



مينا لأك  
MENALAC

مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والجذب السياحي  
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

## LET'S TALK SAFETY - JANUARY 2022



**What is Recreational Water?** For an article on such a topic the reader needs to understand what recreational water is.

‘Recreational water includes water in swimming pools, hot tubs, water parks, water play areas, interactive fountains, lakes, rivers, or oceans’

The definition covers all main areas for bodies of water and therefore the variety of safety controls and especially the ‘key safety controls’ will vary dependent on the structure at the time.

Most people are conversant with the normal safety rules and features found at swimming pools and water parks. Regulation and the general public’s expectation is that we will have well defined rules to follow and as a result of regulation through a local authority, a member of the public should expect to see an organization that has lifeguards and relevant safety equipment available to all.

Maturity of local HSE regulation is a key point in helping to drive safety for all entities who are engaged in any organized water activities, but what also needs to be considered are the bodies of water where more adventurous water activities take place.



مينا لأك  
MENALAC

مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والجذب السياحي  
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

## LET'S TALK SAFETY - JANUARY 2022



Swimming pools and water parks run by organizations should have key control factors behind the activities such as the use of risk assessments, training and equipment's in place. Accountability of the staff at a premises is also key – ensuring that a strong safety culture is nurtured – this itself can be demonstrated through internal and external audits, daily management tours and observation of the team by management whilst walking the property. As health and safety continues to mature and develop around the globe, we will see increased requirements on stronger training and accreditation of those that operate such entities.

As an example, the requirements for water parks is very clearly defined and operators also use international best practices as well to enhance their own management systems – it all leads to a further maturing of their water safety management systems. The main core of these key controls must be a combination of firstly a risk appreciation and a risk assessment of what the organization intends to run/manage – how does the organization reduce all the risks associated with recreational water. Then as mentioned earlier the actual day to day operation of the entity and the management presence therein – which will lead to the lifeguards feeling that they are valued due to how management monitor their actions in and around a property?



مينا لأك  
MENALAC

مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والحدب السياحي  
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

## LET'S TALK SAFETY - JANUARY 2022

Listed below are the key features for swimming pools and water parks:

### Lifeguards:

According to the World Health Organization, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury and death worldwide. The only proven method of preventing drowning and other tragic incidents is by having a lifeguard on-duty.

Lifeguards should complete a comprehensive training with skills that include; Water Rescue Techniques, First-Aid, Health Care Provider CPR, Emergency Oxygen Support and AED training.

It's important to choose a lifeguard program provider that is properly developed by experts, not homemade. These experts should be supported by medical professionals capable of meeting the most current international guidelines.



### Scanning:

The main responsibility of a lifeguard on-duty is to provide surveillance of swimmers. AN EXAMPLE OF WELL-ESTABLISHED PROGRAMME WITHIN THE MENA REGION IS, Jeff Ellis & Associates, the 10/20 Protection Standard™ is widely accepted as the Gold Standard for swimmer protection in pool environments. Lifeguards are trained to identify a distressed swimmer within 10 seconds or less and have the ability to reach all points within their area of responsibility within an additional 20 seconds. In open-water environments, the standard is 10/3 minutes with the same objective being applied.



Lifeguards can only rescue what they can see. With this in mind, it's important to ensure that while on duty, lifeguards are never responsible for secondary tasks such as; cleaning, moving sun beds, serving drinks etc.... A lifeguard who is not trained to be proactive, is not likely to identify a distressed swimmer in the early stages of the drowning process.





مينا لأك  
MENALAC

مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والحداب الساباب  
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

## LET'S TALK SAFETY - JANUARY 2022

### Lifeguard Placement:

You can only hold lifeguards accountable to the 10/20 Protection Standard™ if they have been setup for success. To do so, you need to consider factors that impact the lifeguard's line of sight such as; pool design, glare, reflection and refraction. Only once you have eliminated all blind spots and confirmed the 10/20 standard can be achieved should a lifeguard take over responsibility of their assigned area.



### On-going Training:

Often referred to as 'in-service' training, on-going training is a critical element to keeping lifeguard skills at a 'test-ready' level. Remember, lifeguards are trained as Health Care Providers. If an emergency arises, there's an expectation that the responders can perform at a level that meets patient care objectives. You wouldn't want a doctor performing out of practice procedures and you should expect similar precision from your lifeguards.



### Accountability:

If you have expectations, and you effectively communicate them, you have every right to expect that they will be met or exceeded by your team. Below are a few examples of ways to install a culture of accountability:

- Management by walking around
- Internal audits
- External audits
- Stop and watch strategies

We find time and time again, that lifeguard performance in the stand has a strong correlation to effective supervision on the pool deck.





