

# Scout Association Swimming Pools



## Introduction

This is the fourth edition of the factsheet which updates that coded FS120621 and dated Jan 2000. It provides support to camp site management committees, managers and wardens, on the management of a swimming facility at a Scout Association owned or operated site.

Further editions will be published in the light of experience from this edition. The publication of future editions will be notified in Scouting Magazine, Talking Points and the Activities Newsletter.

The sections printed in *italics* below are extracted from the current edition of Policy, Organisation and Rules (Rule 42.6). Attention is also drawn to the current edition of the companion factsheet *Swimming*.

## General

All swimming facilities, pool, river, lake or beach require some measure of supervision, to promote safety when in use. These notes are aimed at those camp sites with a rectangular 'tank' type swimming facility. Management committees, managers and wardens of sites with other types of swimming provision must develop their own site specific written operating procedures guided by the information published here.

The specific rule is:

### **(d) Scout-owned swimming facilities**

*Management Committees of Scout property with a swimming pool must operate the facility in accordance with the guidance contained within the publication *Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools* [HSE Books, HSG179]. They must have carried out a risk assessment, produced a written operating procedure and arranged for an attendant lifeguard to be on duty during every session. Scout parties using such a facility should do so in accordance with Rule 42.6(a). Further information and advice is given in the factsheet *Scout Association Swimming Pools* available from the Scout Information Centre.*

## Health and Safety Implications

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) places duties on employers, employees and self-employed people. It protects not only people at work, including those undertaking voluntary work, but also the general public who may be affected by work activities. Many of the requirements in this legislation are qualified with 'so far as is reasonably practicable'. The general requirements under the HSW Act are that equipment and plant are safe, the workplace is safe, there are safe systems of work and there is the provision of information, instruction, training and supervision needed to ensure that safety. Employees must do all that is reasonably practical to take care of their own health and safety and that of others, including those undertaking voluntary work, who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work and they must co-operate with their employees in complying with statutory health and safety obligations.

Thus for a swimming pool within a camp site (with professional and/or volunteer staff) the same requirements of duty of care apply. The relevant guidance is contained within the publication *Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools*. It is not the intention of this factsheet to replicate the detail of the publication but more to headline the key elements, in relation to a Scout context.

## Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of all aspects of the operation and use of a swimming pool that might cause harm to people (users and staff). It has to be established whether enough precautions have been taken to prevent harm or whether more precautions need to be taken.

To clarify two terms used:

- A hazard is anything that may cause harm.
- A risk is a chance, whether great, medium or small, that someone will be harmed by a hazard.

The HSE's five step approach to risk is commended:

- Step 1: Look for the hazards.
- Step 2: Decide who might be harmed, and how.

- Step 3: Assess the risk and take appropriate action.
- Step 4: Record the findings.
- Step 5: Review the assessment from time to time and revise it if necessary.
- Swimmers: diving into unsuitable areas, getting tangled in any lane markers, being trapped by the suction at filtration points.
- Lifeguards: is there cover from direct sunlight; if a vantage point is provided is this in good repair and safe to use.

Before writing the site specific operating procedure it is essential that a risk assessment is carried out.

- The Public.

What hazards can be identified that could reasonably be expected to cause significant harm? Points that need to be considered are:

What precautions have been taken against the risks that have been identified?

- Access: effective measures should be in place to prevent unauthorised access to a pool at any time when not in use. There could be a dedicated compound with a secure perimeter fence and a gate capable of being locked.
- Pool covers: if a pool cover is used as a primary or secondary means of preventing swimmer's access, the covers should be of a type that can be secured continuously round the edge. They must be capable of supporting the weight of any person walking or falling on to them.
- Plant or chemicals associated with the pool: what arrangements are made to limit the access to any filtration or heating plants? Where are the chemicals associated with any filtration plants stored and can they be accessed by non-authorized people?
- Chemical levels in the pool: are they at the right level and checked on a regular basis? Over and under use of chemicals can have marked effects on swimmers and has to be avoided.
- Pool surrounds: are these in good repair, are these surfaces non-slip; are there any steps or other hazards associated with the pool surrounds?
- Pool depths and markings: are the depths of the pool clearly marked and are any safety notices with regard to suitable areas for diving, etc, clearly visible to all in the pool?
- Any other identified points.

- Appropriate safety equipment supplied: safety lines in the form of soft buoyant aid or throwbag, safety pole with loop at the end, other soft buoyant aids. Method for the lifeguard to summon further assistance, in the event of an emergency.
- Written operating procedure.

What further action is necessary to control the risk?

- Controls to limit access to pool.
- Controls to limit access to plant and chemicals.

What records are kept - by whom, and how often is the risk assessment reviewed?

- Records of use of pool.
- Records of accidents and near misses.
- Records of any maintenance carried out.
- Record of daily inspection of safety equipment.

#### Standard Operating Procedure

The written standard operating procedure is to be prepared and all those associated with the use, supervision or management of the pool (as part of the camp site facility) are to be familiar with its contents.

This should include:

- Details of the pool, depth markings, safe diving areas.
- First aid provision.
- Safety equipment provided.
- Details of any specific identified risks, chemicals, filtration plant, etc, with associated rules and emergency procedure.
- Maximum numbers of swimmers permitted.

Who might be harmed by any of the hazards Identified?

- Anyone: unauthorised access to the pool (or plant).

