depend on it. Table 3-2 presents some scanning challenges that you may encounter and tactics to overcome them.

Zones of Surveillance Responsibility

Your lifeguard supervisor or facility manager will establish each lifeguard's *zone of surveillance responsibility*—referred to as *zones*. These are the specific areas

THE RID FACTOR

If an active victim drowns while lifeguards are on duty, it is probably due to one or more of the following causes:

- Lifeguards fail to recognize the victim's instinctive drowning response.
- Secondary duties intrude on lifeguards' primary responsibility of patron surveillance.
- Lifeguards are distracted from surveillance.

This set of causes often is referred to as the "RID factor," where the acronym, RID, stands for recognition, intrusion and distraction.

Recognition

Knowing how to recognize that a swimmer is in distress or a person is drowning is one of the most important lifeguarding skills. You must be able to distinguish such behavior from that of others who are swimming or playing safely in the water. You must recognize when someone needs to be rescued. You cannot expect the victim or others to call for help in an emergency.

With good surveillance and scanning techniques, you can recognize even a passive victim who has slipped underwater without a struggle, if the victim is in clear water.

Intrusion

Intrusion occurs when secondary duties, such as maintenance tasks, intrude on your primary responsibility of patron surveillance. Lifeguards often have to sweep the deck, empty trash cans, pick up towels, check locker rooms and perform other maintenance duties. While these duties might be part of the job, you should not perform them while conducting patron surveillance. Before you begin these duties, you must be sure that another lifeguard has taken over surveillance for your assigned area of responsibility.

Similarly, you cannot perform adequate surveillance duties while also coaching a swim team or teaching a swimming lesson. These additional responsibilities should be performed by a different lifeguard, coach or instructor, even if there are no other patrons in the water.

Distraction

Distractions also affect patron surveillance: for example, a lifeguard talking with other lifeguards or friends. A brief conversation might seem innocent, but during that time, you could miss the 20- to 60-second struggle of a young child at the water's surface. The child could die because you were distracted. You should not engage in social conversation while are on duty.

of the water, deck, pier or shoreline that are your responsibility to scan from your lifeguard station (Figure 3-11).

When establishing coverage, supervisors or managers must ensure that:

- All areas of the water—from the bottom through to the surface—are covered and can be seen by a lifeguard.
- There is overlapping coverage when more than one lifeguard is performing surveillance.
- Lifeguards have unobstructed views of their zones from each station.
- The size and shape of each zone allow lifeguards to respond quickly, within 30 seconds, to victims in the water.

Figure 3-11

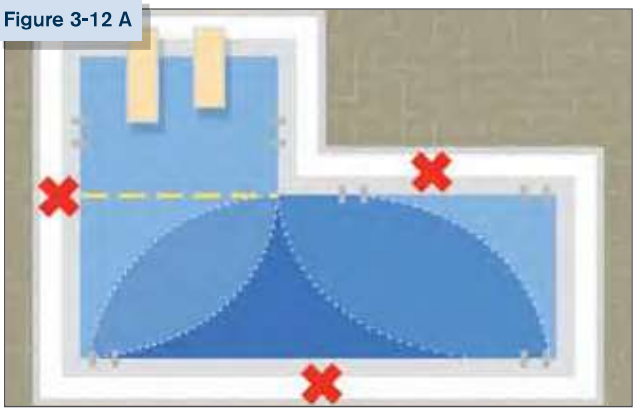
The zone of surveillance responsibility refers to the specific area a lifeguard is responsible for scanning.

Supervisors or managers should post diagrams or charts showing the size, shape and boundaries of each zone. These can change throughout the day, depending on the following:

- Number of patrons
- Types of activities
- Variety of activities
- Time of day
- Environmental conditions, such as glare from the sun

To ensure that all areas of the pool are covered adequately, you might be assigned *zone coverage, total coverage* or *emergency back-up coverage*.

Figure 3-12 A



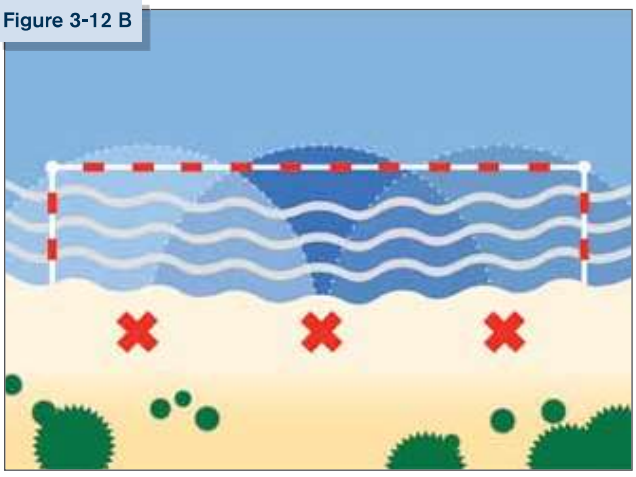
Zone coverage at a pool

Zone Coverage

In zone coverage, the swimming area is divided into separate zones, with one zone for each lifeguard station (Figure 3-12, A–B). Zones can be designated by markers, such as ladders, lane lines, lifelines, buoys, or the shape of the pool. Zone coverage is effective for high-risk areas or activities, avoiding blind spots and reducing the number of patrons watched by each lifeguard. When zone coverage is being provided, each lifeguard needs to know the zone for each guarding position.

