP Download](#)

[Guidance for Council Compliance with Lifeguard Certification Regulations](#)

AQUATICS STANDARDS AT A GLANCE

This chart provides an outline of NCAP standards that apply to aquatics. Camp aquatics directors should be familiar with the particulars for all that apply to their camps.

Category-Number	Standard Label	Standard content
PD-112	Council Program Design, Safety, and Risk Review	Council committee reviews aquatics program
RP-155	Merit Badge & Program Counselor Training	Council committee does onisite visit with aquatics staff
PS-201	Aquatics: General	Primary standard dealing with aquatics program
PS-202	Aquatics: Large "Living Aboard" Boat Programs	For Trek, Speciality, & High-adventure camps
PS-203	Aquatics: Scuba Programs	Reprise of scuba policy in Guide to Safe Scouting
PS-204	Aquatics: Nationally Approved Scuba Adventure Programs	Applies to Florida Sea Base
RP-254	Aquatics Supervision Courses	Recommendation for Swimming & Water Rescue and Paddle Craft Safety courses
SQ-402	General Camp Staff Training	All camp personnel receive training commensurate with responsibilities, including YP and Weather Hazard training
SQ-406	Aquatics Staff	Primary standard dealing with aquatics staff requirements
SQ-411	Specialty-Adventure and High-Adventure Staff	Additional requirements for aquatics staff at specialty- and high- adventure camps
HS-504	Medical Screening and Follow-up	Alerts aquatics staff to any accommodations or restrictions due to health concerns.
HS-511	Buddy System	Covered by PS-201 but also specifies "rule of four" for backcountry treks such as float trips
FA-705	Utility Emergency Shutoff	Applies to aquatics areas with power, gas, water, and/or sewer
FA-706	Stationary Fuel-Fired and Electromechanical Equipment	Applies to water heaters at pools
AO-801	Permits and Compliance	Council has all government permits, certificates, licenses, and agreements to lawfully operate a camp, including those for aquatics
AO-805	Emergency Procedures	Specifies procedures for aquatics emergencies



EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS

Emergency Action Plans are a vital part of a council's overall safety strategy. While they must be completed for camp programs, they should also be considered for unit activities at all levels.

NCAP AO-805 states: "The camp has completed an assessment of risks to its participants and staff and uses written emergency procedures that address them."

*"A. **General.** The camp has conducted an assessment and established procedures for the following:*

- 1. Lost or missing persons*
- 2. Extreme weather conditions, including appropriate shelter.*
- 3. Fire (both structure and wildfire)*
- 4. Communicable diseases and infection outbreaks*
- 5. Hazardous materials exposure*
- 6. Dangerous encounters with wildlife*
- 7. Intrusions (including active shooters)*
- 8. Natural and manmade hazards at the camp and program/ camp sites*
- 9. Equipment that, due to the use and risks presented, is limited to authorized personnel using specified safety procedures, as identified in a written risk assessment.*
- 10. If the camp is not held at a camp property, the camp must have the contact information of the individual(s) who can immediately shut off utilities.*
- 11. Additional items noted in the written risk assessments conducted pursuant to Standards PD-111 and PD-112*

*B. **Swimming pool and aquatic emergencies.** If aquatic features are present, as applicable the camp has conducted an assessment and established procedures for the following:*

- 1. Types of emergencies (drowning, spinal injury, fecal release, chemical exposure, bloodborne pathogen exposure, inclement weather, etc.)*
- 2. Communication among victims, responders, emergency services, and bystanders*
- 3. Identification of each anticipated responder*
- 4. Outline of tasks for each responder*
- 5. Required equipment for each task*
- 6. Emergency closure requirements (out-of-range chemicals, fecal incidents, equipment failure, etc.)"*

Local aquatics leadership has the responsibility of developing and maintaining Emergency Action Plans for all aquatics activities within their purview. EAP's should be reviewed by Camp Management and/or Council committees on a regular basis – at least annually.

Any staff who might be involved in the execution of an Emergency Action Plan should be trained in that plan, both before the season starts and, periodically, during the camping season as part of an on-going In-Service Training Plan

Emergency plans for the aquatics area include but are not limited to:

- Submersion incident or drowning
- Wayward Buddy Tag
- Lost Swimmer
- Spinal Injury
- Severe Weather
- Boating Accident
- Collision
- Stranded Boat
- Water Contaminants
- Failure of electrical/mechanical systems

The camp aquatic director and camp management should meet in the months prior to camp opening and discuss the various emergencies that might occur at that camp during the camping season. Written plans should be developed for all. These written EAP's should be reviewed by camp management and council committees in the weeks before opening of camp.



PROGRAM HAZARD ANALYSIS

Program activities within the BSA are subject to analysis with regard to their **hazards** and **risks**. Most of this analysis takes place at the council or even the national level; however, occasionally a camp will wish to initiate an activity that is new or to change an existing activity. If these cases involve aquatic activities the Aquatic Director should be involved in the process

Most normal activities that take place in camp have already been analyzed by the council Risk Management Committee or maybe the Health and Safety Committee. There is little need to reevaluate the risks if the Aquatic Director is familiar with and understands the risks and how to mitigate them.

Formal analysis should take place for new activities, modifications to existing activities, or for newly recognized hazards. This process could begin with the Aquatic Director but should include Camp Management and council Risk Management, Aquatics and/or Health & Safety Committees. (See NCAP PD-111 AAO-805)

Whether a formal analysis for a major activity or an on-site analysis for a small, localized activity the process remains the same:

1. CLEARLY DEFINE THE PROGRAM ACTIVITY.
 - a. Equipment / Materials
 - b. Procedures
 - c. Participants
 - d. Environment

2. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL HAZARDS -- determine their causes
 - a. Methods of identification could include review of safety data, employing the judgment of experts, generic hazard checklists, formal hazard analysis techniques, or a review of design data and drawings.
 - b. Causes could include human error, procedural issues, chemical hazards, design flaws, environmental factors, among others.
 - c. Using a team approach, including persons from program, management, camping, properties, health & safety, etc., provides the best mix of expertise and experience for thorough hazard identification.

3. ASSESS THE IDENTIFIED HAZARDS
 - a. Hazard Severity -- what is the worst probable result of the hazard?
 - i. Catastrophic → Critical → Marginal → Negligible
 - ii. I → II → III → IV
 - b. Hazard Frequency -- what is the probability that the hazard will be experienced during the planned duration of the activity?
 - i. Frequent → Probable → Occasional → Remote → Improbable
 - ii. A → B → C → D → E

4. ASSESS THE RISK -- based on the combination of Hazard Severity and Hazard Frequency
 - a. Unacceptable → High Frequency and High Severity (A-I)
 - b. Undesirable
 - c. Acceptable with corrective action
 - d. Acceptable without corrective action → Low frequency and Negligible severity (E-IV)

5. ACCEPTANCE AND RESOLUTION OF RISK -- Unacceptable and undesirable risk should be eliminated or controlled
 - a. Design for Minimum Risk -- design, redesign or retrofit to eliminate the hazards; reduce the severity / probability of occurrence to an acceptable level.
 - b. Safety Devices -- reduce risk to an acceptable level through the use of fixed, automatic, or other protective safety features or devices.
 - c. Warning Devices -- devices are used to detect the condition and to generate an adequate warning signal to provide for personnel remedial action.
 - d. Procedures and Training -- If risk remains at an unacceptable level, procedures and training can be implemented to negate the risk. The level of training required is based on the complexity of the task and minimum training requirements specified for the program element.

6. FOLLOW UP
 - a. It is the responsibility of the Aquatic Director to implement a system to monitor the measures being used. Should additional hazards be recognized, it is the responsibility of the Aquatics Director to update the Program Hazard Analysis to address these hazards.

7. DOCUMENTATION
 - a. If an on-site hazard analysis is completed it should be well-documented and records should be maintained in camp as well as with council leadership.

CLICK for A More Detailed Discussion
Of
PROGRAM HAZARD ANALYSIS



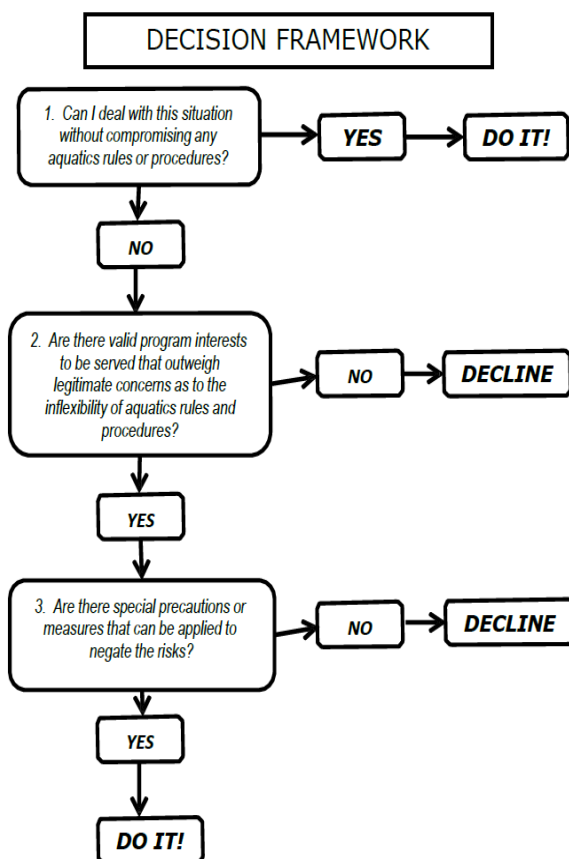
DECISION FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL POLICIES

Decision Tree: Dealing with ‘fuzzy’ rules to balance programing and safety

Many policies affecting program safety are established at the national level and should be uniformly applied across the country. However, local situations may arise for which the national policy is not well defined. It is difficult to write a simple, clear policy that addresses all possible situations.

If a camp / council aquatics leadership identifies risks unique to its physical setting or programs, national policy may be supplemented with local policy.

“The general policy objective behind all aquatics rules and procedures is to assure that the best possible program is delivered in a safe Scouting environment that encourages the youth members and their units to participate in aquatics activity.”



Remember that policy is to serve the program, not the convenience of the Aquatics staff.

The circumstances in which there is no choice but to decline are rare but if you must decline, be firm, be sympathetic, be courteous, and suggest alternatives. While it may be easier to just say no, it's much more satisfying to suggest an alternative that helps the person accomplish much of their objective without compromising safety.

As far as possible, anticipate questions and problem situations in advance. Work with council management to plan ahead.

When making critical policy decisions, be sure all appropriate persons are involved in the decision-making

For an in-depth discussion of the Decision Framework, click [here](#).



CAMP POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IN THIS SECTION:

- AQUATIC STAFF SELECTION TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT
- HEALTH AND SAFETY
 - *Health Exams and Review*
 - *HIPPA*
 - *Universal Precautions*
 - *Lifejacket Policy*
 - *Swimming Periods*
 - *The Sunset Rule*
 - *Underwater Swimming (Hypoxic Blackout)*
 - *Cold Water Shock?*
- AQUATICS SAFETY
 - *Supervision*
 - *Surveillance*
 - *Lifeguarding*

Required Number of Lifeguards on Duty



AQUATICS STAFF SELECTION, TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT



HEALTH AND SAFETY

HEALTH EXAMS AND REVIEW

PERSONAL HEALTH REVIEW – Handling Information from Medical Screenings

Both Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat require evidence of fitness for swimming and boating activities with supervision and protection adjusted accordingly. For all BSA activities exceeding 72 hours duration, such as resident camps, a physical signed by a certified and licensed health-care provider is required. The BSA Annual Health and Medical Record (AHMR) is available at <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/>.

NCAP standards HS-503 and HS-504 also apply. HS-504: Medical Screening and Follow-Up stipulates that appropriate staff members are to be informed of participants, both youth and adults, with limitations, special needs, or life-threatening conditions on a need-to-know basis, with reasonable steps taken to maintain privacy.

The camp aquatics director should coordinate with the camp health officer prior to the start of camp to determine what process will be used to communicate essential information.

A similar process should be in place for screening camp staff during camp preparation. At a minimum, the aquatics staff needs to be aware of any restrictions on swimming or boating activities imposed by a parent or guardian (part A of the AHMR) or the health care provider (part C of the AHMR). Timely notification is crucial to prevent those not allowed in the water from participating in swim checks or similar activities.

The notification procedure needs to be tied to the issuance of buddy tags since those may be withheld for some situations.. Swimming classifications for those with a medical restriction need to be considered on an individual basis. Accommodations for swimming may be different than those for boating.

The most common medical conditions that require restricted water contact are temporary and may not be noted on a health form completed before the condition arose. Those include ear infections, healing wounds, eye irritations, and rashes. Such conditions are not always visible. Therefore the aquatics director should confirm with the camp health officer that the medical screening at camp will include asking the youth and his/her leader about any recent medical issues.

Those should be documented and communicated to the aquatics staff as appropriate.

Certain chronic conditions such as epilepsy, asthma, or diabetes may require special precautions implemented by the camp aquatics staff. For example, a person with seizures controlled by medication may be able to participate in normal swimming activities at a pool when accompanied by a buddy familiar with the situation, but required to wear a lifejacket, rather than an inflatable vest, during an open-water snorkeling program.

Some conditions may require special precautions not necessarily communicated in advance to the aquatics staff if those can be managed by the youth and unit leadership. Some medications increase sensitivity to the sun, but individuals can take extra precautions on their own. Persons with severe allergic reactions to insects and marine life will need immediate access to self-administered medication, which they may be able to carry in a waterproof hip pack in a boat or place discretely at the edge of a swimming area.

Some participants may take psychoactive medications indicated on their AHMR. That information is not normally communicated to the aquatics staff since special precautions are seldom needed. However, if an aquatics staff member notices significant mood swings, problems with concentration, or other behaviors affecting a Scout's ability to participate in the program, consultation between the staff member and the youth's leader is appropriate. At that stage, the staff member might ask whether the youth may have neglected to take prescribed medications.

