CDC’s
Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC)
Lifeguard Requirements

Unintentional Death Prevention Committee
Child Fatality Task Force

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Protecting swimmers from drowning:
CDC’s Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC)
Lifeguard Requirements
What is the MAHC?
What is the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC)?

- Voluntary model public pool and spa code based on science and best practices created by CDC and national consortia of PH/industry
  - 1st Edition released August 2014
  - 2nd Edition released July 2016
  - 3rd Edition released July 2018
- Helps local and state authorities and aquatics sector make swimming and other water activities healthier and safer
What is the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC)?

- States/localities can use MAHC to create/update existing pool codes
  - Reduce risk for outbreaks, drowning, and pool-chemical injuries
  - Saves resources; no need to reinvent codes in each jurisdiction
- All-inclusive and addresses design, construction, operation, maintenance, policies, and management of public aquatic facilities
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: How Does the MAHC Help?

- Pools Requiring Lifeguards is Based on Risk
  - Conditions present that result in higher risk to patrons
  - Conditions present that result in higher risk to persons attempting to assist bather in distress
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: When are Lifeguards Required?

- Pools Requiring Lifeguards is Based on Risk
  - Water depth greater than 5 ft
  - Unsupervised children under 14 yrs of age
  - Used by youth groups (including child care and school groups)
  - Used for group practice or instruction
  - Larger pools (any point in pool greater than 30 ft from nearest deck)
  - Moving water such as wave pools and lazy rivers
  - Waterslide landing pools
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: When are Lifeguards Required?

- Pools Requiring Lifeguards is Based on Risk (continued)
  - Bathers enter water from any height above deck (diving boards, starting platforms, drop slides, climbing walls)
  - Alcohol use (alcohol sold or served within pool enclosure)
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Water depth greater than 5 ft
  - Likely that an untrained adult can provide assistance
    - Average adult bather’s head above waterline
- Unsupervised children under 14 yrs of age
  - Ability to make decisions especially when complying with rules, requires adult supervision
  - Water depth over nose/mouth for height of 50th percentile female at 14 yrs of age
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Used by youth groups (including child care and school groups)
  - Chaperones cannot manage both patron surveillance activities and activities of individual children
    - Activities of the group distract from watching/surveillance of the bathers
    - Need to separate responsibility of chaperone from that of providing dedicated patron surveillance
  - Chaperones not trained as lifeguards are at risk if a rescue is needed
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Used for group practice or instruction (exercise programs, swim lessons, competitive swimming, sports, etc.)
  - Instructor’s primary focus is on the activity not on patron surveillance
  - Need to separate responsibility of coach/instructor from that of providing dedicated patron surveillance
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Larger pools (any point in pool greater than 30 ft from nearest deck)
  - Reasonable ability of untrained person to use aquatic rescue throwing device/ring buoy up to distance of 30 ft
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Moving water such as wave pools and lazy rivers
  - Unwanted movement of bather by force of the water
    - Moved away from safety
    - Lose balance and have sudden submersion
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Waterslide landing pools
  - Induced current/water movement from pump supplying water for slide lubrication
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Bathers enter water from any height above deck (diving boards, starting platforms, drop slides, climbing walls)
  - Risk of spinal cord injuries
    - Need qualified lifeguards to monitor behaviors and control use
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: Rationale for When Lifeguards are Required

- Alcohol use (alcohol sold or served within pool enclosure)
  - Alcohol use frequently reported as a contributing factor in drownings and spinal cord injuries
  - Use by caregivers contribute to drownings related to lapses of supervision of children
  - Qualified lifeguards mitigate risk through active surveillance, enforcement of rules, and rescue and emergency care
Protecting Swimmers from Drowning: How Does the MAHC Help?

- MAHC Lifeguard Requirements – setting the lifeguard(s) up for success
  - Adequate training
    - Victim recognition
    - Rescue skills
    - Preventive lifeguarding
    - Pre-service and in-service
  - Adequate #’s of guards for surveillance
    - Zones of patron surveillance
      - Size, shape, blind spots, response time
Contact Information

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Questions ?