At a minimum, zones should overlap by several feet so that the boundaries between them have double coverage. This prevents any area from not being scanned. When zones overlap, it is important that each lifeguard react to an emergency; that is, you should not assume that the other lifeguard will notice a problem and react. However, if the

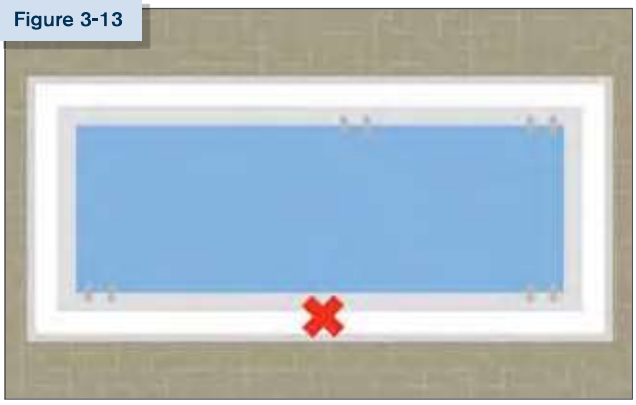
Figure 3-12 B



Zone coverage at a waterfront

position of the other lifeguard allows a significantly quicker rescue, your emergency action plan (EAP) should establish how lifeguards communicate as to who enters the water and who provides back-up coverage.

Figure 3-13

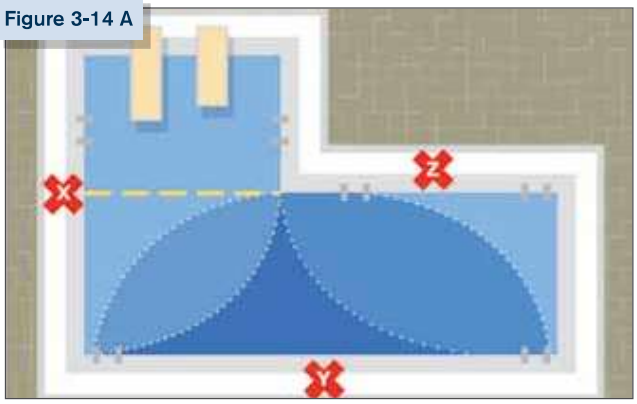


Total coverage at a pool

Total Coverage

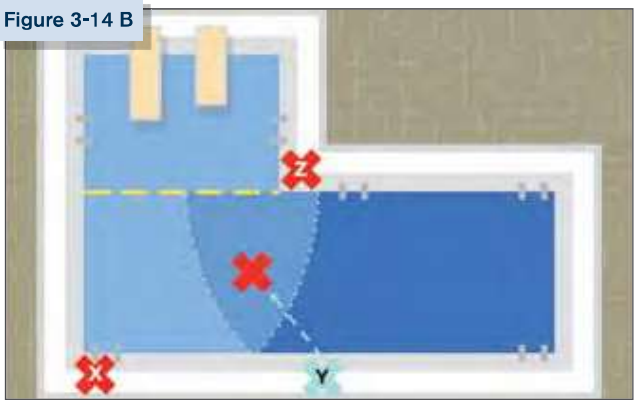
When you are assigned total coverage, you will be the only lifeguard conducting patron surveillance while you are on duty. Some facilities, such as a small pool, always assign their lifeguards total coverage. Other facilities use total coverage for specific situations, such as when there are a limited number of patrons present. When only one lifeguard is conducting patron surveillance, that lifeguard has to scan the entire area, control the activities of patrons in and out of the water and recognize and respond to emergencies (Figure 3-13). If adequate coverage cannot be provided for all patrons, inform a supervisor that help is needed.

Figure 3-14 A



Zone coverage with three lifeguards

Figure 3-14 B



Back-up coverage during a rescue at a three-zone facility

Emergency Back-Up Coverage

In emergency situations when two or more lifeguards are on duty and one lifeguard must enter the water for a rescue, lifeguards who remain out of the water must now supervise a larger area. They might need to move to better vantage points or close part of the swimming area, depending on the facility's design.

Figure 3-14, A illustrates zone coverage when three lifeguards are on surveillance duty. **Figure 3-14, B** shows an example of emergency back-up coverage for the same three-zone facility. **Figure 3-14, B** depicts lifeguard Y as the primary rescuer. He or she signals and enters the water (indicated by a dotted line). The other two lifeguards (lifeguards X and Z) stand in each of the lifeguard chairs and divide the responsibility for scanning the pool. Meanwhile, additional lifeguards or safety team members monitor the rescue and prepare to assist with additional equipment and call emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, if appropriate.