Aquatics activities often offer unique opportunities for those with different needs. Any youth who is able to join in unit activities on land can probably also join in unit swimming and boating activities. Special precautions may be needed for those with impaired mobility, sight, or hearing. Check with the participant and his or her unit leaders or caregivers on appropriate safeguards and activities.



HIPPA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act applies to health care providers, particularly those that bill electronically for medical services. Those covered by HIPPA must abide by stringent rules for storage and sharing of medical information.

The camp health officer may be reluctant to share pertinent information from the AHMR with the aquatics staff whether camp operations are actually covered by the act. When coordinating the sharing of essential medical information, the camp

aquatics director may need to reference that part of the AHMR that authorizes the sharing of such information with BSA volunteers and professionals. ▲

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

On occasion, members of the aquatics staff will provide first aid for cuts. Latex or vinyl gloves should be used to keep from contacting blood.

If blood is spilled, it can be disinfected by using a dilute solution of sodium hypochlorite (household chlorine bleach). The bleach should be stored in a tightly sealed container that is kept in a cool, dry place. The solution should be mixed fresh before each use. Adding two tablespoons (one ounce) of bleach to a cup of water will make the right strength for use as a disinfectant. Using gloves, wipe up any blood or other body fluid with a towel. Then wipe the bleach solution on the surface and let it dry. This solution is corrosive to aluminum.

The use of a mouth-barrier device is an appropriate precaution to reduce the risk of disease transmission during rescue breathing.

Council camps are required to offer all protections of the Bloodborne Pathogens standard, including the hepatitis B vaccine, to all employees with occupational exposure. Because the emergency response duties of occupationally exposed lifeguards are not considered to be collateral, the vaccine must be offered after training and within 10 working days of initial assignment. ▲

LIFEJACKET POLICY

While most states only require children under a certain age – usually 12 or 13 – to wear a lifejacket, **the BSA requires everyone in any small craft to wear one.**

The United States Coast Guard is the agency that oversees and approves lifejackets in the US. **All lifejackets must be USCG approved.** (For a discussion of the US Coast Guard lifejacket rating system [click here](#))

Lifejackets must be selected based on the activity. Most camps provide what is commonly known as either a Type II or a Type III. These are fine for most camp aquatics. For activities like waterskiing or personal watercraft always look for a lifejacket that is rated for those activities. There is a relatively new rating system for lifejackets, although the lifejackets themselves haven't changed very much. If your lifejackets are rated using the old designation, that is fine as long as they are in good condition and the label is still legible.

No matter the type or performance of a lifejacket one of the most important considerations is that **the lifejacket must fit the wearer.** A range of sizes from

the smallest Cub Scout to the largest adult leader must be available in sufficient quantities.

To check the fit, the scout's buddy could pull up on the shoulder straps. The lifejacket should not slide up very much. This will also be obvious when the scout is in the water. A poorly fitted lifejacket will ride up when the scout tries to swim.

For more info on lifejackets try [Aquatic Supervision](#) or one of the boating merit badge pamphlets.



SWIMMING PERIODS

Swimming is strenuous activity and youth ages 11 to 13 should not be in the water for more than 30 to 40 minutes in a single swim period. With check-in and checkout time, 45-minute recreational swims are recommended. A total of approximately one hour of swimming per day is generally recommended as a maximum for the Scout-age group.

Swimming time can usually be safely extended if those in charge are alert and careful to bring individuals out of the water before problems of exhaustion or chilling develop.

Water temperature has a significant effect on stamina and resistance; 80°F is ideal. Safe time in the water is reduced by lower water temperatures. At 70°F, safe in-the-water time may be no more than 20 minutes. If low or variable water temperatures are common in an area, a water thermometer should be included in the waterfront equipment.

The same rules also apply to instructional activity, except that such activity as distance swimming must necessarily involve time in the water in excess of 30 minutes. The required preconditioning and extra safety precautions are intended to balance the risks in distance swimming. Early morning swims in cold water should be avoided.



THE SUNSET RULE

Aquatics activity after sunset is prohibited, except for swimming activity in a pool with proper deck and water lighting. However, pool swimming under these circumstances may still be limited by wind chill and lowered water temperatures.

The only other exception to the sunset rule would be the use of canoes or other craft by staff for ceremonial purposes. For such activity, special safety precautions should be strictly enforced and monitored by the aquatics director.



AQUATICS SAFETY

SUPERVISION

“All swimming activity (activity afloat) must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in their care, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense (nine points of Safety Afloat)” -- GSS

We should note that this is the minimum level of supervision, both in number of supervisors and the required training. As activities become more complex or number of participants increases, the number of supervisors and/or their required training could change.

It is highly recommended that all units have adult leadership trained in Aquatics Supervision, both Swimming and Water Rescue and Paddlecraft Safety.



SURVEILLANCE

“With effective surveillance, you can recognize behaviors or situations that might lead to life-threatening emergencies, such as drownings or injuries to the head neck or spine and then act quickly to modify the behavior or control the situation.”

-- Lifeguarding Manual, American Red Cross

All supervision involves surveillance of some type. BSA Lifeguard training covers surveillance in great detail; however, all supervisors should work to improve surveillance skills.

RID factor:

- Failure to **Recognize** unsafe behavior
- Secondary duties that **Intrude** on the primary responsibility
- Allowing **Distractions** to divert attention



LIFEGUARDING

Response Personnel – Required Number of Lifeguards on Duty

NCAP standard SQ-406:C2 requires at least fifty percent of the camp aquatics staff to hold a valid lifeguard certification. The number required to be on duty, that is providing surveillance, during swimming activities is indicated in Safe Swim Defense:

“Every swimming activity must be closely and continuously monitored by a trained rescue team on the alert for and ready to respond during emergencies. Professionally trained lifeguards satisfy this need when provided by a regulated facility or tour operator. When lifeguards are not provided by others, the adult supervisor must assign at least two rescue personnel, with additional numbers to maintain a ratio of one rescuer to every 10 participants. ...”

Note that BSA policies make a distinction between the overall supervision needed for a unit swim conducted by unit leadership and the supervision needed for swimming at a council camp program accredited under NCAP. The 1:10 ratio of response personnel to swimmers is for unit swims where those assigned for rescue are not required to have professional level training.

Council camps are “regulated” facilities, that is, they are subject to government codes that mandate the number and training of lifeguards for swimming at youth camps. That typically provides a higher duty of care, and better preparation, than required at a unit swim.

When a Cub Scout day camp conducts a swimming activity at an outside facility, camp leadership does not need to insist on a 1:10 ratio of swimmers to certified lifeguards. Whatever number is mandated by code is considered sufficient. The same is true at an accredited council camp program conducted on council property: **the minimum number of certified lifeguards on duty must meet code.**

The camp aquatics director also needs to consider best practices that may exceed some code requirements. Recall that the MAHC places limitations on how quickly a lifeguard is able to reach the furthest extent of a zone.



THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE LINKED
TO THEIR ASSOCIATED CONTENT IN
THE TEXT

MODEL AQUATIC HEALTH CODE:

Lifeguard Equipment, Training, & Supervision

These items are summaries with supplementary information provided in *(parentheses)*. Refer to the actual code for precise wording and details.

5.8.5 Facility Maintenance & Operation: Lifeguard and Safety-Related Equipment

- Functioning emergency communication equipment is required.
- Lifeguards and lifeguard positions must be provided UV protection.
- Sufficient, properly equipped backboards will be located to affect a 2-minute response.
- Each lifeguard conducting surveillance for water depths of 3 feet or greater shall carry a rescue tube in a ready position.
- Lifeguards shall wear a uniform that readily identifies them.
- Each lifeguard conducting surveillance will have a whistle or other signaling device.
- All facilities with UV exposure will train lifeguards on the use of protective clothing, hats, umbrellas, and sunscreen.
- When glare impacts visibility, lifeguards shall wear polarized sunglasses. *(Council need not pay for.)*
- Lifeguards shall have PPE, such as a resuscitation mask and gloves, either in a hip pack or attached to the rescue tube. *(OSHA regulations beyond the MAHC require councils to provide these.)*
- Facilities with only one lifeguard on duty shall provide a reach pole and a throwing device.

6.0.1 Policies and Management: Staff Training

- All facility staff involved with the storage, use, or handling of chemicals shall receive training prior to access to the chemicals. *(Also addressed in OSHA regulations.)*

- All facility staff with possible occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens shall be trained to recognize and respond to releases of body fluid. *(Also addressed in OSHA regulations.)*

6.2.1 Lifeguard Training: Lifeguard Qualifications

(Note that these apply to BSA Lifeguard courses. The MAHC is specific to swimming pools although many of the supervision requirements also apply to swimming in natural bodies of water. Standards for lifeguard training for guarding at waterfronts have additional components.)

- Qualified lifeguards shall have successfully completed a recognized lifeguard training course, have met all pre-service requirements, and participate in continuing in-service training requirements.
- Lifeguard training courses shall include hazard identification & injury prevention, emergency response, professional level resuscitation skills, first aid, and legal issues.
- Lifeguard training courses shall include standardized student and instructor materials, skills practice and sufficient time to cover content, practice, skills, and evaluation.
- Lifeguard training courses shall be conducted by certified instructors subject to a quality control system for evaluating instructor competency.
- Lifeguard training courses shall have the following equipment in sufficient amounts: rescue tubes, backboards, adult and infant CPR manikins, resuscitation masks, BCMs, disposable gloves, AED trainer, first aid supplies, and manikin cleaning supplies.
- The lifeguard instructor shall be physically present at all classroom and in-person contact time, skills evaluations, and testing.
- Lifeguard certification shall be valid for a maximum of two years. CPR/AED certification shall be valid for one year.

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6.3 Facility Staffing:

- *(The MAHC specifies numerous situations when a facility should deploy lifeguards, those are not reviewed here since professionally trained lifeguards are required at BSA camp swimming areas.)*
- All aquatics facilities shall implement a safety plan including staffing levels, emergency action plans, biohazard action plan, pre-service training, and in-service training. The facility safety team will be trained accordingly during pre-service training.
- The safety plan shall include diagrammed surveillance zones such that the **lifeguard is able to reach the furthest extent of the assigned zone within 20 seconds. The lifeguard will be able to reach the bottom of the assigned zone.** *(Bold added for emphasis. The aquatics director at BSA camps should test each guard in each zone to ensure compliance.)*
- During pre-service training, lifeguards shall demonstrate knowledge and skill competency specific to the facility, including water rescue, CPR/AED, and first aid skills specified in their lifeguard certification course and EAP execution. *(Although few states have adopted the MAHC, this provision has been recognized as a best practice by the major lifeguard training agencies. NCAP standard SQ-406: C1 specifies testing requirements for camp lifeguards.)*
- Pre-service and in-service training and evaluation will be documented. Records will be available for inspection and retained for three years.
- Facilities required to have two or more lifeguards shall also have an additional person serving as a lifeguard supervisor. The lifeguard supervisor shall monitor lifeguard performance, make sure rotations are conducted in accordance with the safety plan, coordinate response during and emergency, identify health and safety hazards, and make sure required equipment is in place and in good condition.
- Prerequisites for lifeguard supervisor training shall include completion of a lifeguard training course, ability to communicate verbally in English, and **previous experience as a lifeguard for at least 3 months**. The Annex to the MAHC explains why there is

no specific age requirement. *(Bold for emphasis. Also note that this and the next item appear under section 6.2 rather than 6.3 but are included here for better continuity.)*

- Lifeguard supervisor training elements shall include activation and execution of EAPs, scanning and vigilance requirements, development and evaluation of zones of bather surveillance, strategies to reduce and mitigate hazards, knowledge of legal issues, and knowledge of the use and maintenance of required equipment. *(Jurisdictions that have not adopted the MAHC often have similar requirements for supervisory personnel to have training in lifeguard management. Currently, BSA Aquatics Instructor training serves as a recognized lifeguard management course and the BSA Aquatics Subcommittee is monitoring evolving standards to maintain that designation. However, neither NCAP standards nor BSA Aquatics Instructor training currently include prior lifeguard experience as per the previous item. To meet this requirement, camps may have lifeguards with experience take the online American Red Cross Lifeguard Management course. The role of lifeguard supervisors at BSA camps is discussed in the section on Staff Selection, Training, and Management.)*
- Aquatics facilities shall have a contingency/response plan for localized weather events that may affect their operation, i.e., lightning, hurricanes, tornados, high winds, etc. *(Note: the BSA has specific guidelines for lightning, discussed elsewhere, that curtail activities for at least 30 minutes after lightning is seen or thunder heard.)*

6.4.2 Aquatic Facility Management: Patron-Related Management Aspects

- The facility shall ensure that daily safety inspections are conducted and the results recorded.
- The facility will record all injuries and illness incidents that result in death, require resuscitation, require transportation to a medical facility. *(Note: the BSA has incident reporting procedures, covered elsewhere, that should satisfy this requirement.)*
- The facility shall also record all lifeguard rescues where the lifeguard activates an EAP and enters the water.

- Signage - *(The MAHC has fourteen items dealing with signage. Familiar signs include shower before entering and no-diving. Typically, required signs at BSA swimming areas will be specified, and available, from previous regulatory inspections conducted with the ranger present. However, the camp aquatics staff may need to locate and hang signs as part of the pre-season set-up.)*



Safety Aside : How Important is Swimmer Competency?

* 1.2 per 100,000 in 2016, over ten a day on average.

Drowning need not be fatal: 100's more are permanently impaired.



Year	Drowning Fatalities*	Boating Fatalities
2016	3786	374
2015	3602	354
2014	3406	300
2013	3391	310
2012	3551	314
2011	3556	405

The CDC separates drowning incidents while boating from other causes. These figures are for drowning and do not include deaths from other injuries.

BSA youth members and their parents, used to public swimming pools rather than Scout camp procedures, may sometimes chafe at what they perceive as unnecessary rules and procedures, such as swimmer classification tests. However, youth and parents in the US typically underestimate the risk and overestimate their swimming abilities. That leads to preventable tragedies.

In particular, the general public tends not to realize the danger deep water poses to those who cannot swim. The BSA Incident Report on Swimming, referenced earlier, describes a case when two Scouts, who could not swim, drowned silently after apparently stepping into a deep channel while they were wading. Unfortunately, there are similar incidents in BSA archives.