مينا لأك  
MENALAC

مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والحدب السياحي  
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

## LET'S TALK SAFETY - JANUARY 2022

### Equipment:

Like any other professional, lifeguards need the appropriate equipment to do their job. Equipment may be kept on their person such as a rescue tube or may be part of a larger facility Emergency Action Plan, such as a backboard.

This is fundamentally easier for 'man made' bodies of water such as swimming pools and water parks – but the risks increase for entities such as rivers, lakes, beaches, water features and the open sea. The obvious issues now appear, we now start to see a lessening in managerial accountability and the apparent lack of 'management' in this areas will lead to a drop in rules and processes.

### Private Beaches:

In many respects private beaches are easier to manage and the control is managed through access to them and again it is part of the risk assessment and management therein. But public beaches, lakes and rivers cannot be controlled by a managed team so lesser controls will be employed such as signage and notices displaying a set of rules and the use of buoyancy equipment (life ring in situ) should there be a water incident.

For the adventurous type wishing to exercise on different types of water; (sailing, white water rafting, kayaking in the sea or a river to water skiing on a lake or sea) these key controls will come down again to several factors: Mature organizations who cater to these individual's needs will have used a thorough risk assessment process to understand what issues they face and then the competency of their instructors is paramount – especially if they are to take inexperienced people out on the water. Rules and regulations again are paramount here to maintain order and to control the inexperienced - and need to be impressed on the individuals, through safety briefings and instruction as well as using relevant safety equipment's for all types of activities offered by the organization.



**SAFETY TIPS FOR WHITEWATER RAFTING**

- 1 ALWAYS WEAR SAFETY GEAR**  
It's important to wear a life jacket and helmet that fit properly.
- 2 LISTEN TO YOUR GUIDE**  
Pay attention to the instructions beforehand and always listen to your guide's commands.
- 3 HOLD THE PADDLE CORRECTLY**  
Hold the paddle with one hand on the base and one at the 'T grip' to avoid hitting other rafters on the boat.

River Rat | Rafting & Tubing





مينا لأك  
MENALAC

مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والجذب السياحي  
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

## LET'S TALK SAFETY - JANUARY 2022

### Unmanaged and unsupervised tracts of water:

The controls at this stage now progressively become weaker and generally rely on the public doing the right thing – is this possible? The hope is that yes people can swim and keep themselves out of trouble because they take heed of signage that might indicate that it is a dangerous or hazardous place to swim. Controls will understandably become lighter, a stretch of water might well be owned by a local authority or is private land, so a duty of care is still prevalent on someone – however the degree of control is considerably less. A simple hedge or fence might be the only barrier that deters members of the public from swimming, jumping into the water and generally having 'fun'.



However not all members of the public follow the rules - (if any are on display,) as they are 'risk' takers and want to push the boundaries of their own safety. Sadly, the news frequently reports on mishaps through people's total lack of reading or understanding of a situation. Examples of 'tombstoning' (jumping from cliffs into areas of shallow sea – trying to hit the crest of a wave), to the recent tragic event of a female solicitor jumping through a hole in the ice on a Russian river and being swept away under the ice by the current are sad reminders of what can occur.

In conclusion, there is a sliding scale on levels of control however the expectation would be that any managed organized water activity be it on open water – or in a waterpark, the key controls must start with assessing the risks particular to that activity. It in turn leads to a management system which is evidenced through proactive use of lifeguards, boats, kayaks, safety briefings and signage in the managed areas; dropping down the scale of controls to features such as fencing and stand-alone signage, life rings invariably seen in areas that are unmanaged and uncontrolled.



مينا لأك  
MENALAC

مجلس الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا للترفيه والجذب السياحي  
Middle East and North Africa Leisure & Attractions Council

## LET'S TALK SAFETY - JANUARY 2022

### **Author Credits:**

*Ryan Phillips from SST Worldwide contributed content for the following topics; Lifeguards, Scanning, Lifeguard Placement, On-going Training, Accountability and Equipment. SST Worldwide is a leading aquatic consultancy firm offering globally recognized safety training programs from Jeff Ellis & Associates. To hear more about SST Worldwide email [info@sstworldwide.com](mailto:info@sstworldwide.com) or visit [www.sstworldwide.com](http://www.sstworldwide.com)*

### **Disclaimer:**

*The advice shared above is based on a high-level view of best practices when providing key safety controls around recreational water. It is however important that you speak with and follow the recommendations of the local authorities and regulations in the countries that you operate. Their guidelines will help you to create your own best practices when providing key safety controls around recreational water to ensure your Rules and Responsibilities outlined meet the requirements of your individual country, the regulations and recommendations of your local authorities.*