Lifeguard Stations

Lifeguards perform patron surveillance from a variety of positions including elevated, ground-level, roving and floating stations. Additional coverage at waterfront areas sometimes is provided by foot patrols, boat patrols

and four-wheel-drive vehicles. The goal is to provide optimum coverage for the whole facility by placing lifeguards in positions to quickly recognize and respond to emergencies. To ensure that lifeguards stay alert, periodic rotations and breaks from surveillance are built into their surveillance schedules.

The location of any lifeguard station must allow you to see your entire zone. The lifeguard stand may need to be moved or the position adjusted during the day to adapt to the changing sun, glare, wind or water conditions. It is critical for you to have a clear view of your entire zone.

Elevated Stations

Elevated lifeguard stations generally provide the most effective position for a broad view of the zone and patron activities (Figure 3-15). This is especially important at a facility where a single lifeguard at a time performs patron surveillance. When you are scanning from an elevated station, be sure to include the area under, around and directly in front of the stand. Movable stands should be positioned close to the edge of the water with enough room to climb up and down from the stand.

Figure 3-15

An elevated lifeguard station

The area surrounding an elevated stand must be kept clear of patrons or objects that might interfere with your ability to respond. You must know how to safely exit the stand, both in the course of a normal rotation as well as in an emergency. Be sure to practice with the rescue tube so that you are able to do so quickly and without getting injured. A safety zone should be established that allows access to the water in case of an emergency. At a waterfront, the safety zone should be thoroughly inspected with rakes and shovels before opening each day. This helps to prevent injuries to lifeguards during emergency exits from the lifeguard stand.

Ground-Level Stations

Lifeguards sometimes are assigned to a fixed location on a deck or in shallow water (Figure 3-16). These stations allow for quick response and are common around winding rivers, in shallow-water areas with play structures, and at the end of slides. The primary purpose of ground-level stations is to be close to patrons so you can easily make assists and enforce safety rules for patrons in the water and on the deck. While maintaining surveillance, you also can educate patrons about the reasons behind the rules; however, you should never become distracted from surveillance duties by talking socially with patrons or other staff.

Figure 3-16

A ground-level lifeguard station

Roving Stations

When a facility becomes unusually crowded, such as during a special event or activity, supervisors or managers might assign a lifeguard to a *roving station*. The

roving lifeguard is assigned a specific zone, which also is covered by another lifeguard in an elevated station. These roving, or walking, lifeguards are mobile and able to position themselves where needed within the zone. Combining the views from elevated stations with the mobility of the roving lifeguard provides extra coverage to help ensure effective patron surveillance.

Floating Stations (Rescue Watercraft)

In many waterfront facilities, lifeguards are stationed to watch swimmers from a water craft, usually as extra coverage. Rescue watercraft typically are used to patrol the outer edge of a swimming area. Often, someone in trouble in the water can be reached more quickly from watercraft than from a lifeguard station on the shore.

Figure 3-17

Rescue water craft, such as kayaks, may be used at waterfront areas.

In a small, calm area, a rescue board, kayak or flat-bottom rowboat might be used (Figure 3-17). When patrolling on a rescue board, sit or kneel on the board for better visibility (Figure 3-18). Some protocols may require you to keep the rescue tube or buoy strapped across your chest or attached to the board. In rough water, rowboats might be used. Powerboats, inflatable boats and personal watercraft also can be used as rescue watercraft. Facility management normally provides on-the-job training in the use of watercraft at a facility.

Figure 3-18

A rescue board may be used to help with patron surveillance at waterfront areas.

If stationed on watercraft in water with a current, you might have to row or paddle to stay in position. Some watercraft have a special anchor line with a quick release for lifeguards to make a rescue. In some larger watercraft, one lifeguard maintains the craft's position while a second watches the swimming area.

Make sure that you are well trained in operating the facility's watercraft before using it for surveillance or to make a rescue. Use caution with motorized watercraft to avoid injuring swimmers or damaging lifelines when crossing into the swimming area to make a rescue.

Lifeguard Rotations

All facilities should have a defined rotation procedure. Rotations include moving from one station to another as well as breaks from surveillance duty. Lifeguards should get regular breaks from surveillance duty to help stay alert and decrease fatigue. Typically, you might perform patron surveillance for 20 or 30 minutes at one station, rotate to another station for 20 or 30 minutes, and then rotate off of patron surveillance duty to perform other duties or take a break for 20 or 30 minutes, thereby getting a break from constant surveillance. Rest and meal breaks should be factored into the rotation.

An emergency back-up coverage "station" often is included as a part of the rotation. The location may be a staff room or on the pool deck, pier or shoreline within sight

of the swimming area(s). The lifeguard at this station is not responsible for patron surveillance but is expected to be able to immediately respond to the EAP signal in an emergency. (Chapter 5 covers information about emergency action plans.)