It is not uncommon for news reports to cover similar situations for the public, such as parents assuming their young child no longer needs close supervision after completing entry level learn-to-swim lessons, which stop sort of providing youth the skills they need in deep water. To counteract such perceptions, more and more public and semi- private pools are implementing swimming tests similar to what the BSA has done for decades.

The American Red Cross has recently introduced their concept of Water Competency, which includes deep water entry, floating or treading water for a minute, turning in a full circle to locate an exit, swimming 25 yards, and exiting the water. In a study by the Red Cross, 80% of those surveyed said they were good swimmers, but only 56% of those could perform those skills, which approximate the BSA *beginner* classification.

Examples of young children starting to drown when entering water over their heads are provided in videos linked to the Lifeguards Love YouTube website. (<https://www.lifeguardsloveyoutube.com/>) However, those at risk include nonswimmers of all ages. That site also posts a telling video of four young adults, perhaps teenagers, at what appears to be an apartment complex pool.

Two of the people enter the deep end from a running jump at the urging of a third shooting the video. The remaining person, after much encouragement, does the same, but unlike the others who are able to swim, he immediately begins showing the classic signs of trouble. He struggles in a vertical position, does not call for help or answer shouts from his companions, and is unable to move even a few feet to the side. A friend swims to him, but she is immediately grabbed when she gets within reach. (That indicates the victim would also have grabbed a flotation device pushed into contact.) After breaking free, the friend manages to push the victim to the side. The struggle lasts about 45 seconds. Unaided, the victim would likely have submerged in about 60 seconds. Throughout the struggle, the videographer continued to laugh and make jokes, indicating he was unaware to how close the victim was to a fatal drowning incident.

The critical need for each Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat element continues to be supported by incidents both in Scouting and for the public at large. They should not be compromised for misguided expediency.





Safe Swim Defense



Qualified Supervision

Responsible and informed, knowledgeable in accident prevention, prepared for emergencies*.

Personal Health Review

Activity adjusted to anticipate potential risks associated with health conditions*.

Safe Area

Safe water depths, quality, temperature, movement, and clarity*.

Response Personnel

Trained rescue team ready to recognize and respond to emergencies. Lifeguards at public venues satisfy need*.

Lookout

Identifies any departure from policy and monitors weather and environment.*.

Ability Groups

Participants tested as Nonswimmers, Beginners, or Swimmers and assigned water depths consistent with ability*.

Buddy System

Every participant paired with another. Buddies always aware of each other's situation*.

Discipline

All participants should know, understand, and respect rules and procedures for safe swimming*.

*These are summary highlights.

Please see complete policy in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.

There are several mnemonics used to help remember the components, for example:

- Quick
- Pulling
- Sam's
- Right
- Leg
- And
- Be
- Decent



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®





Qualified Supervision

Skilled in safe operation of the craft, knowledgeable in accident prevention, prepared for emergencies*.

Personal Health Review

Activity adjusted to anticipate potential risks associated with health conditions*.

Swimming Ability

Operation of craft limited to youth and adults who have completed the BSA swimmer classification. Exceptions allowed*.

Lifejackets

Properly fitted approved lifejackets worn by every boating participant*.

Buddy System

Every participant paired with another. Buddies always aware of each other's situation*.

Skill Proficiency

Everyone must have sufficient knowledge and skill to participate safely*.

Planning

Includes Preparation, Float Plan, Notification, Weather, and Contingencies*.

Equipment

All craft and equipment must meet regulations, be properly sized, and in good condition*.

Discipline

All participants should know, understand, and respect rules and procedures for safe boating*.

One mnemonic is:

Quite
Please
Some
Lose
Blood
Some
Patients
Even
Die

* These are summary highlights. Please see complete policy in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®



DISCUSSION OF DECISION FRAMEWORK

Many policies affecting program safety are established at the national level and should be uniformly applied across the country. However, local situations may arise for which the national policy is not well defined. It is difficult to write a simple, clear policy that addresses all possible situations.

If a camp identifies risks unique to its physical setting or programs, national policy may be supplemented with local policy. For example, Safety Afloat requires everyone to wear a lifejacket while boating. It does not address lifejacket wear on land. Some camps with piers require lifejackets to be worn when moving toward the boats, others do not.

In other situations, national policy may appear to interfere with valid program opportunities by imposing safety precautions that seem overly cautious for the local setting. Questions arise as to whether other procedures to manage risk can be implemented instead, particularly if the national policy is not clearly applicable.

Tweaking rules to assure that the best possible program is delivered in a safe Scouting environment can be a slippery slope that should not be considered lightly. However, an experienced camp aquatics director possessing common sense and solid judgement should be able to determine if aquatics rules and procedures can be “flexed” to serve the program, and when they are truly inflexible.

The “decision tree” provides a framework to apply common sense and good judgement. It consists of three questions. Most of the time, the answers to those questions will lead to either modifying the activity to meet current policy or offering alternative programs since the reasonable response is to follow policy.

The following decision framework may be used to determine whether special requests for changes or additions to aquatics programs should be honored. It deals with situations for which the necessary equipment and staff training are already in place, and for which a decision is needed promptly. For example, whether to honor a leaders’ challenge for the staff to play against them in a water polo contest. It does not replace a Program Hazard Analysis for new programs or program changes that will require resources not yet available.

Question 1: **CAN REQUEST BE MET WITHIN POLICY?**

When considering a proposed activity, the first question determines if the request can be met without compromising any current rules or procedures. If the answer is YES, the activity may be allowed, assuming scheduling can be adjusted and staff are available. The request should not be declined simply because it may cause inconvenience to the staff. Sometimes, minor adjustments to the activity will bring it within compliance and will be acceptable to everyone. If the answer is NO, that is, the activity, even with adjustments, appears to violate policy, then the second question is asked.

Question 2: **IS THE REQUEST REASONABLE?**

The second question considers whether or not there are valid program interests that might offset legitimate concerns about the application and inflexibility of policy. Some activities considered by youth, leaders, or camp staff are not compatible with the Scouting program. If the activity is contrary to the Scout Oath and Scout Law and does not support the BSA mission, then the answer to the question is NO. In that case, the suggestion should be politely declined, along with an explanation that the program merit of the activity does not outweigh pertinent safety policies. If the suggestion is both appropriate and likely to be popular, a possible YES answer leads to the next question.

Question 3: **WILL SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS HANDLE RISK?**

If the suggested activity has merit but appears to violate a rule, or it is not clear how the rule applies, the next step is to consider why the rule exists, that is, to examine the policy objectives. Generally, the rule is in place to mitigate a known risk. If the risk can be identified, then it is possible that adjustments to the rule will manage the risk just as well. It may be possible to add additional safeguards, tailored to the local situation, that will increase the safety cushion afforded by the generic rule. If that is the case, a decision to approve the activity may be appropriate. Prior to finalizing such a decision, the camp aquatics director should consult the camp program director and/or camp director. The activity should not proceed unless they concur with the aquatics director's assessment.

Working through a few examples should help camp aquatics directors apply decision tree concepts. The situations do not have universal solutions. Different directors will likely reach different conclusions when details of a particular camp are considered.

1. The wife and family of a Scoutmaster are visiting camp on Sunday afternoon. During a lull between troops arriving for swim classification tests, the wife approaches the aquatics director and politely requests that her daughters, ages 4 and 7, be allowed to cool off in the shallow water. The little girls are already in their swimsuits and the younger one is wearing a plastic air ring. How should the request be handled?
2. A Scoutmaster signed up his troop online prior to camp to take advantage of a camp program that allows a troop to take a short canoe trip with an overnight campout from Wednesday afternoon through Thursday morning. While reviewing the activity during a Sunday night roundtable, the aquatics director notices that the troop has four nonswimmers and only three adults scheduled for the trip. The four nonswimmers are all new Scouts with no previous resident camp experience and have been told the canoe trip will be a highlight of their experience. How should the situation be handled?
3. Early in the week, the camp director, and the council Scout Executive (the CEO) inform the aquatics director that six or seven members of the council Finance

Committee and their families will be meeting in camp on Saturday afternoon and evening. They have been told that there will be opportunities for the families to do a little swimming and boating before the steak dinner and meeting that evening. The aquatics director is asked to stay over that afternoon, along with any other aquatics staff that are needed, to supervise the aquatics activities. How should those activities be conducted?



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FOR THE TROOP OR PACK**

**AQUATICS PROCEDURES
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**AQUATICS PROCEDURES
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DISTRICT**



AQUATICS PROCEDURES FOR THE PACK, TROOP OR CREW

IN THIS SECTION:

- AQUATICS RESOURCES FOR THE UNIT
- PLANNING YEAR-ROUND AQUATICS ACTIVITIES FOR THE UNIT
 - UNIT SWIM CHECKS
 - UNIT SWIMS / BOATING ACTIVITIES
- AQUATICS TRAINING FOR UNIT LEADERS
 - SAFE SWIM DEFENSE / SAFETY AFLOAT
 - AQUATICS SUPERVISION
 - SWIMMING AND WATER RESCUE
 - PADDLECRAFT SAFETY

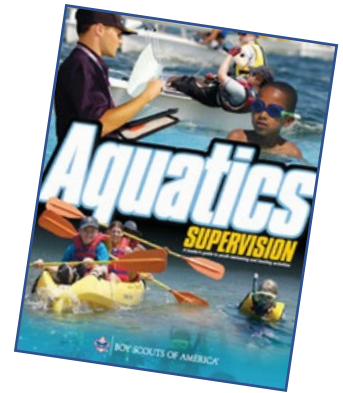


AQUATICS RESOURCES FOR THE UNIT

"AQUATICS SUPERVISION -- A LEADER'S GUIDE..."

The primary resource for adult leaders who are tasked with planning and supervising aquatics activities within the unit, pack / troop / crew, is *Aquatics Supervision, a leaders guide to youth swimming and boating activities (#34346)*. This guide also serves as the text for the Aquatics Supervision training courses - *Swimming & Water Rescue and Paddlecraft Safety*.

Formerly only available for purchase this guide is now available for free download [here](#). It may be used in digital format or printed locally.



"SCOUTS BSA, HANDBOOK FOR GIRLS" / "SCOUTS BSA, HANDBOOK FOR BOYS"

The Scouts BSA Handbook continues to be a good resource for scouts and leaders pursuing the introductory aquatics skills that are included in the 2nd Class and 1st Class requirements.

While most camps provide instruction in these skills it is common for a knowledgeable leader within the troop to instruct and check off these requirements at unit activities outside of camp.



YEAR-ROUND AQUATICS FOR THE UNIT

Many units will make a concerted effort to provide aquatics activities in their annual calendar. Factors that affect this effort include:

- Available facilities for aquatics within reasonable driving distance.
- Age and interest of the youth.
- Training levels and experience of adult supervisors.

Possible activities for various levels could include:

- **CUB SCOUTS** – While most advancement for Cubs takes place within the home or the den, it is possible to have a pack activity, perhaps at a local pool, that addresses the aquatics skills necessary for the various electives of Wolf, Bear, Lion as well as Aquanaut. Adults with aquatics experience could coordinate the various instructional activities for each level.
- **Scouts BSA**
 - Advancement of swimming skill is a very important year-round concern for this age group. If instructors aren't available within the troop structure it is sometimes possible to enlist the services of outside agencies (Red Cross, YMCA, schools, clubs) for swim instruction.
 - 2nd Class and 1st Class aquatics requirements could also be a point of emphasis for a troop's year-round aquatics program. Qualified adults within the troop could serve as instructors.
 - Unit Swim Checks -- Swim tests for **unit activities** (pack, troop, crew) and / or for **advancement** may be conducted by the unit using the guidance contained in Aquatics Supervision - a leaders guide to youth swimming and boating activities (#34346) and following Safe Swim Defense.
 - District or Council Level Swim Checks -- Swim tests for **district, council and national level events** may be conducted following procedures approved by a council-level committee, preferably the Council Aquatics Committee. The council committee should use the guidance contained in this BSA Aquatics Management Guide.
- **Older Scouts BSA, Crews, Ships** -- As Scouts get older, they will get the urge to try high adventure. For many units this could start with an overnight camp-out in canoes to a campsite across the lake. (Be sure to follow *Safety Afloat*). More experienced units could plan a multi-day trip downriver in canoes, kayaks, or rafts.
- The BSA maintains three **High Adventure Bases** that have an element of aquatics -- The Florida Seabase, The Northern Tier Canoe Base in Minnesota and Canada, and The Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia. All three have excellent high-adventure programs worth exploring. Many councils also have high adventure bases.



AQUATICS TRAINING FOR THE UNIT LEADER

SAFE SWIM DEFENSE / SAFETY AFLOAT

The cornerstones of aquatic safety in the BSA are the *Safe Swim Defense* and the *Safety Afloat* programs. Strict adherence to these plans will help to ensure a program that is fun but also safe. All adult leaders are encouraged to take *Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat* training, even if they are not going to directly supervise aquatics activity.

“The Safety Afloat and Safe Swim Defense training is available in the BSA Learn Center, accessed via [My.Scouting](#). Log in to My.Scouting, and after logging in, click the “BSA Learn Center” image. Click Expanded Learning, then Program Safety, then Program Safety, and find the courses listed on the Program Safety page.” -- *Scouting.org*

AQUATICS SUPERVISION COURSES

SWIMMING AND WATER RESCUE

“Training for *BSA Swimming & Water Rescue* provides BSA leaders with information and skills to prevent, recognize, and respond to swimming emergencies during unit swimming activities. It expands the awareness instruction provided by *Safe Swim Defense* training. Persons completing the training should be better able to assess their preparation to supervise unit swimming events. The BSA recommends that at least one person with this training is present to assist with supervision whenever a unit swims at a location that does not provide lifeguards. This training is open to any registered adult leader, Scout, Venturer, or Explorer who is age 15 or older. A council approved instructor must directly supervise all training. The course takes approximately eight hours and is valid for three years” -- *BSA Swimming & Water Rescue Instructor Guide, 2nd Edition*



PADDLECRAFT SAFETY

“Float trips are popular Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Sea Scout activities. *Safety Afloat* awareness training provides guidelines for safe float trips and is required of unit leaders but does not provide the skill training mandated by those guidelines. *BSA Paddle Craft Safety* expands *Safety Afloat* training to include the skills, as well as the knowledge, needed for a unit leader to confidently supervise canoeing or kayaking excursions.

