



Risk Management Considerations for Polar Bear Dips

Polar bear dips raise funds by either charging participants a flat entrance fee or asking participants to collect donations through pledges. The pledge will be paid based on how long the participant stays in the frigid water.

Why Are Polar Bear Dips Successful?

1. Polar bear dips are novel – people want to take this activity off their “bucket list”.
2. They believe in the cause they are dipping for.
3. It is a quick activity that gives participants a great story to tell for the rest of their life.

How to Plan a Successful Polar Bear Dip Event

Solicit Participants

- Enlist participants at least three to four months in advance of the event.
- Ask public officials, local celebrities or well-known members of your community to participate. They will draw pledges, friends, family and other curious spectators.
- Know that some participants will change their mind.

Volunteers

- Spread the word by putting up flyers, posters, etc. around the community.
- Collect donations and manage funds.
- Check registration forms and ensure the waivers are signed. If a participant doesn't turn in the signed waiver, they should not be allowed to participate.
- Organize the spectator space.
- Sell drinks/food.
- Clean up.

Promote your Event

- Ask for donations from local business – this could be in the form of prizes, publicity (print material, mentions on social media or emails to clients).
- Add extra entertainment such as local musicians, local radio stations and television celebrities willing to act as host of your event. You need to pull out all the stops to make sure you get plenty of spectators out on a cold winter day.
- Link the event to a special holiday so people look forward to it every year. You traditionally see polar bear dips on New Year's Day.
- When developing advertisements, make sure to include contact information, time and location, etc.

Safety First

- Paramedics or St. John's Ambulance need to be on site during and after the event so they can monitor participants. Cold water can severely shock the body leading to physical or emotional distress. Medical professionals should be ready to deal with these types of situations.
- Consider having representatives from the Police and Fire Department at the event to oversee the event.
- Lifeguards can control the number of people allowed in the water at one time and help anyone experiencing difficulty.

Establish Rules

- The registration package should include all of the rules for the event.
- Work with legal counsel on the wording of your Waivers and Indemnification Clauses. The clause will need to have a statement outlining that the participant understands the risks and health implications.
- Participants must also visit their physician to receive confirmation they can participate.
- Prohibit alcohol before the event. Do not let anyone under the influence participate in the polar bear dip.
- Have a minimum age restriction.

Participants Rules

- Bring an old blanket or towel to put down on the beach to stand on before the dip.
- Stay fully clothed until it is their time to go into the water.
- Wear old shoes when entering the water. This will help prevent cuts from rocks and help feet from sticking to any ice or snow on the shore line.
- Secure glasses with an athletic strap prior to entering the water. Have a spotter on land. They will be waiting for you on the shore with blankets and your dry clothes and shoes.
- Keep your head above the water. This helps to avoid brain shock that could result in disorientation.
- Do not stay in the water longer than three crawl strokes. Body heat is lost 25 times faster in water than air.
- After the dip, go to the heated change areas to get dry and warm.
- Have fun.