Your supervisor will establish a plan for lifeguard rotations, usually based on:

- Locations of stations.
- Type of station (elevated, ground-level, roving or floating).
- The need to be in the water at some stations.
- The number of patrons using an attraction.
- The activity at the station, such as wave durations at a wave pool.
- EAPs.

The rotation begins with the incoming lifeguard. While rotating, each lifeguard should carry his or her own rescue tube, and both lifeguards must ensure there is no lapse in patron surveillance, even for a brief moment. Each lifeguard must know who is responsible for scanning the zone—"owning the zone"—and at what time during the rotation. You will be transferring scanning responsibilities back and forth as the incoming lifeguard gets into position and the outgoing guard prepares to leave the station. Keep any necessary conversations brief and make sure that eye contact remains on the water.

As the incoming lifeguard, you should be aware of the patrons and activity level of the zone you will be watching. Begin scanning your zone as you are walking toward your station, checking all areas of the water from the bottom to the surface.

The outgoing lifeguard should inform you of any situations that need special attention. The exchange of information should be brief, and patron surveillance must be maintained throughout the entire rotation. Once in position, with the rescue tube strapped in place, make any adjustments needed, such as removing shoes or adjusting an umbrella before confirming to the outgoing lifeguard that you own the zone. The outgoing lifeguard should continue scanning as he or she is walking toward the next station. The skill sheet at the end of this chapter outlines the steps for rotations for ground-level and elevated stations.

WRAP-UP

A lapse in coverage—even for just a few seconds—could result in injury or death. A lifeguard must be alert for dangerous behaviors and able to recognize a distressed swimmer and a drowning victim who is active or passive. Effective scanning techniques and lifeguard stations are needed both to prevent incidents and locate people in trouble.

ROTATIONS—**Ground-Level Station**

At a ground-level station, you (the incoming lifeguard) should:

1. Begin scanning your zone as you are walking toward your station. Note the swimmers, activities and the people on the deck. In a pool or waterpark setting where the water is clear, check the entire volume of water from the bottom of the pool to the surface of the water.

2. Walk to the side of the lifeguard being relieved and begin scanning the zone.

3. Exchange information. Ask the lifeguard being relieved whether any patrons in the zone need closer than normal supervision.

4. Once scanning has started, signal or tell the outgoing lifeguard that you have the zone covered and he or she can rotate.

5. The outgoing lifeguard continues scanning as he or she is walking toward the next station.

ROTATIONS—**Elevated Station**

At an elevated station, you (the incoming lifeguard) should:

1. Begin scanning your zone as you are walking toward your station. Note the swimmers, activities and the people on the deck. In a pool or waterpark setting where the water is clear, check the entire volume of water from the bottom of the pool to the surface of the water.

2. Take a position next to the stand and begin scanning the zone. After a few moments of scanning, signal the lifeguard in the stand to climb down.

3. Once on the deck, the outgoing lifeguard takes a position next to the stand and is responsible for surveillance of the zone. Climb up in the stand, make any adjustments to equipment or personal items and begin scanning.

4. Exchange information. Ask the lifeguard being relieved whether any patrons in the zone need closer than normal supervision.

5. Signal or tell the outgoing lifeguard that you have the zone covered and he or she can rotate.

6. The outgoing lifeguard continues scanning as he or she is walking toward the next station.

CHAPTER 4

Injury Prevention

Lifeguards are essential for keeping aquatic facilities safe. Unlike most other professional rescuers, lifeguards are present to help prevent emergencies from occurring. As a lifeguard, one of your goals is to prevent injuries; therefore, it is important for you to understand how injuries occur and know the best strategies for preventing them. In addition, you must be prepared to meet the safety challenges presented by visiting groups as well as the various activities and features at your facility. ■

HOW INJURIES HAPPEN

Aquatic injury prevention is part of your facility's risk management program. *Risk management* involves identifying dangerous conditions or behaviors that can cause injuries and then taking steps to minimize or eliminate those conditions or behaviors. Even though lifeguarding requires performing emergency rescues, far more time is spent on *preventive lifeguarding*—trying to make sure emergencies do not happen in the first place.

Although not all emergencies can be prevented, knowing what causes life-threatening injuries can help you to prevent many of them. Injuries either are life threatening or non-life-threatening. Examples of life-threatening injuries include drowning and injuries to the head, neck or spine. Life-threatening conditions that can result from an injury include unconsciousness, breathing and cardiac emergencies, severe bleeding and drowning.

Drowning begins when a person's mouth and nose are submerged and water enters the airway, regardless of the water depth. Drowning can occur in shallow or deep water. In shallow water a toddler may fall over and be unable to stand or unable to raise the head up. Drowning also may result when a nonswimmer enters or falls into water over his or her head, when a poor swimmer becomes exhausted and cannot stay afloat or when a patron is incapacitated in the water due to a medical emergency, such as a seizure or cardiac emergency.