“The program contains four separate modules. Basic canoeing and basic kayaking options cover flat water skills. River canoeing and river kayaking options build on the basic programs to include moving water.

“Persons completing the training should be better prepared to supervise paddle craft activities. The training is open to any registered adult leader, Scout, Venturer, Sea



Scout, or Explorer who is age 15 or older. The training must be conducted by a council approved instructor and is valid for three years. Each module takes approximately eight hours." -- *Paddle Craft Safety Instructor Guide, 3rd edition*



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MANAGEMENT OF AQUATICS PERSONNEL

THE AQUATICS DIRECTOR

While the Aquatics Director plays many roles as part of the camp staff there are four primary roles they play—specifically related to the Aquatics Area. At camp the Aquatics Director operates as the:

- Lead Professional Lifeguard
- Lead Instructor for Aquatics
- Aquatics Program Manager
- Aquatics Area Manager

For an in-depth discussion of these four roles click [here](#).

AQUATICS STAFF POSITIONS

Other than the Aquatics Director the other staff positions will be determined locally. Most camps will have an Assistant Aquatics Director who is experienced and can fulfill many of the same duties as the Aquatics Director.

Large camps might also have Coordinators with responsibility for program areas (like boating) or program elements (sailing, motorboating, etc.).

Assistant Directors, Coordinators, as well as the rest of the Aquatics Staff will operate at the direction and under the supervision of the Aquatics Director.

Other positions will be determined by such factors as program offerings, number of campers, local / state requirements, among others.

HIRING

The hiring of aquatics staff is usually done by camp management. The aquatics director should be consulted and be prepared with recommendations, if possible. Aquatics directors should constantly be on the lookout for suitable candidates for future seasons – younger aquatics staff members, staff from other program areas, even older campers.

Management should note that there is a severe lifeguard shortage nationwide. Councils will need to be proactive in developing their own Lifeguard training programs. For more information on best practices click here.

[PPT – “Building an Aquatics Staff, Aquatic Conference 2020”](#)

COMPENSATION

Compensation levels vary widely among councils. Usually there is some correlation between average weekly enrollment of the camp and compensation levels. Appropriate criteria in salary determination are

- level of responsibility,
- age,
- experience,
- required training,
- special capabilities or training that provide additional scope or depth to the program.

An aquatics director may or may not participate in salary decisions for the aquatics staff but should at least be advised by camp management as to the staff salary structure. Since individual salaries may become general knowledge, and seemingly unjustified discrepancies are potentially harmful to staff morale, a director should have knowledge of the salary status of staff members under the director's supervision.

TIME OFF is generally a matter of camp policy and should never interfere with program activity. Policy regarding such time off should be determined by camp management at the outset of the summer and applied uniformly.

STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

A primary management skill is the **distribution of workload** so that all personnel are used most effectively to meet program objectives, but few hard-and-fast rules can be cited in this regard because of the variety of personalities and capabilities that may be included in any single program staff.

Two basic approaches in instructional assignments are **specialization** and **rotation**.

Specialization can lead to more extensive development of specific skills or teaching techniques but may induce boredom and less conscientious attention to the task. Regular **rotation** of teaching responsibilities may avoid potential monotony but hinder the development and perfection of critical teaching skills. Certain other considerations, such as class size or number of classes per week in a particular skill area, also may be important to workload distribution.

Possibly the best approach is for the director to constantly monitor instructional activity to recognize deficiencies or potential problems and to make adjustments accordingly. Noninstructional work assignments and duties should be distributed so that no one is unfairly burdened or privileged. No such assignments should be made as a punitive measure.



AQUATICS PROGRAM SCHEDULING

STAFF RELATIONS

Conscientious attention by the aquatics director to such matters as workload distribution will favorably influence the development of positive **working relationships** among staff members. This, plus the intense nature of the work, usually will lead to a strong spirit of camaraderie, but the director should be alert to symptoms of an emerging pecking order or of cliques that tend to exclude certain staff members. Should these situations arise, the director should confront the situation directly, either through individual conversation with staff members or, in severe circumstances, through group discussion.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Personal appearance and habits of aquatics program personnel should not be matters of controversy but should be discussed briefly during pre-camp staff training to avoid later problems or misunderstandings. Questions arise most frequently regarding clothing and hairstyles. Swimsuits for instructors and guards should be comfortable, functional, and simple. Swimwear should not reflect personality, lifestyle, or politics. Loud colors and wild patterns are distracting and inappropriate.

The Model Aquatic Health Code recommends that lifeguards' attire should be of a uniform color and style so that guards are easily identifiable. This is a recommended best practice for the entire aquatics staff. A uniform color for swimsuits (red has been the tradition) and a uniform staff T-shirt is appropriate.

Other MAHC recommendations include Personal Protection Equipment, polarized sunglasses and the use of SPF 15 or higher UV protection.

For many in aquatics, a hat is essential. The first requirement for headgear is utility—it should shade the eyes and protect the face against sunburn. Additionally, hats should not be billboards for politics, personalities, or commentary on things to do, see, or consume.

Simple utility requires that the hair be maintained in such a way that it does not interfere with or distract from the execution of demonstrations or other procedures or obstruct visibility. Beyond considerations of this sort, Scouting requires only that its leaders set the example by being clean and neat in their personal appearance and habits.

STAFF TRAINING

The BSA has many excellent training programs. This is a summary of training that a member of the aquatics staff should have. Some are mandatory, others are highly recommended.

- Youth Protection Training
- Safe Swim Defense
- Safety Afloat
- Aquatics Supervision
 - Swimming and Water Rescue
 - Paddlecraft Safety – Flatwater, Canoe
 - Paddlecraft Safety – Flatwater, Kayak
 - Paddlecraft Safety – Moving Water, Canoe
 - Paddlecraft Safety – Moving Water, Kayak
- BSA Lifeguard
- Aquatics Instructor BSA

The AMERICAN RED CROSS also offers training for aquatics staff:

- Lifeguard,
- CPR,
- AED,
- First Aid

The AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION offers:

- Canoe Instruction
- Kayak Instruction
- Raft Instruction
- Safety and Rescue
- Stand Up Paddleboarding
- Surfski



PRE-REQUISITE TRAINING

There is a certain amount of aquatic and scouting training that is necessary for one to be considered for aquatics staff. What this entails is determined by camp management and the aquatic director. A strong scouting background is a reasonable pre-requisite for just about any staff job, but sometimes a candidate's strong aquatics background will overshadow a lack of scouting history. One might have affiliation with other aquatic agencies – American Red Cross, American Canoeing Association, etc.

It is also reasonable to expect that a candidate complete Youth Protection, Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat training prior to reporting to camp.

Camp Management should work year-round with council aquatics leadership (The Council Aquatics Committee) to provide lifeguard training as well as Aquatic Supervision training in the months prior to camp. According to National Standards (NCAP), 50% of the aquatic staff must have BSA Lifeguard or equivalent. **It is unreasonable to expect an aquatics director to provide BSA Lifeguard training during staff week.** If local BSA LG training is not feasible, look to local ARC, YMCA, schools, and colleges who might be offering lifeguard courses.



PRE-CAMP TRAINING

Pre-camp training usually means “staff week”. Some camps have work weekends that allow completion of a lot of physical set-up, thus allowing more time during staff week for training. Camp management should recognize that, even though lifeguard training should already be complete, there is a significant amount of aquatic training that must take place during staff week.

All aquatics staff must be trained in the following:

- Staff Roles and Responsibilities
- Daily operation of the waterfront – both the swimming area and the boating area. Include teaching scouts the basic process of checking in, securing equipment (boating) and proper launching and landing of craft.
- Execution of Emergency Action Plans – everyone must know how to respond once an EAP is activated. **EAP’s must be practiced**, sometimes repeatedly, to be effective.
- Mandatory testing by the Aquatic Director of each lifeguard’s lifesaving and BLS skills (NCAP SQ406)
- Opening Day Procedures -- a smooth opening day makes the whole week easier.
- Effective Teaching Strategies and Practice -- this can’t be overemphasized
- Teaching and testing of skills needed for merit badge instruction.
- Health and Safety -- their own as well as that of the scouts
- Lifeguarding -- also basic surveillance and supervision
- Basic Rescues -- both swimming and boating
- BSA Lifeguard -- 50% of the aquatics staff must be BSA LG
- Supervision of Aquatic Programs -- determined by your own camp’s program
- Basic Skills Training -- again, determined by your camp’s facilities

TESTING OF LIFEGUARD SKILLS

NCAP is specific that merely possessing a lifeguard card or a BLS or first aid card is not enough. **The aquatic director must test all lifeguards for current competency as follows:**

"1. All aquatics lifeguarding staff are tested for competency by the aquatics director before assuming lifeguarding or instructional duties. The aquatics director shall keep written documentation of staff and the areas and activities for which they are qualified. Staff in training may not work unsupervised until approved in written documentation by the aquatics director. The required skill competencies for lifeguarding include:

- a. All lifeguards can reach the bottom at the deepest part of the swimming area.
- b. All lifeguards can reach the furthest extent of their assigned zones within 20 seconds.
- c. All lifeguards can currently perform water rescue skills (possession of a lifeguard training certificate is not enough; each aquatics director must check that they can still perform to standards).
- d. All lifeguards can currently perform BLS and first-aid skills (possession of a card is not enough; each aquatics director must check that they can still perform to standards)
- e. All lifeguards must be trained to execute written emergency action plans specific to local camp swimming areas and activities.
- f. All lifeguards respond to bloodborne pathogen incidents according to the OSHA-mandated exposure control plan."

NCAP National Camp Standards, 2021 – SQ406



IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Training of aquatics staff should be an on-going process. Even though schedules are tight, time should be allowed for in-service training. Consider:

- The entire aquatics staff should regularly (at least weekly) practice the EAP's for the aquatics area.
- An on-going BSA LG course, for those not already certified, could be organized to be conducted during evenings or weekends throughout the summer.
- Especially early in the camping season, time should be allowed for the practice of teaching skills. Constructive critiques are usually very beneficial.
- Camp aquatics leadership should be on the lookout for staff whose basic skills need improvement.
- Night video sessions could be arranged to show Red Cross LG videos or American Canoe Association videos.
- Aquatics staff members should be given the opportunity for advancement. While 2nd Class and 1st Class requirements have already been met, aquatic staff should be given the opportunity to pursue merit badge advancement – especially those that meet Eagle requirements -- Swimming and Lifesaving.
- Aquatics staff members should be encouraged to communicate to the aquatics director what they would like to pursue for enhancement activities.

In-service training should be very upbeat, never punitive. The aquatics director should document all who attend and their progress. An interesting and challenging in-service training program promotes teamwork and enthusiasm and can help prevent burnout during a long camping season.



COUNSELOR IN TRAINING (CIT) PROGRAMS

“A written counselor-in-training (CIT) program under the direction of an adult staff member includes a variety of supervised experiences. A CIT serving in a program position or as a den chief must be at least 14 years of age. CITs do not replace staff members; they are there to experience program areas to determine where they might serve in the future.” (NCAP 2021, RP-459)

Most camps will have a counselor-in-training program.

The Counselor in Training (CIT) program is designed to train potential future staff members for camp and at the same time to provide training for junior leaders and instructors in troops. The program is structured to help youth grow; to work with peers and adults; and to develop leadership skills, teaching ability, and responsibility.

CIT's who are assigned to the Aquatics area should meet early-on with the Aquatics Director to discuss expectations as well as opportunities for advancement and training. Other considerations include:

- CIT's should be allowed to experience as much of the aquatic program as possible, perhaps shadowing different staff members for different parts of the day or serving as assistant instructors to help in the development of teaching skills.
- While CIT's should perform their fair share of group clean-up chores, their primary duties should not be that of clean-up or “grunt” work.
- CIT's should be given supervisory assignments only if they are, in turn, being observed and supervised by more experienced staff as part of a learning process.
- CIT's lifeguarding responsibilities must be commensurate with their certification, training, and age.
- CIT's, like all staff members, should be given the opportunity for advancement -- rank advancement, specialized training, or aquatic awards.
- CIT's should be given ample opportunity for self-evaluation and reflection. Daily briefings with the Aquatic Director are appropriate.

The camp Counselor-in-Training program will probably be coordinated by the Program Director. The Aquatics Director should work with them for recommendations and evaluations of CIT'



SWIMMING AND BOATING AREA DESIGN AND SET-UP

AREA BOUNDARIES

Both the Swimming Area and the Boating Area should have definitive boundaries. For pools, local or state codes will probably require secure fencing with a lockable gate. Lake swimming areas and boating areas should have well-defined boundaries surrounding the entire check-in and launch area. The boundary need not be impenetrable but should clearly mark the area. The boundary could be as simple as highly visible rope or line strung between a row of posts. The purpose of the boundary is to direct the scouts to the gate area.

GATE

Both the swimming area and the boating area will have a gate of some kind. The efficient and controlled flow of scouts through these gates is very important. These gates should be a visual, if not a physical barrier -- as simple as a rope spanning across the entrance or as complex as a gate with a latch and a lock.

SWIMMING AREA

Each section of the pool (nonswimmers, beginners and swimmers) should be well defined both in the water and on the dock or pool deck.

The swimming area, whether in a pool or a lake, must have three areas clearly defined. Nonswimmer and beginner areas must be completely enclosed either by dock system or by ropes with floats. The swimmers' area does not have to be enclosed but must be defined and well-marked. The nonswimmers' area should have a walk-in beach, bank, slope, or steps, and have at least one side of pier.

The beginners' area should have pier area on two sides, or at least on one side with shallow water on the other side. The swimmers' area should be accessible from a pier or shore and have a platform or a raft on the far side of the area. The route from shore to the swimmers' area must follow a dock or a roped-off lane from shore. One must not be required to wade through the non-swimmers / beginners area to get to the deep water.

