

OFFICIAL POSITION



Date : June 9th 2011

To: Safety supervisors, lifeguards, affiliate members

Subject : Use of personal electronic device during lifeguarding duty

During lifeguarding duty, the use of personal electronic devices (cell phones, iPad, Mp3 player, etc.) puts the lives of swimmers directly at risk.

Reading and writing text messages, talking on a cell phone, playing, listening to music or surfing the Web are sources of distractions. Distractions are recognized as factors for drowning in a supervised environment.

Statement of position

Complete ban on the use of a personal electronic device when lifeguarding

Considering that the use of a personal electronic device while lifeguarding:

1. is not an aid device to lifeguarding;
2. reduces performance of lifeguards and particularly for cognitive tasks including due vigilance;
3. is a source of distractions, a recognized factor for drowning in supervised environments;

the Lifesaving Society recommends a complete ban on the use of personal electronic devices during lifeguarding duty.

Basic data & justification

Pool operators have expressed their concern about the use of personal electronic devices during lifeguards' tasks including lifeguarding. Driving and aquatic supervision are cognitive tasks involving vigilance. The level of vigilance required for pool lifeguarding is comparable to the one required to drive a car.

In a report published in 2007, the Institut national de la santé publique (INSPQ) stated as principal recommendation a total ban of cell phone use while driving.

Implementation

The Lifesaving Society recommends to pool operators to include this procedure in the staff procedure handbook and to implement measures to strengthen the application of that official position.

The use of cell phone for emergency call

Lifeguards must have easily and rapidly access to a means of communication to activate the Emergency Medical Service, as defined in the provincial regulation. The means of communication must be within a 100-metre radius of the control station. Aquatic facilities without access to a wired communication means can make available a cell phone that will be installed in a readily accessible location, identified by a notice posted in a conspicuous place and located in a fixed position. This means of communication must be located so as to avoid being a source of distraction for lifeguards. The owner and pool operator must apply measures to verify and ensure the operation of the means of communication.

References :

1. Alert ! Lifeguarding in Action (2006)
2. Public health advisory on the effects of cell phone use while driving and recommendations (INSPQ 2007).
3. Lifeguard vigilance – bibliographic study (2001)
4. Regulation respecting safety in public baths S-3, r.3, s. 24

Every Lifesaving Society's OFFICIAL POSITION must be put to use by all certified members (Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross, National Lifeguard, Instructor, etc.) and its affiliate members, as soon as it is made public.

Lifesaving Society

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The Lifesaving Society is a charitable organization whose mission is the preservation of human life and to offer help to victims of water-related traumas.