Most head, neck or spinal injuries at aquatic facilities result from a high-risk/high-impact activity, such as head-first entries into shallow water. If a victim's head strikes the bottom or the side of the pool, the spinal cord can be damaged, causing paralysis or death.

Non-life-threatening injuries also occur in aquatic facilities. Examples of non-life-threatening injuries include fractures or dislocations, abrasions (scrapes), superficial burns (sunburns), muscle cramps (caused by overexertion), heat exhaustion, dehydration and sprains and strains.

Non-life-threatening injuries can occur by slipping, tripping, falling when running or getting cut on sharp objects. They also can occur when patrons do not follow rules when using play equipment or slides. If you understand how most injuries occur, you can help prevent them by increasing your awareness of risks and hazards, helping patrons to avoid risky behavior and developing a safety-conscious attitude at your facility.

INJURY-PREVENTION STRATEGIES

As you learned earlier in this course, your injury-prevention responsibilities include taking steps to ensure that the facility is safe and providing effective patron surveillance. Another important injury-prevention responsibility is communicating with patrons, which involves educating and informing patrons as well as enforcing your facility's rules.

Communicating with Patrons

Communicating with patrons is an important injury-prevention strategy. It requires you to inform and educate patrons about inappropriate behaviors and the potential for injury. Communication also includes consistently enforcing rules and regulations in a positive, customer-friendly manner.

Figure 4-1

Signs provide instructions to patrons on how to use equipment and list rules and regulations of the facility.

Informing and Educating Patrons

Patrons need to know about risks that could cause injury. Signs communicate warning, provide instructions on how to use equipment and list rules and regulations to prevent behaviors that can lead to injury (Figure 4-1). Part of your role, too, is to inform patrons about the potential for injury; therefore, you need to understand the rules and regulations of your facility and the rationale behind them.

Patrons may be unfamiliar with a facility's features or get so excited that they do not read signs or pay attention to the rules. If patrons are not following the rules, it is your job to inform them of the possible consequences. Explaining rules in a positive way encourages patrons to behave safely. The following steps can prevent a patron from engaging in risky behavior:

- Get the patron's attention, for example by blowing a whistle, and saying, "Excuse me." (Figure 4-2)
- Explain the hazard or danger, for example, "If you dive into shallow water, you might hit your head on the bottom and get injured." Or say, "You may slip and hurt yourself if you run." Simply telling someone not to do something often does not work. People usually understand and cooperate when they know why something is dangerous.
- Explain a safe option. For example, say, "If you want to dive, please go to the deep end of the pool where it is safe." Or say, "Excuse me, diving into shallow water is dangerous and can cause a head injury. Please use the deep end." Or say, "Walk, please." This type of explanation gets the patron's attention, clarifies the danger, emphasizes the consequences of the risky behavior and offers safe options, if available and appropriate.

Did You Know?

The precise way that you will use your whistle in an emergency should be spelled out in your facility's plan. Typically, an emergency action plan (EAP) will specify that a certain number and type of whistle blasts should correspond to a certain emergency situation. You should practice your whistle-blowing technique during orientations and in-service trainings to cover all of the variations and numbers of whistle blasts.

Enforcing Rules

By enforcing the rules, you help to prevent injuries and encourage safe patron behavior. When conducting patron surveillance, keep rule enforcement brief by using only a few words or short phrases, such as, "Slow down," or by giving a hand signal. When enforcing rules, be consistent, fair and respectful. In some cases the patron may not know the facility's rules or may not understand them. Always use age-appropriate enforcement methods that are approved by the facility's policies.

If certain patrons repeatedly break the rules even after you have attempted to correct their behavior, you could direct them to leave the water for a set time. Signal for someone who is not engaged in patron surveillance, such as another lifeguard or

Figure 4-2

When enforcing rules, use your whistle to get patron's attention.

INTERACTING PROFESSIONALLY WITH THE PUBLIC

When you are on duty, your actions should promote an atmosphere of professionalism, safety, trust and goodwill. The following general guidelines will help you display a professional image and maintain a positive relationship with patrons:

- When conducting patron surveillance, any verbal interaction should be brief and your eyes should remain on the water. Politely refer the patron to a staff member who is not conducting surveillance if necessary.
- When not conducting patron surveillance:
  - Treat people as you would like to be treated. Make every patron feel welcome, important and respected.
  - Be professional at all times. Be courteous, mature and responsible. Never insult or argue with a patron.
  - Speak clearly and calmly, at a reasonable pace and volume.
  - Use appropriate language, but do not patronize or speak down to anyone, including children.