Water depth should be waist to chest deep for nonswimmers, just over the head for beginners and no more than 12 feet for swimmers. If possible, this should be adjusted for the age of the youth. For instance, a nonswimmers area that is set for 11-year-old Scouts BSA youth will probably be too deep for Lion Cubs. Water depth should be clearly marked as well as "No Diving" areas.

BOATING AREAS

Besides the launch area, the boating area on the lake should be clearly defined. If the waterfront is situated on a confined lake, the boundary could simply be the shoreline. Scouts should not be allowed to exit their boats except in the defined launch / landing area.

Lakes with public access and public boat traffic will need more defined boating areas. Areas for paddlecraft could be defined with a line of buoys. Areas for sailboats and motorboats will be larger and harder to define.

In defining boating areas aquatics management should consider:

- Available Program –
- Age and Ability of Participants –
- Public Boat Traffic –
- Wind / Current –
- Visibility of the Area –

LOOKOUT

At a waterfront the lookout position should be established where the lookout can always see every part of the swimming area without turning his/her head. A tower is not essential if a lookout at ground level has an unobstructed view of the areas.

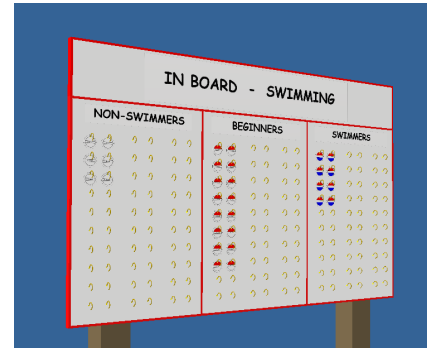
By turning, the lookout should be able to see the entire waterfront area including the boating portion of the lake. If the program areas are remote, a second lookout position may be necessary.

BUDDY BOARDS (IN-BOARDS / OUT-BOARDS)

The In-Board for the swimming area has a series of $\frac{3}{4}$ " cup hooks arranged in pairs divided into three areas – Nonswimmers, Beginners and Swimmers. The number of hooks should correspond to the maximum number of bathers allowed in each of the areas. The hooks should point down so that tags won't blow off in the wind.

It is OK to have separate areas on the In-Board for Staff and/or Lifeguards.

The placement of the In-Board should be adjacent to the gate so that scouts must pass in front of the buddy board before they can go on into the swimming area. The board should be clearly visible from inside the area.

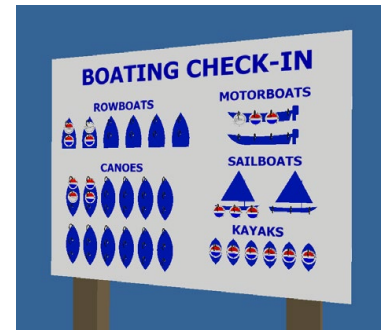


Note: The paired hooks should be on 2" centers with 3" between column pairs. This spacing makes it easy to place and remove tags without affecting the adjacent tag. It also makes it easy to make a quick visual count of tags.

Boating In-Boards usually have outlines of the available craft. The number of hooks on each craft should correspond with the maximum number of occupants allowed aboard each.

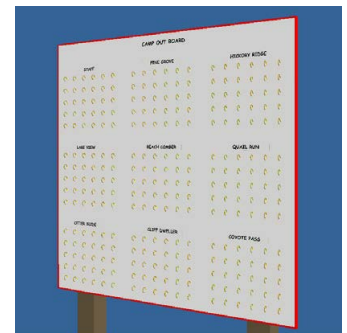
You could stretch a rubber band or a string around the hooks of adjacent boats to visually indicate buddy boats.

Just as in the swimming area it is OK to have a separate check-in area for staff or those on shore or dock duty. Note: If those staff members who are checked into a separate area of the board go out in a craft, they should then move their tag to that particular craft.



A convenient way to store tags when not in use is a camp wide "Out" board. Arranged by campsite this keeps the tags at the waterfront, so they are less likely to be misplaced.

It is OK for Scouts to keep their tags on their person or, especially for Cubs, for the adult leader to collect all tags for safe keeping.



GENERAL OPERATING PROCEDURES

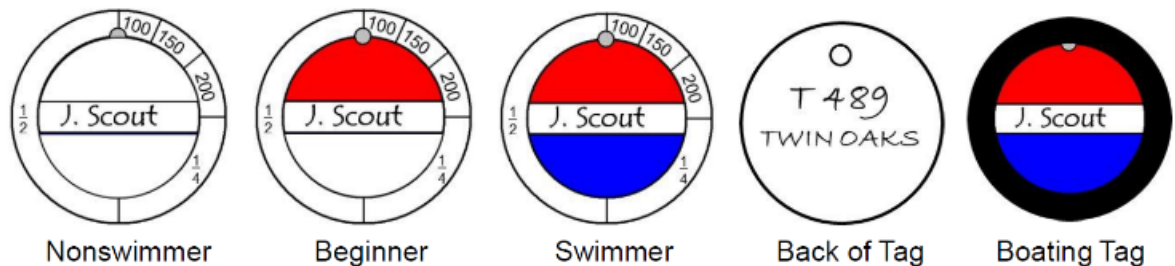
SWIMMING AND BOATING CHECK-IN

BUDDY TAGS

For all aquatic activities in summer camp a check-in system must be developed. For temporary day camps with few campers this system could be rather simple -- popsicle sticks with the scout's name, even an adult leader with a check-in sheet.

Whatever system is used it must be clear which scouts are checked in and which area they are checked in to. Most camps use the system of buddy tags placed on a board which has hooks arranged into groups that correspond to the swimming areas or the boating craft. This is the recommended system.

Buddy tags must be filled out with the Scout's name on the front and colored to reflect the Scout's swimming ability (all white, red, or red/blue). On the back the Scout's troop number and campsite must be listed. This information becomes vital when a tag is left on a buddy board after an activity or when a



tag is found blown off the buddy board.

The information on the tag must be legible. In an aquatic environment it sometimes becomes difficult to even get the pen to write, let alone make it readable. Also, weathering and repeated use during the week make tags even more difficult to read. Tags that are illegible must be replaced.

In filling out tags it is imperative to be as neat and complete as possible. First and last names, if possible. First initial and complete last name, if not. Avoid nicknames. The name on the tag should uniquely identify the scout.

The semicircles that are colored (red or blue/red) should be completely colored in. A simple red or blue dot or slash is difficult to see from a distance.

Most camps use one set of tags; however, if the boating area is separate from the swimming area a separate set of boating tags could be used.

BOUNDARY / GATE

The gate for the swimming area must be situated so that buddy pairs must immediately pass in front of the In Board for check-in. This process should be directly monitored by a responsible staff member

The gate should always be manned when the area is open. If possible, this should be a dedicated assignment rather than doubling up with another assignment. This person's attention should always be on the check-in / check-out procedure.

The gatekeeper should consider the following:

- Allow only one buddy group at a time to approach the board. Ask them to hold their tag up as they approach the board and as they leave. This simply provides the gate person with a visual confirmation.
- Allow each scout (or leader) to handle **only their** own tag. Note that Cub leaders sometimes keep the tags for their den or pack with them and hand them out immediately before the Cubs enter the area. This is OK but it is important that the Cub check in themselves.
- The gatekeeper must be patient as scouts learn how to hang tags on a cup hook that is pointing down. The instructions of "Start it backward, flip it up and over" will be made over and over. An early explanation of why the hooks point down -- so the wind is less likely to blow them off -- will help.
- If the gatekeeper is distracted, perhaps by a leader asking a question, they should stop traffic through the gate until done. This can be done discreetly but it is important that the gatekeeper's undivided attention be given to the gate
- At the end of a swimming or boating session all guards and supervisors should remain on duty in the area until the board is clear. When all scout and leader tags are off the board the gate keeper should call "Board clear!"



Buddy Checks

Periodically, especially during open swimming activities, buddy checks must be performed. These checks reinforce the concept of the buddy system to the scouts and confirm to the staff that all those checked into the area are accounted for.

The frequency of buddy checks is about 10 minutes or as the supervisor deems necessary. If only a few scouts are swimming and it is easy to visually confirm the count, then it might only be necessary a couple of times per swim period. If there are a lot of swimmers, then the supervisor might call for more frequent checks.

- At the signal for the buddy check, usually a horn or a whistle, scouts are given a few seconds to get with their buddy and clasp hands overhead. At this time scouts should come to a stationary point, either standing or holding onto the sides. Some directors may even want them to exit the water.
- As soon as all buddy groups are stationary, guards should begin counting buddy groups in their area.
- The gatekeeper calls out “Nonswimmers, how many?” and the guard for that area responds with the number of buddy groups. (e.g., “Four doubles, One Triple”) The gatekeeper either calls out “Check!” or “Count again, please”.
- If the non-swimmer count checks out the gatekeeper continues in the same manner for the Beginner and Swimmer areas. A successful buddy check should take less than a minute from start to finish
- If the number of buddy groups returned by the guard is not the same as the number checked in, then the guard is asked to recount. **The gatekeeper should not provide the correct number.** If the recount doesn't check the gatekeeper should probably go ahead and check the other areas' count but the supervisor or director should be notified. Miscounts are often simply a case of scouts swimming in an area different than they checked into.
- If miscounts aren't quickly remedied, then some type of emergency plan will be implemented.
- Buddy checks for instructional sessions usually take place within that group and are the responsibility of the instructor

BOATING AREA PROCEDURES

OPENING DAY PROCEDURES

Medical Recheck

Scouts BSA resident camps normally start after lunch on opening day, with aquatics programs, such as merit badges, starting the next day. Therefore, units are typically scheduled for swim tests that first afternoon. Efficient scheduling is essential to allow sufficient time for units to complete the procedure without long lines developing. It is also essential for any critical information from the medical screening to be communicated to the aquatics staff prior to those individuals participating in the tests.

The *test administrators* may be anyone with an aquatics background approved and instructed by the camp aquatics director. In some camps, recruiting extra test administrators from other program areas may help prevent backlogs.

The procedure should be explained simply to the group, but the group should not be divided into those self-declaring themselves to be swimmers, beginners, or non-swimmers. Each Scout should have his or her own buddy tag in hand.

- A Scout, such as the Senior Patrol Leader or Den Chief, may be recruited to help color the tags. This could also be an adult leader or staff guide assigned to the unit.
- The Scout, or leader, and the test administrator form a buddy pair.
All swim classification tests are conducted one-on-one.
- The test administrator introduces themselves to the participant, takes the buddy tag, leads the person aside and first determines which classification the person will likely qualify for.
- The test administrator should ask if the participant has ever jumped into deep water before. For those who answer no, the administrator should encourage them to slip into shallow water and cool off. They may also be asked to show how well they can swim in shallow water. Those not ready for the beginner test should be encouraged to join the camp's learn-to-swim program, which may be tied to Second Class requirements. Ideally, they should be introduced to the nonswimmer instructor prior to being shown how to store their tag on the out board.
- If the participant states that they are comfortable jumping into water over their head, they should be asked additional questions such as: "How far can you swim?" "Have you taken the beginner or swimmer test before?" "The beginner test is from here to there and back (indicate the course). The swimmer test is (explain briefly). Which would you like to try?" If the Scout provides cues, either verbally or by body language, that they are uncomfortable with the deep-water entry, they may need to slip

into either shallow or deep water (holding to the side) to demonstrate that they are ready for the test.

- Once the Scout and the test administrator agree on which test is appropriate, the Scout should be asked to briefly repeat what they are expected to do.
- Scouts unsure of their ability may attempt the swimmer test without doing the beginner test first. The start of each is similar, so a person unable to go the entire 100 yards without holding to the side or unable to perform an acceptable backstroke is still likely to demonstrate the 50 ft swim with a turn required for the beginner classification.
- During the test, the Scout should swim parallel to the pool side or pier, ideally within easy reach pole range. Rescue equipment may be carried by the administrator or placed within easy reach, such as along the side of the water. Anyone carrying a pole should be careful not to hit others when moving along the course. Assists, if needed, should be quick and discreet.
- If the Scout does not obtain the classification he or she was expecting, the test administrator should provide encouragement, suggest camp programs that will help with swimming skills, and note that the person can take the test again, just about any time they are at the swimming area, by arrangement with any of the aquatics staff.
- Once the test is completed, the test administrator should walk with the Scout back to the entrance where a means to color the tag is in place. That might simply be a table with markers to allow the administrator to color the tag. It might also be a table staffed by someone else, such as the Senior Patrol Leader or adult unit leader, who does the coloring. In any event, the Scout should be told what to do with the tag after it is colored.
- The test administrator then introduces themselves to the next person waiting to take the test.

AQUATICS PLAY STRUCTURES

Various items such as water slides, Icebergs, and the Blob can add pizzazz and challenge to a camp aquatics program. Those in turn can attract and retain campers. The Water Reality obstacle course at the Summit Bechtel Reserve is an excellent team building exercise.

The BSA's Aquatics Play Structure Policy applies to all play structures operated in Scouting whether inflatable, floatable, or fixed structures. It includes, but is not limited to, slides, swings, mats, logs, rockers, and climbing or bouncing devices.

- Program Hazard Analysis -- A program hazard analysis must be completed at least annually for each aquatics play structure device in use. The unique risks associated with the device and the operational procedures and practices to mitigate the risks must be documented. The participant's age and swimming ability, which are appropriate for use of the device, must also be documented. The program hazard analysis must be approved by the council (Aquatics Committee and Enterprise Risk Management Committee).
- Location -- Aquatics play structures, used individually or in a group, must be isolated from other water activities to safely manage risks. A dedicated catch pool or roped off area of water is required for each activity. A separate check in and a single route to the start of the activity are often needed.
- Operating Procedures -- The activity must be conducted in accordance with Safe Swim Defense principles, and swimming ability must be appropriate for the activity. Lifeguards must be specific to the activity and not be shared with other water activities. Appropriate guard ratios must be maintained, which includes a sufficient number of guards to scan the entire activity area with lines of sight not blocked by structures. Supervision of participants entering and leaving the activity must occur. Lifeguards must be positioned to maintain proper lines of sight for the risks associated with each type of device. Lifeguards must be provided with appropriate personal safety and rescue equipment.
- Installation/Construction -- Installation, including any anchoring systems, must be in accordance with manufacturing specifications. Construction of any fixed structures, towers, and ramps must be professionally designed, approved, and inspected by engineers / architects. All installations and construction must meet any state regulations on aquatics play structures.



