



# Risk Management Considerations for Diving Boards

There's nothing better than launching off a diving board into a clear blue swimming pool on a sweltering Canadian summer day. However, there is risk involved with this activity. Numerous people have taken the exact dive mentioned above and have had things go horribly wrong. Although diving boards are the leading cause of swimming pool related injuries, 95% of them occurred in the absence of supervision, in an area without proper warning signs and in water less than five feet deep. With proper precautions diving boards can be a fun addition to any pool instead of a liability waiting to happen.

## Risk Management Considerations

### 1. Choose the Right Board

Several things should be taken into consideration when you're choosing a diving board so that it is safe for recreational use.

- It should be made of slip-proof, rugged material that is extremely durable. The material should be safe to use when wet and have lots of grip.
- The board must be the right type for the pool. Each board is specifically designed for a certain pool shape, length, width and depth.

- Use a professional installer to ensure that the board is the correct one for your pool, that it is safe and meets all code requirements.

### 2. Maintain the Board

Once the correct diving board has been selected and installed, it is important to make sure it is inspected on a regular basis.

- Check the board for general wear and tear; there should be no visible cracks, scrapes, dents or other physical damage.
- The screws holding the board to the pool deck should be firmly in place and not rusted out.
- The foundation securing the board should not be cracked. Test the board to make sure it remains firmly in place.
- Set up a daily inspection schedule before the board is used to make sure everything is in proper working condition.

### 3. Create a Safe Diving Area

Not all areas of a pool are suited for diving. Diving into an unsuitable area can result in injury. Therefore, it is imperative that all areas off-limits to diving are clearly marked.

- Most diving injuries occur in water that is not deep enough. “No diving” signs should be posted near water that is too shallow for diving (usually less than eight feet).
- “No diving” signs should also be placed along the pool’s edge and should clearly state that diving is only allowed from the diving board because it is safer to dive from a board than from the edge of the pool.
- Signs should be clearly posted around the pool’s edge stating the depth of the water.
- Buoys or a floating rope should be used to indicate the division between the shallow and deep end of the pool.
- Clearly mark on the edge of the diving board the safest spot to dive. This reduces the risk of injury when using the board.
- Diving areas should be well lit to ensure that divers can clearly see the area in which they are diving.

### 4. Diving Rules

Post a list of diving rules to ensure that all swimmers use the board safely. Swimmers should see it immediately when they enter the pool area. Consider sending out a list of the rules to the community before the start of each swimming season. Here is a list of rules that should be followed in any pool that has a diving board:

- No running, jumping or horseplay around the pool or on the diving board.
- No trick dives (front flips, backwards dives etc.). These greatly increase the risk of diving injury.
- No diving off the sides of the board.
- No alcohol consumption allowed when using the diving board.
- One diver at a time.
- Don’t walk backwards on the board.
- No diving at, around or through objects such as floatation devices (inner tubes etc.).
- Do not dive alone.

- Always wait for the last diver to surface and exit the diving area before proceeding with your dive.
- No swimming under or around the board while it is in use.
- No floatation devices are allowed to be worn or carried when using the diving board (water wings, flutter boards etc.).
- Diving should be restricted at peak pool hours to decrease the risk of divers landing on other swimmers.
- There must be a ladder near the board to allow divers to efficiently exit the pool so the area is clear for the next diver.
- Restrict young children from diving because their risk of injury is greater. Children under the age of fifteen represent two-thirds of all diving injuries.
- Young children should not be allowed to use the diving board unless they have successfully completed a diving course that teaches safe diving techniques.
- In order to ensure age restrictions are being followed, consider issuing wristbands to those who are qualified to use the diving board.
- Post the weight limit and height restriction of the diving board.
- Be aware of your obligations to public pool safety as they are stated under any relevant legislation in your province. See an example from *Ontario’s Health Protection and Promotion Act* below.

### 5. Proper Supervision

Proper supervision is essential to make sure divers use the board responsibly and to provide necessary first aid should something go wrong. In 94% of all diving accidents, a lifeguard wasn’t present.

- Clearly note the hours, if any, that the pool is supervised by a lifeguard.
- Indicate the dangers of swimming without supervision.
- All children should be accompanied by an adult. They shouldn’t be allowed to use the pool alone, even if there is a lifeguard present.
- Consider assigning a lifeguard specifically to monitor the diving board and make sure that divers use it safely. They should also ensure that the diving area stays clear of people and debris.

- Ensure there are an adequate number of lifeguards on duty to cover the number of swimmers. Refer to Table 1.1 below as a guideline.
- Lifeguards should be sixteen years or older, hold a current lifeguard certificate that is dated no more than two years prior to when they are acting as a lifeguard and have a copy of their certificate at the pool where they are working.
- Increase the number of lifeguards on duty during expected peak periods: weekends, school breaks, summer camps, heat waves, and during mid-day.
- Where there is only one lifeguard on duty on the deck, every operator should ensure that there is one or more additional persons on call who are sixteen years of age or over and trained in the emergency procedures for the pool.
- If the pool is to be closed when there is no lifeguard on duty, ensure that proper fencing is installed around the pool with latches and sturdy locks.

**TABLE 1.1: MINIMUM NUMBER OF LIFEGUARDS AND ASSISTANT LIFEGUARDS FOR A PUBLIC POOL WITH A WATER SURFACE OF LESS THAN 500 SQUARE METRES (OTHER THAN A WAVE/ACTION POOL)**

Where there are assistant lifeguards and lifeguards on duty		Where there are only lifeguards on duty	
Number of bathers on the deck and in the pool	Minimum number of lifeguards and assistant lifeguards on duty	Number of bathers on the deck and in the pool	Minimum number of lifeguards on duty
0-30	1	0-30	1
31-100	2	31-125	2
101-200	3	126-250	3
201-300	4	251-400	4
300 or more	One additional lifeguard or assistant lifeguard for each additional 100 bathers or fraction thereof	400 or more	One additional lifeguard for each additional 150 bathers or fraction thereof
R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 565, s. 17 (2); O. Reg. 270/99, s. 1 (1).			

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