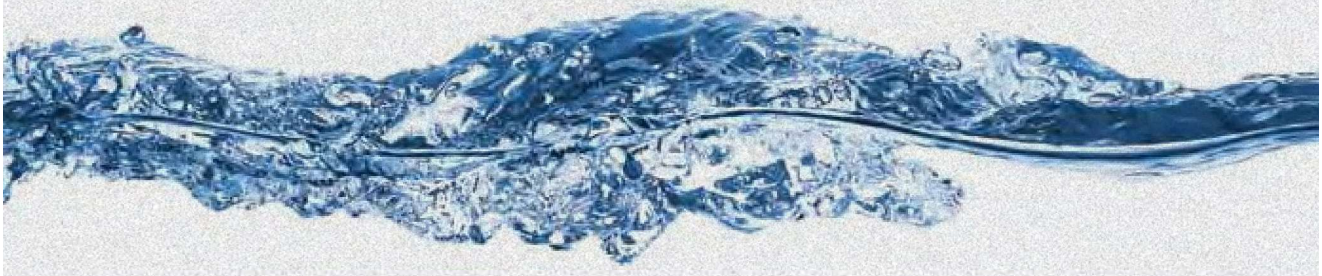
Lifeguards should interact with the public in a professional manner.

  - When interacting with patrons, make frequent and direct eye contact. Remove your sunglasses, if necessary. When speaking to small children, kneel down to be at eye level with them.
  - Take all suggestions and complaints seriously, and follow up as necessary. Avoid blaming anyone. If you cannot resolve a complaint, take it to your facility's management. Always follow the facility's procedures.
  - Repeat the concern expressed by the patron back to him or her to ensure that you understand the concern correctly.
  - Do not make promises that cannot be kept.
  - Enforce rules fairly and consistently. Be positive and nonjudgemental. Reinforce correct behavior.
  - Take a sincere interest in all patrons.

Nonverbal Communication

Spoken words make up a surprisingly small part of overall communication. A listener automatically tends to make judgments about a speaker's attitude based on the volume, pace, tone and pitch of the speaker's voice. A listener also reacts positively or negatively to visual cues or body language. You can gauge a person's attitude as cooperative or confrontational by evaluating these cues; know that the listener will be doing the same.

Nonverbal communication also is expressed while you are on duty, whether you are conducting patron surveillance or performing secondary responsibilities. Patrons may make judgments about your professionalism by observing your appearance, demeanor, posture and behavior. Lifeguards are "on stage" and set the tone while on duty.



DEALING WITH UNCOOPERATIVE PATRONS AND VIOLENCE

No matter how fairly you enforce the rules, you may encounter an uncooperative patron. Before assuming that a patron is being uncooperative, you should make sure that he or she hears and understands you.

If a patron breaks the rules and is uncooperative, you should take action right away because breaking the rules can be a danger to the uncooperative patron and to others. Most facilities have procedures for handling uncooperative patrons; however, if your facility does not have a procedure, you should call the lifeguard supervisor or facility manager for help as soon as possible.

A patron may threaten to or commit a violent act. You must be realistic about what can be done in a violent situation. If violence is likely to erupt, call the supervisor or facility manager immediately. If violence does erupt, do not try to stop it. Never confront a violent patron physically or verbally and do not approach a patron who has a weapon. In such a situation, the best approach is to retreat and follow the facility's EAP for violence. Safety for patrons and facility staff should be your main goal.

a supervisor, to explain the rules and their rationale. If the patron is a child and a parent or guardian is available, the rules should be clearly explained to the adult as well. Since most people want to be treated with respect, simply explaining and enforcing the rules usually is sufficient. If a parent or guardian is uncooperative, do not argue, but instead ask a supervisor or facility manager to assist you.

A patron may become uncooperative and defiant, compromising his or her safety and the safety of others. If this happens, you should summon a supervisor or facility manager, who may ask the patron to leave the facility. Use this approach only when other methods have failed.

If a patron refuses to leave after being told to leave for repeatedly breaking the rules, the supervisor or manager may choose to call the police or security personnel. Every facility needs a procedure for removing someone from the facility. This procedure should have specific steps and guidelines to follow. Any such action should be recorded in the facility's daily log and on the appropriate form or report.

EFFECTIVE GUARDING–INJURY PREVENTION CHALLENGES

Lifeguards should be conducting patron surveillance anytime the facility is being used by patrons or staff. A major goal of patron surveillance is looking for behaviors

that indicate someone may need assistance. As part of your patron surveillance, you also may have specific responsibilities based on the facility's activities or features, such as enforcing age or height requirements, helping patrons with equipment or ensuring that riders are in the proper position. These responsibilities will vary and may include guarding:

- A variety of activities occurring simultaneously.
- "Kiddie" areas, play structures, special attractions, water slides, winding rivers and wave pools.
- Organized recreational swim groups and youth camps.