- Participant Safety -- Safety equipment (such as properly fitted life jackets and helmets) must be provided to participants as appropriate for the activity.
- Safety Checks -- A safety check of the structure/device must occur in accordance with manufacturer specifications or at least daily. A safety check of the participant safety and lifeguard safety and rescue equipment must occur daily.
- Emergency Action Plans -- As part of the program hazard analysis, emergency action plans specific to the activity must be developed and approved. Emergency action plans must be practiced on a regular basis.

This policy, along with guidance for specific play structures is available at the following link:

<https://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/aquatics>

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES / TEACHING AQUATICS

The teaching of aquatics skills and procedures is perhaps the most important attribute for a supervisor to acquire. Teaching skills are utilized in working with scouts of every age, from Lion Cubs to adults. Training that emphasizes teaching include *Aquatics Instructor BSA*, all *Aquatics Supervision* courses and all instructor training (*BSA Lifeguard Instructor*, *Aquatics Supervision Instructors*, etc.)

For an in-depth discussion of *teaching* **objectives**, **methods** and **assessment** see the Teaching section of the ***Aquatics Staff Guide***.

BSA Aquatic Staff Guide

SCOUTS WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

The following section is excerpted from the BSA publication INTRODUCTION to WORKING WITH Scouts With Special Needs and Disabilities (#510-071). This publication is written for the unit leader but many of the guidelines are appropriate for the camp situation.

“The best guide to working with Scouts who have special needs and disabilities is to use common sense. It’s obvious that a Scout in a wheelchair may have problems fulfilling a hiking requirement, but it might not be so obvious when it comes to a Scout with a learning disability. Use the resources around you.”

“The basic premise of Scouting with disabilities is that everyone wants to participate fully and be treated and respected like every other member of the unit.”

“Many Scouts with disabilities can accomplish the basic skills of Scouting, but they may require extra time to learn them. Working with these Scouts can require patience and understanding on the part of unit leaders and other Scouts.”

Also check out the **Inclusion Toolbox** from ablescouts.org, a product of the **BSA Special Needs and Disabilities Committee**. “The [Inclusion Toolbox for Special Needs and Disabilities](#) is a printable website that keeps special needs and disability information accessible 24/7/365 for the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) community, including Scouts BSA. The Toolbox will replace the printed and PDF Scouting for Youth with Disabilities Manual from 2007.”

Check the following links for specific special needs guidance for camp aquatics areas:

CAMP PROGRAM: SWIM AREAS

CAMP PROGRAM: WATERFRONT AND BOATING

HYPERVENTILATION & HYPOXIC BLACKOUT

Competitive underwater swimming events are not permitted in Scouting. Repeated deep and rapid breathing, or hyperventilation, before underwater swimming should be discouraged.

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF
HYPERVENTILATION & HYPOXIA BLACKOUT



AQUATICS PROCEDURES FOR THE COUNCIL OR DISTRICT

- LOCAL COUNCIL AQUATICS COMMITTEE
 - Starting an Aquatics Committee
 - Committee Structure
 - Committee Procedures
- YEAR-ROUND AQUATICS
 - Council-Level Swim Checks Procedure
 - Learn to Swim Program
 - Merit Badge Program
 - Aquatics Training
- AQUATICS CALENDAR
- COUNCIL AQUATICS CAMPS
- AQUATICS LEADERSHIP TRAINING
 - Safe Swim Defense / Safety Afloat
 - Aquatics Supervision
 - Swimming and Water Rescue
 - Paddlecraft Safety
 - Aquatics Supervision Course Instructor
 - BSA Lifeguard
 - BSA Lifeguard Course Instructor
 - Aquatics Instructor BSA



LOCAL COUNCIL AQUATICS COMMITTEE

The National Aquatics Subcommittee recommends the formation of a Local Council Aquatics Committee to oversee the aquatics activities within the council.

STARTING AN AQUATICS COMMITTEE

1. Professional Staff Member to serve as staff advisor.
2. Volunteer Chairperson - Identify an experienced, mature volunteer to chair the committee. The qualifications of this volunteer should include expertise in one or more aquatic program areas and an understanding of the purposes and scope of BSA aquatic activities. An adult volunteer with training as an Aquatics Instructor BSA would be preferable.
3. Committee Objectives - Define the scope and responsibilities of the committee in terms of training and instruction, program, safety, advancement and leadership development for year-round aquatics as well as for the aquatic programs delivered in council summer camps. For a **sample** set of Council Aquatics Committee objectives click [here](#).
4. Decide Where the Committee Fits - Determine the place of the committee in the council structure and define the relationship of the committee relative to the other council committees. Include on which council committees there should be Aquatics Committee representation and from which council committees it is suggested there is representation on the Aquatics Committee.
5. Committee Structure - Develop a committee structure and organization that address both aquatic program areas, e.g. swimming, lifesaving, flatwater boating, whitewater boating, sailing, snorkeling, SCUBA, etc., and the functional areas of training, program, safety, advancement, and leadership development. (Note: The next section covers the committee's organizational structure in greater depth.)
6. Advertise - Formally announce the creation of the committee in council publications and electronic forms of communication as well as in district and council meetings.
7. Recruit Members - Recruit interested and qualified adult volunteers with expertise in the identified aquatic program areas through existing council committees, council publications and personal contacts. Include representatives from community aquatic resources such as the American Red Cross, YMCA, paddling, sailing or rowing clubs, and where appropriate outfitters and other commercial sources of aquatic equipment and training.



8. Meeting Time and Place - . Determine and announce an annual meeting schedule and meeting location.
9. Communicate - Publish meeting notices, minutes, an annual aquatics calendar and aquatic resource documents on council and district websites and distribute them through council electronic methods of communication.
10. Analysis and Feedback - As with all committee work, part of the process should be an annual review to analyze the effectiveness of the committee's activities and to receive feedback from the various parties who might have an interest.



COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The aquatics committee has overall responsibility for the local council's aquatics activities in Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Exploring. Within the local council organization, the aquatics committee reports to either the vice president of program or to the vice president of health and safety. The aquatics committee may be a separate committee or subcommittee within the program or health and safety committee.

Members of the aquatics committee should either be experienced Scouters with a background in aquatics or aquatics specialists interested in becoming involved in the Scouting program. The committee should include at least one individual with a current National Camping School Aquatics Instructor, BSA training card.

In addition to swimming and water-rescue specialists, the committee should include specialists for the type of aquatics activities prevalent in the local council (e.g., snorkeling/scuba, canoe tripping, sailing, whitewater, crew rowing, waterskiing, Sea Scouts, etc.). Select committee members should either be members of or liaisons to other council committees that touch the aquatics committee's areas of responsibility, including training, advancement, health and safety, camping, etc.

Summer camp aquatics directors should be ex-officio members of the committee during the term of their employment and afterward encouraged to become full-time, year-round volunteer members.



COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES

The aquatics committee's main responsibilities include the following year-round activities tailored to the local council's aquatic activities and opportunities:

- **Training**—Work with the council training committee to provide aquatics training for adults and youth.

- **Program**—Provide and promote a broad array of basic and high-adventure swimming and boating activities to support all parts of the Scouting program.
- **Advancement**—Provide advancement opportunities for youth.
- **Safety**—Actively assess safe operation of council- and district-led aquatics activities, including summer camp, and promote aquatics safety at the unit level.
- **Attraction, Development, and Retention of Aquatics Leadership**—A primary role of the committee is attracting, developing, and retaining qualified aquatics leadership for the training, program, advancement, and safety activities above. This includes summer camp and year-round council- and district-led aquatics activities and should include succession planning for key roles.

For a comprehensive guide to Council Committee activities and best practices check out the [Local Council Aquatics Committee Starter Kit](#):

<https://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/aquatics/forms>

YEAR-ROUND AQUATICS

Just as units are encouraged to maintain aquatics activities throughout the year, so are councils encouraged to do the same. It obviously starts with an active Council Aquatics Committee, but other council or district groups could host or sponsor events that promote aquatics:

- Council-Level Swim Check Procedures -- While units (packs, troops, crews) may conduct swim checks for **unit activities** and/or **advancement**, the procedure for swim checks for **district**, **council**, or **national** events should be determined by a council-level committee, preferably the Council Aquatics Committee. For details on this process click [here](#).
- Learn-to-Swim Programs -- The BSA has no formal learn-to-swim program, but this is probably the most important program that could be offered within a council.
 - Formal learn-to-swim program sponsored by the council or district using volunteer instructors and following the guidance found in [Aquatics Supervision](#). The goal would be for the Cub or Scout to advance a swimming level.
 - Informal incentive program where a Cub or Scout could receive an award, perhaps a local patch, for taking swimming instruction offered by other agencies – Red Cross, YMCA, etc.

- Merit Badge Instruction -- Could be Swimming, Lifesaving or any of the boating merit badges. Instruction could be over a week-end or, maybe, spread out over a few weeks.
- Training programs -- While these are geared more toward adults they support the other youth programs by providing well-trained supervisors and instructors.



AQUATICS CALENDAR

For a good part of the country the aquatics “season” is late-spring to early-autumn. As stated earlier, every effort should be made to extend that as much as possible. The following model was developed for the purpose of training programs for summer camp staff, but it wouldn’t be difficult to adapt it to other council, district or even unit aquatics programs.

*The months of **August through October** would be a period of **ASSESSMENT**. During this time, you would review reports from the previous season, identify problems and discuss solutions. Review program needs for next season looking especially at staffing needs. Depending on council calendars you might have to anticipate and plan for training dates.*

SAMPLE STAFF PLANNING / TRAINING SCHEDULE

AUG - OCT	ASSESSMENT
NOV - DEC	PLANNING
JAN - APRIL	TRAINING
MAY - JULY	IMPLEMENTATION

*The months of **November and December** will be used for **PLANNING** the training season. This is the holiday season so it might be difficult to get more than one or two planning meetings.*

*You really need to be ready to go in **January** with instructors and facilities for your expected **TRAINING** sessions. Realistically this often gets pushed into March or even later but getting it started early helps account for unexpected problems.*



AQUATICS LEADERSHIP TRAINING

- Safe Swim Defense / Safety Afloat
- Aquatics Supervision
 - Swimming and Water Rescue
 - Aquatics Supervision Course Instructor
- BSA Lifeguard
 - BSA Lifeguard Course Instructor
- Aquatics Instructor BSA



**THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE LINKED
TO THEIR ASSOCIATED CONTENT IN
THE TEXT**



FROM MAHC

6.4.1.3.1 Daily Inspection Items The QUALIFIED OPERATOR or RESPONSIBLE SUPERVISOR shall ensure that a daily AQUATIC FACILITY preventive maintenance inspection is done before opening and that it shall include:

- 1) Walkways/DECK and exits are clear, clean, free of debris;
- 2) Drain covers, vacuum fitting covers, SKIMMER equalizer covers, and any other suction outlet covers are in place, secure, and unbroken;
- 3) SKIMMER baskets, weirs, lids, flow adjusters, and suction outlets are free of any blockage;
- 4) INLET and return covers and any other fittings are in place, secure, and unbroken;
- 5) SAFETY warning signs and other signage are in place and in good repair;
- 6) SAFETY equipment as required by this CODE are in place and in good repair, including emergency instructions and phone numbers;
- 7) Entrapment prevention systems are operational;
- 8) Recirculation, DISINFECTION systems, controller(s), and probes are operating as required;
- 9) SECONDARY DISINFECTION SYSTEMS and/or SUPPLEMENTAL TREATMENT SYSTEMS are operating as required;
- 10) Underwater lights and other lighting are intact with no exposed wires or water in lights;
- 11) Slime and biofilm has been removed from accessible surfaces of AQUATIC VENUES, SLIDES, and other AQUATIC FEATURES;
- 12) Doors to nonpublic areas (*CHEMICAL STORAGE SPACES, offices, etc.*) are locked;
- 13) First aid supplies are stocked;
- 14) Emergency communication equipment and systems are operational;
- 15) Fecal/vomit/blood incident CONTAMINATION RESPONSE protocols, materials, and equipment are available;
- 16) Water features and amenities are functioning in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations;
- 17) Fencing/BARRIERS, gates, and self-latching or other locks are tested and are intact and functioning properly, and BARRIERS do not have nearby furniture to encourage climbing;
- 18) Drinking fountains are clean and in functional condition;
- 19) Electrical devices are in good working condition and meet the requirements specified in the NEC and MAHC;
- 20) Alarms, if required, are tested and functioning properly; and
- 21) Assessing water clarity such that the bottom and objects in the POOL are clearly visible.

ROLE OF THE AQUATICS DIRECTOR

Lead Professional Lifeguard. The Aquatics Director has responsibility for training inexperienced lifeguards, for assessing the quality of skills of experienced lifeguards, for establishing aquatics Emergency Action Plans, for implementing effective swimming and boating protection plans and for leading the response in an aquatics emergency situation.

American society in general and parents in particular have an ever increasing expectation of the “Standard of Care” that must be met by professional lifeguards. In addition to other skills and knowledge, graduates of the National Camp School Aquatics Section need to meet the skill requirements of BSA Lifeguard and have the ability to train others in BSA Lifeguard.

Lead Instructor for Aquatics. Aquatics Directors have responsibility for developing/refining the aquatics activities schedule within the overall camp schedule, for teaching aquatics skills to their staffs, for teaching their staffs to be effective instructors and for being a role model for effective aquatics instruction.

Providing fun and challenging aquatics activities and performing effective instruction for all participants are keys to the experience youth will have at resident camp and determinants of whether they remain in Scouting or return to camp the following year.

