

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white clipboard with a silver clip. The person is using a red pen to write on a white sheet of paper. The background is a blurred blue and white, suggesting an outdoor aquatic setting.

AQUATIC SAFETY PLAN TEMPLATE

Introduction

An essential component of Aquatic Venue management and operation is having a detailed and well thought out Safety Plan as outlined in the CDC's Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC). The aquatic Safety Plan is a written document that describes safety procedures, requirements, and/or standards for staff of an aquatic venue to follow. The plan includes training, emergency response, and operations procedures.

This document is intended to assist aquatic venues when developing or updating their Aquatic Venue's Safety Plan.

Aquatic Safety Plans vary in complexity and detail. For some, the development process can seem overwhelming. The following are strategies to keep in mind when developing or updating a Safety Plan.

The elements are already in place. Aquatic venues have most of the information contained in a Safety Plan. Most of this information is typically not found in one place – but in several places, such as an aquatics manual, emergency procedures manual, human resources/safety manual, and other plans required by state and local governments. The Safety Plan brings together these separate pieces of information into one plan – making it convenient for all aquatic stakeholders. **Out of order is ok.** Your Safety Plan does not need to match the order as listed in the MAHC (However, keep in mind that it will be easy for individuals reviewing your Aquatic Venue's Safety Plan if the plan followed the order listed in the MAHC) The Safety Plan is about the Aquatic Venue and the preparedness of staff to respond to an emergency. Feel free to make modifications to the Safety Plan to maximize communication and preparedness among the safety team members.

For multiple sites, consider the use of addendums. Where an agency operates multiple Aquatic Venues, many of the essential safety components may apply to all of the venues. Addendums may be used to notate specific variations of each Aquatic Venue. Using this approach may simplify the creation and update process.

It takes a village. Developing a Safety Plan should not rest solely on one individual's shoulders. While one person may be tasked with creating the physical document, all safety team members should be consulted and contribute to ensure a comprehensive approach. A comprehensive approach results in a thorough Safety Plan, and ultimately a higher level of aquatic safety and emergency preparedness.

Use Tech. When gathering materials to create the Safety Plan, use original electronic files. This allows content to be copied and pasted from the original document into the Safety Plan. The use of AI may be considered to create a draft provided it is directed to use existing information used at the Aquatic Venue.

Safety Plans should be considered a living document. As the Aquatic Venue grows and changes (staffing changes, operational changes, new legislation, and the addition or deletion of water features and equipment) the Safety Plan itself should change and grow. Your Aquatic Venue's Safety Plan should be reviewed annually at a minimum.

References:

- 5th Edition Model Aquatic Health Code, Section 6.3.3, pages 180-83
- 5th Edition Model Aquatic Health Code Annex, Section 6.3.3, pages 196-200



How To Use This Template

1. Share this template with all safety team members and stakeholders who will be involved creating or updating your Aquatic Venue's Safety Plan
2. If using a team approach, assign a section to an appropriate safety team member
3. Gather all manuals and operating documents used at your Aquatic Venue
4. Make sure safety team members and stakeholders involved in the development of the Safety Plan has a copy of the current editions of the CDC's Model Aquatic Health Code and the Model Aquatic Health Code Annex
5. Review, brainstorm, and analyze what needs to be covered in the Safety Plan
6. As your Aquatic Venue's plan is being developed, check off the components that have been created in draft form
7. Once the draft Safety Plan is complete, it should be reviewed by the safety team members and stakeholders to complete the document
8. Once the Safety Plan is completed and finalized, share with all safety team members, stakeholders, and, if required, the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)



Aquatic Venue Characteristics

Description of Aquatic Venue

- Aquatic Venue address
- Aquatic Venue phone number
- Square footage of pool(s)
- Gallons of water (each pool)
- Maximum bather loads
- Minimum & maximum depths
- Description of Aquatic Venue features (diving boards, play features)
- Aquatic Venue point of contact phone and email address

Pool Diagrams

- Location of features
- Depths and depth transitions
- Rope and float lines
- Lifeguard stations
- Location of First Aid room
- Emergency & rescue equipment and emergency telephone locations
- Entries and Emergency Exits

Note: *If there is more than one venue at the Aquatic Venue, provide diagrams for each venue.*

Staffing Plan

Safety Team Members

- Position
- Required certifications for each position

Note: *This lists positions that are part of the safety team, not the name of each safety team member. This generally includes non-aquatic based positions that perform higher level functions. The roles of safety team members are outlined in Section 3: Emergency Action Plan.*