- Stipulation of the number of lifeguards to be on duty.
- Booking procedure for the use of the pool.
- Details of emergency signals to be used and when they should be demonstrated.
- Details of how attendant lifeguard(s) can summon further assistance in the event of an emergency.
- Location of emergency telephones.
- An evacuation plan.
- Details of the reporting chain in case of an incident.
- Maximum working periods for the lifeguard.
- Procedure to be used by the lifeguard (or other staff member) when opening-up the pool for use.
- Procedure to be followed if the lifeguard has to temporarily leave the area of the swimming pool.
- Procedure to be used by the lifeguard (or other staff member) when closing-down the pool after use.

In addition, there should be an emergency action plan which should list the actions to be taken in the event of a foreseeable emergency to include:

- Overcrowding.
- Disorderly behaviour.
- Lack of water clarity.
- Injury to bather.
- Discovery of casualty in the water.

The emergency action plan should detail the specific actions to be taken when an incident happens. The immediate follow-up and the subsequent review process for the incident.

#### Lifeguard

The HSE guidance is that constant poolside supervision by lifeguards provides the best assurance of pool users' safety. Recent experience dictates that, as with the operation of 'public' swimming pools, the onus is on the management committee of the property, which includes a pool, to

arrange for (an) attendant lifeguard(s) to be on duty each time the pool is used for swimming.

The option to use - in certain circumstances - occasional pool supervision, contained within the HSE guidance, is not appropriate for those operating pools on Scout-owned camp sites.

The HSE guidelines provides information to determine the number of lifeguards required:

- Firstly decide the maximum number of swimmers permitted to use the pool at the same time.
- Secondly determine the number of lifeguards required.

This calculation may have to be repeated: a reduction in the number of swimmers to match the number of lifeguards that can be provided.

The management committee of the property, which includes a pool, will decide how the required attendant lifeguard(s) is(are) to be provided. In most instances the camp site will assume this responsibility and arrange for (a) member(s) of the staff - either paid or volunteer - to be trained as lifeguards.

In some instances it may be decided to permit attendant, qualified lifeguards to be provided by user Scout parties. If this is the case, it has to be emphasised that there is an element of the training of lifeguards which is site specific. Thus such people will have to be briefed on the nature of the pool, how it is to be operated and the emergency procedures (the Standard Operating Procedure).

All lifeguards must hold a valid Royal Life Saving Society UK National Lifeguard Qualification or Swimming Teachers' Association National Aquatic Rescue Standard for Lifeguards in Swimming Pools or equivalent. Such qualifications contain an element of training which is specific to the location - in relation to the nature of the pool, how it is to be operated and the emergency procedures (the Standard Operating Procedure).

For any lifeguard on duty, it is important to include in the operating procedure the requirement to timetable both work and rest periods. The guidance provided in the HSE publication is that the duty period should not exceed 45 minutes with a break of at least the same length of time between such duty periods.

### Scout Use of the Swimming Pool

For Scouts using such a swimming pool the rule is:

#### **(a) Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools with an Attendant Lifeguard**

*When swimming takes place in leisure centres and swimming pools owned by other people or bodies, the leader must have read, accepted and implemented any safety rules and conditions contained in written operating procedures or displayed at the pool. The pool's lifeguard will be on duty to supervise all swimmers; the leader, however, is still responsible for the good behaviour of a Scout party.*

#### Use of the Swimming Pool by Outside Organisations

The management committee of the property, which includes a pool, may decide that outside organisations may hire the facility. Within such an arrangement, the attendant lifeguard must be provided:

- **either** by the camp site.
- **or** by the outside organisation.

If the latter it has to be emphasised that there is an element of the training of lifeguards which is site specific. Those from the outside organisation will have to be briefed on the nature of the pool, how it is to be operated and the emergency procedures (the Standard Operating Procedure).

Parties of swimmers from other organisations, such as schools or youth groups, will have rules/regulations set by their parent organisation or local education authority. It is essential that these groups meet these rules/regulations in addition to The Scout Association's requirement that there is an attendant lifeguard(s).

For such users a suggested *Form of Acceptance* is included at the end of this factsheet.

#### Use of the Swimming Pool for Activities other than Swimming

The management committee of the property, which includes a pool, may decide that the facility can be used for other activities - such as canoeing or subaqua.

In such instances the activities should be conducted in accordance with The Scout Association's Rules and the guidelines provided by the appropriate National Governing Body. The management

committee may decide that an additional requirement is that safety cover is provided by someone in addition to those engaged in the activity. For canoeing the management committee may be decided that in order to minimise damage to the structure of the pool than especially designed canoes (BAT canoes) must be used rather than the more traditional ones.

#### PUBLICATION CROSS REFERENCE

The current editions of:

Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association.  
Swimming FS120620  
Managing Health and Safety in Swimming Pools [HSE Books, HSG 179].  
Safe Supervision - ASA/ISTC/ISLM/RLSS UK ISBN 1 900738 20 1

Attachment:

Suggested Form of Acceptance for Use of the Swimming Pool (Non Scout Use).

**Suggested Form of  
Acceptance for Use of Swimming Pool (Non-Scout Use)**

I .....  
(name)

of ..... (School or other  
organisation)

confirm that I have received a copy of the Standard Operating Procedure relating to the swimming pool

at ..... Camp Site. There will be ..... swimmers.

I confirm that the safety requirements of The Scout Association and my own school/organisation will be met:

**either**

I am providing ..... people of who hold a Royal Lifesaving Society UK National Pool Lifeguard

Qualification, Swimming Teachers' Association National Aquatic Rescue Standard for Lifeguards

or ..... equivalent ..... (please ..... state ..... qualification):  
.....

**or**

I am making use of the lifeguard cover provided by the Camp Site and undertake that the requirements

of the person(s) on duty will be carried out.

*(delete as appropriate)*

.....  
.....

Date

Signature

**(To be printed on campsite's own paper)**