Aquatics Area Manager. The Aquatics Director has responsibility for managing the day-to-day operation of the Aquatics Area. This includes staff development and relations, relations with unit leaders, conflict resolution and decision-making involving rules and procedures. Having the ability to anticipate and respond to the types of practical situations the Aquatics Director will face in their resident camp is critical to making their other two roles work.



OBJECTIVES OF A LOCAL COUNCIL AQUATICS COMMITTEE

Each committee should establish reasonable objectives which guide it in the pursuit of its short- and long-term goals

The following objectives from one council are offered as an example

1. Promote Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat in all aquatic activities.
2. Encourage units to promote aquatics by providing resources and training.
3. Provide a process for units to conduct their own yearly swim tests
4. Provide on-going training for adult unit leaders and summer camp aquatics staff.
5. Encourage advancement in aquatics -- 2nd Class, 1st Class and aquatics Merit Badges.
6. Promote Cub Scout aquatic activities.
7. Provide a forum for discussion of policies and procedures relative to unit, district and council aquatics.
8. Ensure that facilities and equipment are used according to agreed-upon standards.
9. Develop resources for training and support in specialized aquatic areas -- kayaking, boardsailing, waterskiing, etc.
10. Promote participation in aquatic high-adventure -- Northern Tier, Sea Base or similar.
11. Coordinate with other agencies (Red Cross, YMCA, etc.) for joint programs or use of facilities.
12. Coordinate with other councils regarding programs and resources.



KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL AQUATICS COMMITTEE

Local council aquatics committee activities should include but are not limited to:

TRAINING

- Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat
- Aquatics Supervision Training – Swimming & Water Rescue / Paddlecraft Safety
- Basic swimming and boating skills training for unit leaders
- Basic water-rescue skills training for unit leaders
- Development of unit aquatics activities for unit leaders
- Camp aquatics staff training in:
 - Aquatics skills
 - Effective teaching of aquatics skills
 - Aquatics safety, including lifeguarding
- Basic canoeing
- Basic crew rowing
- Basic whitewater
- Non-swimmer instruction

PROGRAM

- Promote learn-to-swim programs for all Scouts and especially for Cub Scouts by providing opportunities and incentives to learn to swim.
- Whitewater canoe, kayak, rafting trips
- Aquatics Awards -- Snorkeling BSA, Kayaking BSA, Boardsailing BSA, etc.
- Promotion of aquatics high adventure—Northern Tier, Sea Base, other
- Scuba
- Enhanced aquatics activities during day camp and resident camp sessions for both Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts
- Special aquatics camp sessions for Scouts BSA and Venturers with emphasis on activities not available during regular summer camp sessions
- Winter swim programs with learn-to-swim and advancement opportunities for Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, and Venturers
- Coordination with other councils to promote programs and resources
- Implementation and promotion of the aquatics portions of the national Red Cross and BSA agreements and key interface with the assigned Red Cross aquatics liaison in the designated local chapter of the Red Cross
- Coordination with other agencies (e.g., YMCA, NAUI, PADI, American Canoe Association, etc.) for joint programs or use of facilities

ADVANCEMENT

- Cub Scout electives
- Webelos Aquanaut
- Second Class and First Class requirements
- Swimming and Lifesaving merit badge clinics (non-summer camp)
- Other aquatics merit badges (non-summer camp)

SAFETY

- Promotion of Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat at the district and unit levels
- Pre-camp swim classification testing
- Review of council and district safety training and procedures for aquatics activities, including day and resident camps
- Inspection of summer camp and other council and district aquatics activities facilities and equipment

ATTRACTION, DEVELOPMENT, AND RETENTION OF AQUATICS LEADERSHIP

- Develop and maintain enough qualified instructors, distributed throughout the council, to timely meet all local aquatics training needs.
- Assist with sourcing qualified candidates for council aquatics program and safety leadership needs.
- Assist with interviewing candidates to ensure necessary aquatics experience, training certificates, and aquatics leadership exist.
- Establish a succession planning process identifying the next aquatics leaders for key roles.
- Establish a program to train, develop, and retain younger aquatics staff members to become aquatics leaders in the future. This includes staff for summer camp and year-round council- and district-led aquatics activities. The staff training process for summer camp staff ideally would begin in the January to April time period each year to ensure that a well-trained aquatics staff exists prior to arrival at summer camp.



HYPOXIC BLACKOUT

Competitive underwater swimming events are not permitted in Scouting. Repeated deep and rapid breathing, or hyperventilation, before underwater swimming should be discouraged.

It is a myth that hyperventilation can noticeably extend the time a person can stay underwater. A person breathing normally typically has blood oxygen (O₂) levels approaching 100 percent of what the blood can hold.

Instead, hyperventilation reduces the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the blood (hypocapnia). That is dangerous since a person's urge to breathe depends on the amount of CO₂ rather than O₂. If the urge to breathe is delayed, O₂ levels can drop sufficiently to cause unconsciousness (hypoxic blackout). Loss of consciousness underwater is fatal unless the person is quickly rescued and revived.

Breath-holding is an important stage in learning to swim, and the ability to swim underwater is an important skill for snorkeling and lifesaving. However, one or two deliberate breaths should be sufficient. Camp aquatics staff should caution anyone obviously breathing excessively prior to submersion. Contests to see who can stay under longer, swim the longest distance underwater, or reach the deepest depth are prohibited.

Hypoxic blackout is also known as shallow water blackout. However that term is used inconsistently and can be confusing. It can lead the public, and perhaps lifeguards, to think that the danger only exists in the shallow end of a pool, which is untrue.

The "shallow" in shallow water blackout comes from the competitive freediving community, with records exceeding 100 meters of depth and over 10 minutes of static breath holding. Freedivers are subject to hypoxic blackout from hypocapnia, but can also be in danger from unconsciousness on ascent due to other effects.

For every 10 meters or so of depth, the pressure on a freediver increases by roughly one atmosphere. That compresses the air in the lungs. On ascent, the pressure decreases, approaching normal levels above 10 meters, or 33 feet, which is "shallow" for freedivers. Hypoxia can result from the drop in O₂ partial pressure in the lungs as the air in them expands.

In 2015, the YMCA of the USA, the American Red Cross, and USA Swimming issued a joint press release which included a recommendation to use hypoxic blackout rather than shallow water blackout in reference to the problem. The BSA supports that recommendation. A short video on hypoxic blackout from the American Red Cross is available at the following link:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=hypoxic+blackout&view=detail&mid=6A6BD2416768ADB51AD56A6BD2416768ADB51AD5&FORM=VIRE>





THE ROLE OF THE AQUATICS DIRECTOR IN SUMMER CAMP

While the Aquatics Director plays many roles as part of the camp staff there are four primary roles he/she plays specifically related to the Aquatics Area. At camp the Aquatics Director operates as the:

- Lead Professional Lifeguard
- Lead Instructor for Aquatics
- Aquatics Program Manager
- Aquatics Area Manager

Lead Professional Lifeguard. The Aquatics Director has responsibility for training inexperienced lifeguards, for assessing the quality of skills of experienced lifeguards, for establishing aquatics Emergency Action Plans, for implementing effective swimming and boating protection plans and for leading the response in an aquatics emergency situation.

American society in general and parents in particular have an ever-increasing expectation of the “Standard of Care” that must be met by professional lifeguards. In addition to other skills and knowledge, Aquatic Directors need to meet the skill requirements of BSA Lifeguard and have the ability to train others in BSA Lifeguard. The Model Aquatics Health Code (MAHC), which is in the process of being adopted at the state level, is setting a national Standard of Care for professional lifeguards which will only increase as more states adopt it.

Lead Instructor for Aquatics. Aquatics Directors have responsibility for teaching aquatics skills to their staffs, for teaching their staffs to be effective instructors and for being a role model for effective aquatics instruction.

Providing effective instruction for all participants is key to the experience youth will have at resident camp.

Aquatics Program Manager. Providing fun and challenging aquatics activities is also key to the experience youth will have at resident camp. This program experience will largely determine whether they return to camp the following year and impacts whether they remain in Scouting. Aquatics Directors have responsibility for developing/refining the aquatics activities within the overall camp schedule. While the aquatics program will be designed well before they arrive at camp, they should continually be assessing and evaluating the program and offering real-time suggestions for changes when things are not working. They should actively work with the resident camp Management and

Program Director to continue enhancing the Aquatics program being offered. The Aquatics Director should also prepare an end-of-year program report to identify things that worked well, things that need improvement and new activities or programs to consider in next year's planning process. This report should be made available to Camp Management and the Council Aquatics Committee or Camping Committee.

Aquatics Area Manager. The Aquatics Directors have responsibility for managing the day-to-day operation of the Aquatics Area. This includes staff development and relationships, relations with unit leaders, conflict resolution and decision-making involving rules and procedures. They also have a key responsibility for retaining staff for future years and developing a pipeline for Aquatics leadership including a succession plan for the next Aquatics Director. Having the ability to anticipate and respond to the types of practical situations the Aquatics Director will face in their resident camp is critical to making the other roles work.



BUILDING AN AQUATICS STAFF

The following is excerpted from a presentation to the National Aquatics Virtual Conference, October 2020.

I've been asked to discuss with you the annual difficulties of hiring a director and staff for your camp aquatics area.

For as long as I can remember there has been an almost annual rush or even panic to find an available person to be the camp aquatic director. Granted, you might have someone that comes along and fills the void for several years or even someone that has served for many years as aquatic director. That's good – count your blessings.

More often, especially in smaller councils, it's an annual effort to find someone who has all the qualifications and is willing to be the aquatic director. **So why is it so difficult**

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

As I used to teach my students, the first point of problem-solving is identifying what the problem is. Seems a bit simplistic but it's an important point.

Most problems are like onions -- you must peel back the layers to get to the **crux of the problem**.

In developing an aquatics staff for summer camp, you need to consider many things like TRAINING, EXPERIENCE, LEADERSHIP, PERSONALITY, AVAILABILITY and on and on . . .

I'm going to concentrate on **TRAINING** in this presentation although we'll touch on some of the others as we go.

So what's the minimum **training** required for your aquatics staff? Let's check with NCAP.

For the AQUATICS DIRECTOR .

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- 21 YEARS OLD
- LIFEGUARD (BSA LG or ARC LG)
- AQUATICS INSTRUCTOR BSA (NCS)
- FIRST AID AND BASIC LIFE SUPPORT FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

For the rest of the AQUATICS STAFF . . .

50% OF AQUATIC STAFF MUST HAVE:

- LIFEGUARD (BSA LG or ARC LG)
- BASIC LIFE SUPPORT FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Why is this aquatic training different than all the other training we take in Scouting?

- **SPECIALIZED** -- Lifeguard and Aquatics Instructor BSA courses have skill-based prerequisites. In fact, AI requires LG and CPR *certificates* for admission. The training for the *instructors* for these courses is even more specialized.
- **TIME CONSUMING** -- By the time they start in camp, the Aquatics Director will have had 90 – 120 hours of training plus travel time to at least three training sites. That same Aquatics Director might then be asked to provide 30+ hours as a Lifeguard Instructor or Aquatics Supervision Instructor.
- **EXPENSIVE** -- Depending on how much the council pays, the Aquatics Director will have spent between \$500 and \$1000.
- **IT'S NOT "ONE AND DONE"** -- This training expires in as little as two years. Some trainings provide abbreviated recertification courses, but training is still an on-going process.

LIFEGUARD SHORTAGE

The whole problem of finding aquatics staff members is exacerbated by the fact that there is a lifeguard shortage. Whether this shortage affects you now or not, you need to realize a few things

IT'S REAL I'm not going to get into statistics, but there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to show that this isn't an anomaly or a fluke.

IT'S NATION-WIDE Pools across the country have had to cut back hours of operation, even close, because of a lack of qualified lifeguards

IT'S PROBABLY HERE TO STAY The reason I say that it's here to stay is that although the demographics of camp staff haven't changed very much (mostly high school and college students) the demands on that group have increased a lot in the past 20 years.

High School and College students have a lot of demands on their time:

- **SPORTS** – Summer practice, Sports Camps and travelling teams have become the norm
- **MUSIC (BAND)** -- Camps and marching band practice have, again, become the norm
- **COLLEGE STUDENTS** are often expected to complete internships in their professional field.

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- Most high school and college students can earn more money back home than at camp.

So, what do you do? The bottom line is that it has to work for you -- your camp -- your council. The Subcommittee advocates the involvement of your Local Aquatics Committee. The Aquatics Committee is covered in greater detail elsewhere in this guide, but a review of the recommended roles is appropriate here.

ROLE OF THE AQUATICS COMMITTEE

- **Training.** Work with the council training committee to provide aquatics training for adults and youth.
- **Program.** Provide and promote a broad array of basic and high-adventure swimming and boating activities to support all parts of the Scouting program.
- **Advancement.** Provide advancement opportunities for youth.
- **Safety.** Actively assess safe operation of council- and district-led aquatics activities including summer camp and promote aquatics safety at the unit level.
- **Attraction, Development, and Retention of Aquatics Leadership.** A primary role of the committee is attracting, developing, and retaining qualified aquatics leaders for the training, program, advancement, and safety activities above. This includes summer camp and year-round council- and district-led aquatics activities and should include succession planning for key roles.

Let's zero in on this last role which we have broken down even further:

- [Assist with sourcing qualified candidates.](#)

Where do you look for aquatics leaders?

The first place is, we think, **within your Scouting community** -- Camp Staff, Campers / Leaders, Roundtables, Other Training Groups

Next, consider **colleges, high schools** and **swim clubs**.

Finally, it's always a good idea to make contact with the various organizations in your community that have aquatics interests -- **American Red Cross, American Canoe Association, JCC, YMCA, US Rowing, US Sailing**, and others.

- [Assist with interviewing candidates to ensure necessary aquatics experience, training certificates, and aquatics leadership.](#)

Whether the Aquatics Committee is directly involved in the interview process isn't as important as providing Camp Management the support and information they might need to ensure qualified candidates are considered.

- Establish a succession planning process identifying the next aquatics leaders for key roles.



