

Swimming



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Introduction

This factsheet gives further guidance for members wishing to organise activities which fall into the definitions of POR 9.48 Swimming – General.

Activities near the water

This refers to all activities which take place near and around the water with no intention of getting wet, however there may be a possibility of this occurring.

Examples of this type of activity would include; walk along the river bank or seashore, pond dipping, pioneering projects to cross rivers.

When organising these activities common sense should prevail, take into account the location, weather conditions, age range, time of year and ability of the group. Detailed advice is contained within the CCPR Group Safety at Water Margins document which can be found at www.scouts.org.uk/watersafety.

Activities on the water

This refers to all activities which fall under the Adventurous Activity Permit Scheme or similar that take place on C Class waters. This includes; canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, powered water activities and sub aqua activities (this is not an exhaustive list).

There must be a person responsible for these activities, details of what is required of this person is outlined in POR 9.50. The responsible person must:

- ensure that the location is suitable for the proposed activity;
- ensure safety cover appropriate to the number of participants and the location (ie Permit holders);

- ensure that the necessary safety equipment is provided;

Where appropriate, the responsible person must take into account:

- the location and temperature of the water;
- the weather conditions;
- the age, ability and state of health of the participants;
- the suitability of the water with respect to depth, cleanliness, rocks and the movement of any tide, current or undertow.

The responsible person must brief the participants on the following points:

- any matters specific to the location, e.g. limits to the area in use, other water users and hazards;
- demonstrate the emergency signal to be used.
- what to do in the event of them ending up in the water;

Remember that changes in the purpose of the activity, or the equipment or clothing being used, can mean the activity could become classified as swimming rather than an activity on water.

For example when finishing a sailing session by allowing the participants to jump out of the dinghies and swim around the boats, this is different to practicing a capsizing drill because the purpose is only to swim.

Wearing activity equipment such as buoyancy aids does not mean that swimming activities can be led by an Adventurous activity permit holder under the pretenses of another activity.

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Paddling

This refers to standing in the water with the intention of not being any deeper than knee or waist high.

Where POR 9.48 refers to still and moving water the following should be followed;

- Still water is that where there is a minimal variance in the water level for the duration of the activity. There are no obvious waves and undercurrents.
- Moving water is that where there is a significant rise and fall in the water level during the period of the activity. There may also be obvious waves and surface turbulence or noticeable undercurrents which could also cause shifting of the sea/river bed.

When planning a paddling activity the responsible person should consider the following;

- Plan to the shortest member of the group in order to maintain an appropriate depth level.
- Designate an area for the activity, in doing this the distances from the safety cover should be considered.
- Position the safety cover appropriately to monitor the whole group.
- Ensure all non swimmers (as defined in POR 9.42) are directly supervised by an adult who is in the water and this must not exceed two young people to one adult.
- Brief the group appropriately.
- Ensure that there is effective communication between the safety cover and the participants at all times.

The safety cover for this type of activity need not be formally qualified, but must have a knowledge of water safety and an ability to perform rescues appropriate to the location. Examples of this are; someone with a lapsed lifeguarding qualification, a lifesaving award holder or those with a water activity background.

The safety cover must have a knowledge of the practical use of the safety equipment on hand.

This may be provided at the location or may be provided by the group or safety cover themselves. This equipment could include; buoyancy aid, throw line, throw bag or life ring.

The safety cover must also consider their clothing, they need to be prepared to enter the water should they need to perform a rescue.

Swimming activities

This refers to all other activities as defined in POR 9.48.

When planning a swimming activity the responsible person should consider the following;

- Choose a location appropriate to the group and the intended purpose.
- Ensure adequate safety cover is provided in accordance with POR 9.52.
- Ensure all non swimmers (as defined in POR 9.42) are directly supervised by an adult who is in the water and this must not exceed two young people to one adult.
- Designate an area for the activity, in doing this the distances from the safety cover should be considered.
- Position the safety cover appropriately to monitor the whole group.
- Brief the group appropriately.

Ensure that there is effective communication between the safety cover and the participants at all times.

Safety cover for swimming activities

For all swimming activities a qualified lifeguard must be present and must operate in accordance with the ratios outlined in POR 9.52(c). The safety cover must hold a current qualification as outlined below;

For a swimming pool:

- Royal Lifesaving Society UK National Pool Lifeguard Qualification; or equivalent or higher.

For a beach, river or lake (all open waters):

- Royal Lifesaving Society UK National Beach Lifeguard Qualification; or equivalent or higher

Further information

For further information and guidance please go to

RLSS website www.lifesavers.org.uk