Guarding Activities

Facilities often have a variety of activities taking place simultaneously, all of which require your surveillance. Examples include:

- Open or recreational swim.
- Water exercises, such as water walking and lap swimming.
- Instructional classes, such as swim lessons, water therapy, water exercise and SCUBA lessons.
- Swimming, water polo, synchronized swimming and other team practice.
- Competitive events, such as swim meets and triathlons.
- Special events, such as movie nights and pool parties and after-hour rentals.

To help you identify patrons who may need assistance, be aware of the age and ability levels of those participating in the activity. For example, you may notice a young child in beginner-level swim lessons moving toward water over his or her head or an elderly man stopping frequently as he swims laps.

Each activity has its own unique characteristics and risks. Some activities, such as SCUBA classes, may require that you receive special training on what to look for specifically or be aware of while you are on surveillance duty. Considerations and questions that need to be answered for effective guarding include:

- What things could go wrong that are unique about this activity?
- What is the swimming ability or comfort level in the water of patrons involved in this activity?
- Are there any unique challenges or obstacles to recognizing an emergency, approaching a victim or performing a rescue?
- Do participants have any medical conditions that increase the chances for sudden illness or injury due to the nature of the activity?

Instructional Classes

Instructional classes are a type of general activity but have the benefit of supervision by trained personnel. Although the instructor is responsible for the safety of the class, that does not relieve you of your responsibilities. You must still scan every person in the water and enforce rules, perform rescues and provide first aid as appropriate. However, with proper preparation, instructors may become valuable members of your safety team. Facility management should share and practice emergency action plans (EAPs) with instructors, clarify their roles during an emergency and share those roles with you. Some instructors will have lifeguard training and specialized rescue skills; others will not.

Having an instructor present may help you to ensure patron safety because he or she may be:

- Familiar with special equipment. Therapy classes may use wheelchairs, lifts and special flotation devices. Instructors for those classes should be able to recognize and deal with potential problems with such devices.
- Familiar with the behavior of specific types of patrons. Instructors may be able to recognize subtle signs of potential problems that may not be obvious to you. For example, a water exercise instructor may detect the early signs of overexertion of a patron in that class.
- Able to help in an emergency related to the specialized class. For example, a SCUBA instructor should know how to deal with and respond to a victim wearing a SCUBA tank and buoyancy control device.

Guarding Areas for Young Children

Many facilities have shallow pools for young children. It is common for these areas to have play equipment, including slides, fountains, inflatable play equipment and climbing structures (Figure 4-3). Effective patron surveillance at these areas is essential, even though the water may be shallow. Enforce rules, such as height and age requirements, fairly and consistently. Note that:

Figure 4-3

Many facilities have play equipment for young children.

- Older children might be too large for some structures, or their play might be too rough for young children.
- Toddlers who are still learning to walk may fall easily. If they fall down in water, they usually cannot lift themselves to an upright position, even if the water is ankle or knee deep.
- Children often get lost. Remind adults to supervise their children at all times.
- You must watch out for young children using the pool as a toilet. The facility should have procedures for preventing and addressing the situation, including handling fecal incidents, which follow local health department guidelines.
- Children usually do not think about overexposure to the sun or hypothermia. If a child is becoming sunburned or overly cold, immediately inform the child's parent or guardian.

Figure 4-4

Sprays and fountains are a common feature at many facilities.

Guarding Zones with Play Structures

Facilities may have play structures that are either permanent or removable (Figure 4-4). Permanent structures include sprays and fountains, interactive water-play structures and dumping buckets. Removable structures include large floating toys, inflatable play structures and water basketball and volleyball nets. Some play

structures require their own lifeguards, whereas others are watched by lifeguards surveying a larger area.

While guarding at play structures:

- Do not let a play structure become overcrowded. Be prepared to restrict the number of patrons using it at one time.
- Do not allow patrons to swim underneath structures.
- Watch that patrons return to the surface after dropping into the water from a floating feature. Swimmers can be surprised by the fall or become disoriented, especially if they do not realize they will be dropping into deep water.
- Pay close attention to children playing in and around sprays, fountains and interactive water-play structures. These attractions usually are in shallow water. Excited children may run and fall. A very young child who falls might not be able to get back up or may strike his or her head.
- Pay close attention to patrons in moving water. Moving water can surprise people. They might lose their balance and be unable to stand up again.
- Watch for overcrowding and horseplay on floating structures. These structures are tethered to the bottom of the pool; some allow patrons to walk from one floating structure to another while holding onto an overhead rope (Figure 4-5).
- Keep play safe and orderly.
    - Patrons may climb onto floating toys and jump back into the water. They may not notice what is around them and jump onto other swimmers or into water that is over their heads.
    - Patrons may throw balls and other toys and hit unsuspecting swimmers, resulting in injury.

Figure 4-5

Floating structures are a special attraction at waterparks.

Guarding Special Rides and Attractions

Special attractions create a lot of excitement and can include rides, such as bowl slides, multi-person raft rides, uphill water coasters and high-speed water slides. Some attractions found at deep-water pools also include diving platforms, cable swings and hand-over-hand structures like ropes, nets and rings. In a waterpark setting, there are multiple attractions designed for a variety of age groups and abilities. Regardless of the patron's swimming ability, patrons may become fearful, disoriented or off-balance, thus requiring assistance.