This is where the long-term process of aquatics staffing really begins. You've already got a group of young 15 – 17 year-olds; either working in your camps or perhaps working district events or even working within their units as aquatics resources. These are the ones who should be recruited and trained in *Aquatics Supervision (Swimming & Water Rescue* and / or any of the *Paddlecraft Safety* modules) and *BSA Lifeguard*.

As aquatics leaders turn 18, they've, hopefully, got a couple years of experience and BSA Lifeguard training. These are the ones who should be considered for sending to National Camping School for training as *BSA Aquatics Instructors*. This flies in the face of traditional thinking where a person is not considered for NCS until they are 21 and can actually be a camp Aquatics Director.

Consider that most staff members fade away around the age of 22. They're starting careers and families and camp staff often doesn't fit into the plans. If those staffers were sent to NCS at the age of 21 you'll get 1, maybe 2, years of service. On the other hand, if they are sent to NCS at the age of 18, you could get 3 years of a highly trained assistant and then possibly 1 or two years as an Aquatics Director. Something to consider.

- Establish a program to train, develop, and retain younger aquatics staff members to become aquatics leaders in the future. This includes staff for summer camp and year-round council- and district-led aquatics activities. The staff training process for summer camp staff ideally would begin in the January-to-April period each year to ensure that a well-trained aquatics staff exists before arriving at summer camp.

The months of **August through October** would be a period of **ASSESSMENT**. During this time, you would review reports from the previous season, identify problems and discuss solutions. Review program needs for next season looking especially at staffing needs. Depending on council calendars you might have to anticipate and plan for training dates.

SAMPLE STAFF PLANNING / TRAINING SCHEDULE

AUG - OCT	ASSESSMENT
NOV - DEC	PLANNING
JAN - APRIL	TRAINING
MAY - JULY	IMPLEMENTATION

The months of **November and December** will be used for **PLANNING** the training season. This is the holiday season so it might be difficult to get more than one or two planning meetings.

You really need to be ready to go in **January** with instructors and facilities for your expected **TRAINING** sessions. Realistically this often gets pushed into March or even later but getting it started early helps account for unexpected problems.

Ideally the training is done by the first of May. Except, of course, for National Camping School. If you must send folks to NCS that will probably take place during May.

- *Develop and maintain enough qualified instructors, distributed throughout the council, to timely meet all local aquatics training needs.*

Earlier we talked about the “crux” of the problem.

I believe that having enough instructors (LG, AQ SUPV, etc.) gets right to the center of how to make this work.

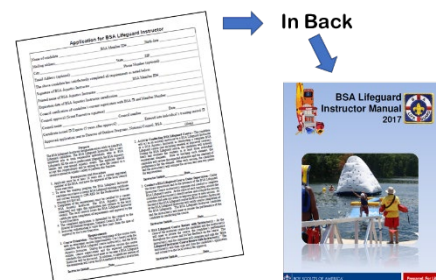
It all starts with an NCS graduate, probably your aquatics director.

That person can teach BSA Lifeguard courses

The people that complete those courses may apply to become BSA LG Instructors (if they’re 18+)

That’s a 3 step process:

- Complete the BSA LG course
- Assist in teaching a course under the supervision of a BSA LG Instructor
- Organize and teach a BSA LG course under the supervision of a BSA LG Instructor



It's basically the same process to become an instructor for Aquatics Supervision Courses.

An Aquatics Instructor BSA may teach either Swimming and Water Rescue or any of the Paddlecraft Safety courses.

Then the students who complete any of those courses may work toward becoming instructors for those awards.

AQUATICS SUPERVISION COURSES



• SWIMMING AND WATER RESCUE

PADDELCRAFT SAFETY



- BASIC CANOEING
- BASIC KAYAKING
- RIVER CANOEING
- RIVER KAYAKING

Aquatics Supervision Instructor . .

Also a three-step process

1. Complete corresponding course
2. Assist in teaching a course under supervision
3. Organize and teach a course under supervision

FINALLY . . .

IT HAS TO WORK FOR YOU -- YOUR CAMP -- YOUR COUNCIL

We on the subcommittee can give guidance, direct you to resources and pass on best practices; but, you are the only ones who can make any of this work in your local council / camp.

Let us know how we can help.

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SWIM CLASSIFICATION TESTS

The swim classification of individuals participating in a Boy Scouts of America activity is a key element in both Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. These swim classification tests are a foundational unit of the Aquatics Continuum.

All persons participating in BSA aquatics are classified according to swimming ability. The classification tests and test procedures have been developed and structured to demonstrate a skill level consistent with the circumstances in which the individual will be in the water.

SWIM TEST PROCEDURE

UNIT LEVEL SWIM TESTS

- Swim tests for **unit activities** (pack, troop, crew) and / or for **advancement** may be conducted by the unit using the guidance contained in *Aquatics Supervision - a leaders guide to youth swimming and boating activities* (#34346) and following Safe Swim Defense.

SWIM TESTS FOR DISTRICT, COUNCIL AND NATIONAL LEVEL EVENTS

- Swim tests for **district, council** and **national level events** may be conducted following procedures approved by a council-level committee, preferably the Council Aquatics Committee. The council committee should use the guidance contained in this *BSA Aquatics Management Guide*.

If approval is by a council committee other than the Aquatics Committee, trained aquatics volunteers should be consulted. Approval by an individual (volunteer or professional) is not recommended. The approval process should be determined by that committee and communicated within the council. Annual review of this process is recommended.

Notes:

- The council committee is approving the *process*. It doesn't necessarily need to approve each individual testing event.
- The procedure for all individual tests should follow *Aquatics Supervision* guidelines.
- National events or venues (High Adventure / Jamboree) might have their own processes and/or forms. It is OK to defer to those in those circumstances.

Some things for the committee to consider:

Facility -- the ideal facility for swim tests is a swimming pool such as those used for swimming competition. 25 or 50 yards/meters in length allows easy calculation for starting and stopping points. Decks for walking alongside a swimmer should not have unnecessary obstructions. These pools will also have a deep end which satisfies the need for jumping into water over the head in depth.

Any natural body of water that satisfies Safe Swim Defense requirements may also be used for swim classification tests. Clear water is preferred over murky water, warm water over cold water. A pier that extends from shore to deep water is ideal for the feetfirst entry in the requirements, but a floating platform can also be used. Other guidance for testing facility is covered in *Aquatics Supervision*.

Test Supervisor -- is on-site and able to visually oversee all aspects of the testing process. This person should be trained in *BSA Swimming and Water Rescue* or as an *Aquatics Instructor BSA*. Other approved training for test supervisor includes *BSA Lifeguard*; or, lifeguards / instructors certified by other agencies (American Red Cross, YMCA, etc.) who are familiar with the BSA process.

Lifeguards / Response Personnel -- In addition to supervisors and testers, separate persons trained in water rescue should provide surveillance following Safe Swim Defense guidelines. At public and semi-public facilities, including most council camps, where professionally trained lifeguards are required by local and state codes, the number and distribution of lifeguards will be determined by those facilities. At a private facility the training, number and distribution of lifeguards / response personnel is determined by the Test Supervisor serving as the Qualified Supervisor for Safe Swim Defense.

Testers / Test Administrators -- these are the individuals who administer the tests. They should be experienced in aquatic safety, mature and trained in the testing process as outlined in *Aquatics Supervision*. The Test Supervisor provides or reviews that information and observes and monitors the execution of the tests.

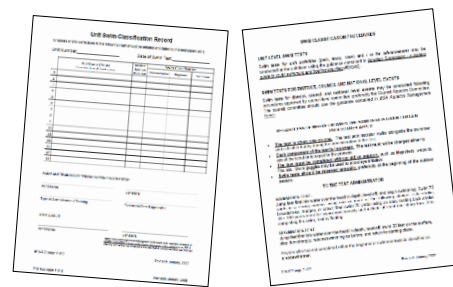
Documentation

Health Review -- Parts A and B of the Annual Health and Medical Record are completed annually for all Scouting events. This should be completed and documented by unit leadership before swim tests commence.

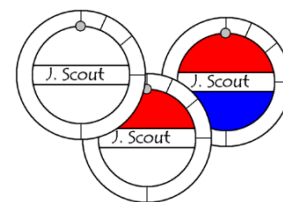
For camp, Part C, physical exam, will also need to be completed. Camp health review will be completed by camp Health Officer upon the Scout's arrival in camp.

For all aquatics activity, including swim checks, the supervisor should be made aware of any health conditions that might limit or prohibit a Scout's participation in aquatics. See *Aquatics Supervision* for additional guidance.

Swim Classification Form -- The unit should record swim checks on the *Unit Swim Classification Form* (#19-122, Rev 2022) available [here](#).



Buddy Tag -- Most camps and some units will use the Buddy Tag to check into aquatic activities. Units completing council-level swim checks prior to camp should present the *Unit Swim Classification Record* to the camp Aquatics Director upon arrival camp. Buddy Tags will be issued for use in camp.



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REGARDLESS OF WHERE OR WHEN THE SWIM TEST IS GIVEN CERTAIN PROCEDURES APPLY:

- **The test is given one-on-one.** The test administrator walks alongside the swimmer and is his/her buddy during the administration of the test.
- **Each component of the test is important.** The test must not be changed either to assist the scout or to expedite the process.
- **The test must be completed without aid or support,** such as lifejackets, wetsuits, fins, etc. Swim goggles may be used to avoid eye irritation.
- **Swim tests should be renewed annually,** preferably at the beginning of the outdoor season.
- **The camp Aquatics Director or event Aquatics Director has the authority to retest** any individual Scout or Scouter if they (the Aq Dir) feel that standards were not met. **Arbitrary rejection of a Unit Swim Classification form is not recommended.** (Unit Swim Classification forms should not be rejected because the tests were conducted in a pool and the camp has a lake).

See also:

- Council Swim Test Procedures Template
- Unit Swim Classification Record, #19-122, Rev 2022

Next 3 pages



COUNCIL SWIM TEST PROCEDURES TEMPLATE

This template is provided to guide council committees toward establishing the procedures for administering swim tests in their council. If the committee is not the Council Aquatics Committee, then experienced and trained aquatics personnel should be consulted in the process.

The council committee may, after discussion and deliberation, choose from among the following options **or** may choose to determine other procedures for the council following guidance in the *BSA Aquatics Management Guide*:

- Units (packs, troops, crews) may conduct swim checks for **unit activities** or **advancement** following the guidance in *Aquatic Supervision* and following *Safe Swim Defense*.
- For **district, council, and national** events:
 - Swim tests may be conducted at camp under the supervision and direction of the **Camp Aquatics Director**.
 - Swim tests may be conducted prior to camp, without committee approval, under the supervision and direction of individuals holding certain training such as **Aquatics Instructor, BSA** or **Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue**.
 - Swim tests may be organized by district or council volunteers with approval by a council committee. Training for the supervisors of these swim test events could include: **BSA Lifeguard, certified Lifeguard from other agencies (ARC, YMCA), certified swim instructor or swim coach**. If supervisor does not have a BSA background care must be taken to also include BSA personnel that are knowledgeable of the swim test process.

Individual swim tests should be conducted following guidance in *BSA Aquatics Management Guide* and *Aquatic Supervision* (#34346).

For all swim tests the **Unit Leader**, or his/her designee, should:

1. Assure that Parts A and B of the Annual Health form have been completed prior to the testing event. If swim tests are to be conducted at camp, part C will also need to be completed.
 - a. Aquatics swim test supervisors should be made aware of any youth or adult that has restrictions based on the health review.
2. Maintain an accurate unit roster using the Unit Swim Classification Record (# 19-122 Rev. 2022). Secure the necessary signatures and copies of the supervisor's credentials, if required.

Swim Classification Record

(Changes and/or corrections to the following chart should be initialed and dated by the test supervisor.)

Unit Number _____

Date of Swim Test _____

	Full Name (Print) <small>(Draw lines through blank spaces)</small>	Medical Recheck Parts A-B	Swim Classification		
			Non-Swimmer	Beginner	Swimmer
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

The swim classification test performed at a unit level should be conducted by one of the following council-approved resource people: Aquatics Instructor, BSA; BSA Lifeguard; BSA Swimming & Water Rescue; or other lifeguard, swimming instructor, etc. Test administrators should utilize chapter 5 of the [BSA Aquatics Supervision Guide](#).

NAME OF PERSON SUPERVISING & FACILITATING THE SWIM TEST:

Print Name

Signature

Type of Authorization/Training
(Attach a copy of certification if required by council procedure)

Expiration Date if applicable

SWIM CLASSIFICATION PROCEDURES

The swim classification of individuals participating in a Boy Scouts of America activity is a key element in Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. These swim classification tests are a foundational unit of the Aquatics Continuum.

All persons participating in BSA aquatics are classified according to swimming ability. The classification tests and test procedures have been developed and structured to demonstrate a skill level consistent with the individual's circumstances in the water.

SWIM TESTS FOR COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Swim tests for **council activities** are conducted following procedures approved by a council-level committee, preferably the Council Aquatics Committee. The council committee should use the guidance contained in *BSA Aquatics Management Guide*. SPECIAL NOTE: When swim tests are conducted away from camp, the camp aquatics director retains the right to review or retest any or all participants to ensure that standards have been maintained.

REGARDLESS OF WHERE OR WHEN THE SWIM TEST IS GIVEN THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES APPLY:

- **The test is given one-on-one.** The test administrator and the swimmer are buddies during the administration of the test.
- **Each component of the test is important.** The test must not be changed either to assist the Scout or to expedite the process.
- **The test must be completed without aid or support.** Aid includes lifejackets, wetsuits, fins, etc. Swim goggles may be used to avoid eye irritation.
- **Swim tests must be renewed annually,** preferably at the beginning of the outdoor season.

TO THE SWIM TEST ADMINISTRATOR

SWIMMER'S TEST:

Jump feet first into water over the head in depth, level off, and begin swimming. Swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: side stroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting back stroke. The 100 yards must be swum continuously and include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

BEGINNER'S TEST:

Jump feet first into water over the head in depth, level off, swim 25 feet on the surface, stop, turn sharply, resumeswimming as before, and return to starting place.

Anyone who has not completed the beginner or swimmer tests is classified as a **nonswimmer**.