Bather Supervision Policies

- Practices and policies designed to provide for bather and patron safety
- Practices and policies designed to reinforce appropriate behaviors and actions by the lifeguard staff

Note: The above practices and policies should be descriptive and detailed as possible. This may include, but is not limited to:

- The minimum number of required lifeguards
- When additional lifeguards are needed
- Policies prohibiting secondary duties while lifeguards are providing bather supervision
- Policies banning the use of personal electronic devices while providing bather supervision
- Policies around the use of technology in drowning prevention
- Life jacket use and availability
- Aquatic Venue rules and regulations
- The use of remote-monitoring systems (MAHC 6.3.4.6)

Zones of Patron Surveillance

- Diagrams of each zone identifying lifeguard positioning, zone boundaries, and where zones overlap
- If applicable, secondary diagrams showing alternative lifeguard positions
- Any applicable practices or policy statements that provide guidance accounting for glare and other challenges to patron surveillance
- Back-up coverage procedures in the event of an emergency or water rescue

Rotation Procedures

- Frequency of rotations and rotation patterns
- Aquatic Venue specific practices and policies regarding rotations
- Practices and policies that ensure coverage is maintained by a lifeguard during rotations
- Practices and policies ensuring each lifeguard receives a 10-minute break from supervision after 60 consecutive minutes of bather supervision

Note: The 10-minute break must be a complete break from any form of patron supervision, including the traditional practice of monitoring the water during rotations. This includes non-supervision-based activities, such as slide dispatch, cleaning and maintenance, admissions, or staffing the first aid room.

Supervision Protocol

- Minimum number of supervisors on duty that supervise aquatics staff
- Supervisor responsibilities
- Practices and policies regarding supervision and emergency response assessments (if applicable)

Note: *In some Aquatic Venues, supervision is performed by appropriately trained non-aquatic staff. Where this is applicable, the following should be described in the Safety Plan:*

- *Required training*
- *Practices and policies that describe the scope, detail, and frequency of supervisory actions to be performed*

Emergency Response and Communication Plan

Safety Team Roles and Responsibilities

- Role (title of position)
- Roles and responsibilities

Note: *Since some positions have frequent turnover, the listing of individual names is not needed. Listing the position only is recommended. Every position at the Aquatic Venue will have some role in the safety team. Some positions key to the safety team may not be aquatic positions. For example, a municipal Parks and Recreation Director may be responsible for interacting with the media. This position would be listed in the Safety Team with the duty of “serves as the point of contact for media inquiries and crisis communications.”*

Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

- Outline types of emergencies and Imminent Health Hazards found in MAHC 6.6.3 (pages 185-86) and appropriate actions incorporated into Emergency Closure Procedures.
- Practices and policies regarding emergency communications utilized by all members of the safety team from initiating the EAP to the end of the emergency
- Practices and policies when communicating with EMS
- Practices and policies when communication with Patrons
- Coordinating emergency response efforts when more than 1 safety team member is needed to respond
- Written EAPs identify each anticipated responder and outlines their task in the emergency
- Written EAPs list all required response equipment

Note: *In addition to the various EAPs, the Aquatic Venue should develop plans regarding:*

- *When and how to evacuate the Aquatic Venue. (MAHC 6.3.4.5.7)*
- *Facilitating activation of internal emergency response centers and/or community 911/EMS as necessary (Communications plan). (MAHC 6.3.4.5.1)*
- *What type of weather events that impact operations and patron safety and when the aquatic venue should be cleared of bathers (MAHC 6.3.4.5.9.1)*

- *What steps to take in the event of an accidental chemical release (MAHC 6.3.4.5.6.1)*
- *Additional EAPs for specific emergencies can be added as an attachment to the Safety Plan.*

Pre-Service Requirements

Certification Requirements and Documentation

- Certification requirements for all safety team members listed in writing
- Policy statement on where copies of staff certifications are held on file and how they may be accessed
- Policy statement requiring current certifications, what happens when certifications lapse, and policies surrounding the maintenance of staff certifications Note: This policy should be reflected in the In-Service Training Plan.
- Policies to support the annual renewal of professional level CPR/AED skills for staff

Preemployment Testing

- Written description of the Aquatic Venue testing process for new staff members
- How the testing is conducted
- How the training is documented

Note: This process will vary between aquatic venues. A key point is for you to analyze and determine the testing components and how the testing is conducted