Follow these general principles when guarding attractions:

- Watch patrons as they enter and exit an attraction. Dispatch patrons safely on a ride at set intervals. Dispatching is the method of informing patrons when it is safe for them to proceed on a ride.
- Carefully watch both the water below and the activities overhead.
- Keep patrons in view as long as possible. Keeping patrons in view can be

a problem on some attractions: structures, such as caves, enclosed tubes, bridges and buildings, might prevent you from seeing patrons at all times. When a patron goes out of sight, watch to make sure that he or she emerges safely on the other side.

- Ensure that patrons who submerge return to the surface. The excitement may cause weak swimmers or nonswimmers to overestimate their abilities or underestimate the water's depth.
- Be aware of special risks. Structures designed to have patrons sit or climb on them, or swim over or under them, pose hazards. Supervise patrons carefully. Someone who falls off of a mat, raft or tube might be injured or pose a hazard to another patron.

Guarding at Water Slides

On some water slides, patrons ride on an inner tube, raft, mat or sled. On others, riding equipment is not allowed. On some slides, only one person is allowed on an inner tube or a raft. On others, two or more people can go together on a special tube or raft. On an inner tube or raft, patrons ride in a sitting position. If no equipment is used, the proper riding position typically is face-up and feet-first. Lifeguard stations may be positioned at the top, middle and/or bottom of a slide.

Follow these guidelines when lifeguarding at a water slide:

- When dispatching at the top of a slide:
  - Check that patrons are tall enough to use the slide by using a measuring pole or line on a wall (Figure 4-6).
  - Instruct riders how to ride down the slide according to manufacturer's instructions and facility protocols and make sure they are in the correct riding position.
  - Instruct riders not to stop on the slide.
  - Help riders with the equipment.
  - Confirm that the riders are ready to go and signal them to start.
  - If assisting riders to take off, use tube handles when available. Avoid pushing or pulling riders by their shoulders, arms or legs.
  - Dispatch the next rider(s) at the proper intervals. For drop-off slides, speed slides and free-fall slides, ensure that the previous rider has left the runout end of the slide or the catch pool and the lifeguard at the bottom has signaled for the next rider.
  - If you can see the lifeguard at the bottom, he or she can use a hand signal or whistle.
  - If you cannot see the lifeguard at the bottom, a mechanical system, such as light signals, can be used.
- When stationed at the middle of a slide:
  - Watch for riders who:
    - Stop, slow down, stand up or form a chain.
    - Lose their mat, tube or raft or have trouble getting down the slide.

Figure 4-6

When guarding at a water slide, be sure patrons meet the minimum height requirements.

- Hit their heads on the side of the slide.

- Alert the dispatcher and lifeguard at the end of the slide of the situation and assist patrons as necessary.

- When stationed at the bottom of a slide:
  - Observe all riders exiting the slide into the catch pool (Figure 4-7). Patrons might not realize the depth of the catch pool and may need assistance.
  - Assist riders who appear to be off balance or get caught underwater in the strong downward flow of water in the catch pool. This strong force can knock a person off balance or hold a small person or nonswimmer under water.
  - Help riders, if needed, from the runout or catch pool. Some patrons might be disoriented or frightened from the ride (Figure 4-8).
  - Ensure that riders do not cross in front of any slide when getting out of the runout or catch pool.
  - Signal the lifeguard at the top when each rider has moved out of the catch pool or runout and it is clear to send the next rider.

Figure 4-7

Watch for riders to exit the slide into the catch pool.

Figure 4-8

Assist riders to exit the speed slide, if needed.

Guarding Winding Rivers

In a winding river, water flows in a long circular or twisting path through a facility. Depending on the winding river, patrons may be floating on tubes, walking or swimming. Some wear life jackets, some do not. Water speeds may vary. Lifeguards may be positioned at the entrance and exit. They also may be positioned at several elevated or ground-level stations or at a combination of both with overlapping zones around the river (Figure 4-9).

When guarding a winding river:

- Ensure that patrons enter and exit at designated locations.
- Watch for inexperienced swimmers falling off their inner tubes or inflatable rafts. It will be difficult for you to see all patrons or the bottom of the winding river if there are a lot of tubes and rafts in the water. Similarly, it can be difficult for someone who falls off a raft or tube to come up for air if the surface is blocked. In addition, someone who is hit by an inflatable raft might be knocked down, hit the bottom and get into trouble.
- Watch for patrons around features in winding rivers, such as fountains and waterfalls, which can catch patrons off-guard or cause patrons to gather.
- Watch carefully for, and correct, risky behavior.

Figure 4-9

Lifeguards may be stationed in multiple zones around a winding river when performing patron surveillance.