

The Redwoods Group Insurance Program for JCCs

## RISK MANAGEMENT TOPIC

### Preventing Lifeguard Slips and Falls

Lifeguards have a key responsibility to keep people safe, but lifeguards need to remain safe as well. In 2010, a lifeguard was rushing off her stand to make a save, slipped on the bottom step, and was knocked unconscious. Numerous lifeguards are injured, both while making saves and otherwise, simply because of their work environment. Aquatic facilities pose an increased threat due to their wet surroundings. A large number of lifeguards are slipping on wet floors, slipping off their lifeguard chairs, or injuring themselves while entering and exiting the water. Taking the following preventative measures can reduce the likelihood of these injuries happening to your guards.

#### Slipping on Wet Floors

- Check that all non-slip surface coverings on the pool deck and lifeguard stands are intact to keep guards from slipping.
- While walking on the pool deck, consider wearing shoes or sandals that have good tread to maximize traction and friction with the deck.
  - Examples of these include water shoes, Crocs™ with straps and good tread, Chacos™ or any other sandal with a textured tread.
- When on duty, avoid:
  - Shoes with smooth plastic or leather soles because they provide less traction.
  - Shoes with laces because they pose a tripping hazard and can be difficult to remove in an emergency.

#### Slipping Off the Lifeguard Stand

- When ascending and descending ladders on slides and lifeguard stands, position your stomach towards the ladder to prevent falling. Also, hold onto the railings and check that the non-slip tread is present and in good condition.
- Do not jump off the ladder on the back of the lifeguard stand unless it is an absolute necessity. Only jump off the lifeguard stand into the water when it is necessary. Use your discretion prior to doing this and take into consideration:
  - The depth of the water
  - The height of the chair
  - The urgency of the situation
  - The correct form to jump into the water

#### Proper Form for Entering the Water

When you jump into the water to make a save, the depth of the water is the first factor you should consider. The following entry methods are outlined in the YMCA Lifeguard Manual:

- For all depths of water when jumping from no height use the **Touch-and-Go Entry**: place one hand on the edge of the pool or dock while holding the rescue tube in your other hand and jump or step into the water.
- In water more than 5 feet deep and from a height of 3 feet or less, use the **Stride Jump Entry**: keep your arms out from your sides and step out away from the edge, with your legs wide apart in an A-shape and scissor kick your legs.

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- In water more than 5 feet deep and from a height of 3 feet or more, use the **Compact Jump Entry**: jump into the water with both feet parallel to the surface while keeping your knees bent.

#### Exiting the Water

- Use a ladder or stairs to exit the water unless you are in an emergency situation.
- Do not use the edge of the pool or dock to pull yourself out of the water unless it's

an emergency. Many lifeguards sustain injuries to their shoulders and backs using this method.

The seriousness of a lifeguard's responsibilities is often overlooked. Their first duty is to save people from harm, but they need to protect themselves as well. Following these recommendations will help keep your lifeguards safe and in turn make sure that they are able to fully protect your patrons.

**Please call us at 800-463-8546 to discuss this or any other risk management safety tip, or visit our web site at [www.redwoodsgroup.com](http://www.redwoodsgroup.com) to learn more about JCC risk management issues.**