Conducting the testing may include, but is not limited to:

- A description of minimum criteria for this position (this may include a reference to the job description, or contain elements from the job description)
- A description of the application and interview process
- Who will participate in the applicant screening, and who has authority to determine if the applicant should proceed in the employment process

The Aquatic Venue should address in the testing process the anticipated demands of the job role. For lifeguards, this may include, but is not limited to:

- Demonstration of key water rescue skills
- Demonstrating the ability to identify an endangered person and execute a water rescue at the furthest edge of the assigned zone within 20 seconds
- Demonstrate the ability to either reach or perform a water rescue at the deepest point of the aquatic venue
- Demonstration of key resuscitation and first aid skills

Preservice Training (Orientation)

- Policies and procedures specific to the Aquatic Venue, including documentation of the training.
- Policies supporting the demonstration of safety team skills including, but not limited to:
 - The understanding of safety team member responsibilities
 - Understanding when the aquatic venue should be closed to bathers and/or patrons
 - Understanding their role in responding to fecal/vomit/blood contamination of the water and surrounding perimeter deck
- Policies and procedures regarding lifeguard skills proficiency
 - Ability to reach the maximum water depth of the assigned venue
 - Ability to identify all zones
 - Ability to recognize a victim in an assigned zone
 - Ability to reach the furthest part of the zone within 20 seconds
 - Demonstrate and understanding of where the EAP is posted and how to access a personal copy of the EAP
- Policies and procedures regarding initial training on:
 - Zones of patron surveillance
 - Rotations
 - Minimum staffing
 - Water rescues
 - CPR/AED and first aid

Note: Pre-Service training is different from the employment process. The goal of Pre-employment testing is to evaluate the candidate for the job role. The goal of Pre-Service training is to teach the newly hired staff the important elements of the job. Pre-Service training should always occur before the lifeguard's first shift providing patron surveillance.

Much of this information may be found in the existing staff handbook and can be copied into the Safety Plan. Remember that all pre-service training actions should be documented.

In-Service Training (IST)

- In-Service Training Frequency
- Documentation of in-service training. This documentation should include, at a minimum:
 - Names of attending staff
 - Training content
 - Date and time of training
 - Staff member leading the training
- Attendance and make up policy for missed trainings (if applicable)
- Identifying role responsible for managing the IST plan and staff participation
- Certification maintenance plan
- Demonstration of test ready skills
- Competency demonstration and frequency of test-ready skills to include:
 - Reaching the furthest edge of the assigned zone within 20 seconds
 - Recover and extricate a simulated victim
 - Performing resuscitation skills in accordance of the certifying agency and Aquatic Venue protocol

Note: *When developing an In-Service Training plan, the Aquatic Venue should:*

- *Perform an analysis to identify the types of emergencies most likely to occur based on Aquatic Venue characteristics and bather/patron profiles*
- *Create a comprehensive plan that develops and evaluates all skills per the training agency and Aquatic Venue-specific training*

Biohazard Action Plan

Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan

- See https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/CPL_2-2_69_APPD.pdf for a model Exposure Control Plan Template

Fecal/Vomit/Blood Contamination Response Plan

- See <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-swimming/media/pdfs/fecal-incident-response-guidelines.pdf> for more information.
- Also refer to the CDC's Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC) pages 181-84.

Additional Components to Consider

The following are not found in the MAHC Safety Plan components. However, these components are either considered best practices or are federal requirements through OSHA. The inclusion of these components into the Aquatic Venue Safety Plan provides for a streamlined flow of critical information and planning. It is highly recommended that the Aquatic Venue include these components when crafting the Aquatic Venue Safety Plan.

Employee Illness and Injury Policy

- Illness policy indicating that employees who are ill with diarrhea are not permitted to enter the water or perform in a QUALIFIED LIFEGUARD role. (MAHC 6.3.4.7.1)
- Open wounds policy indicating that employees are permitted with open wounds in the water or in a QUALIFIED LIFEGUARD role only if they have healthcare provider approval or wear a waterproof, occlusive bandage to cover the wound. (MAHC 6.3.4.7.2)

Pandemic Response Plan

- Policies and procedures to follow during a pandemic
- Aquatic Venue reopening procedures

Hazard Communication Plan

- See <https://www.osha.gov/lawsregs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.1200> for more information.

Heat Illness Prevention Plan (HIPP)

- See <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/Model%20Heat%20Illness%20Prevention%20Plan.pdf> for a HIPP template