

## Guidelines for Youth Camp Emergency Plans

Indiana State Department of Health rule 410 IAC 6-7.2 Youth Camps requires:

*A written emergency plan for dealing with natural disasters, lost campers, and other emergencies must be developed and maintained. At a minimum, the plan shall include procedures for evacuation and transportation to emergency facilities. Camp staff shall be trained on the plan and a record of the training shall be kept by a responsible adult. Campers shall be advised of their responsibilities in following the plan.*

*Camps offering aquatic activities must have an emergency plan that includes procedures for rescues, accounting for each camper, evacuations, and the method for notification of emergency services. Weekly orientation in using the aquatic emergency plan must be conducted.*

The following guidelines for emergency plans have been developed as a resource to assist youth camp operators and directors in the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive written plan that will meet the provisions of the Youth Camp Rule. Anything in this Guideline that goes beyond the requirements of the rule is based on the professional literature or best practices. These recommendations are for your consideration, but in no way replaces the policies of your sponsoring agency or the advice of your legal counsel.

### Fire Emergency Plan

#### PLAN TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO FIRES

- The first priority in staff training must be the evacuation of the children, before any attempts are made to extinguish a fire. Discuss fire drills in the staff and camper orientation section of the plan. Address the staff responsibilities for firefighting. Include management of campfires and out-of-camp cookouts.
- A significant component of your fire safety program must be fire prevention. It should be an integral part of the pre-camp training for staff, and be part of their daily activities. A partial list of the things to look for, and correct daily, are frayed or improperly placed electrical wires, overuse of extension cords, collection of combustible materials sufficient to cause excessive fire load such as paper and cardboard, and improper storage of flammable liquids, and management of campfires.
- The camp written plan must describe the routine inspection of exits and exit signs. Be sure you have proper exits, and that staff and campers know their location and how to use them. The second means of exiting should be as far as possible from the main exit. Maintain exits and exit ways free of all obstructions. Explain exiting the building to campers on their first day in camp. Train staff to assist and direct this drill so it will run smoothly and rapidly. Include simulating drills from various buildings during training, to find any possible problems in exiting and eliminate them before campers participate.

- Teach what to do in case of a fire to the staff during the pre-camp orientation and to the campers during their own orientation. Then practice it at least 3 times during the season, once within the first 24 hours of the start of camp and at least once thereafter, preferably at the start of each new camp session. Simulate actual fire conditions in the drill. Hold it at different times and using different exits.
- All fire extinguishers must be tested at least once per year by a qualified inspector. Fire extinguishers must be routinely checked every month during the camp season, to insure they are operable, with the inspections logged. A camp map should include the location of all firefighting equipment. Use of fire extinguishers should be addressed.
- Get to know the local Fire Department. Show them around the camp, and give them a sketch depicting the layout of buildings, water supply to be used for firefighting, and other pertinent information. They may also be able to give you technical assistance.

### **DESIGNATE A FIRE SAFETY COORDINATOR**

The Fire Safety Coordinator may be the operator of the camp or a staff member at a level of management that allows him or her to deal on an equal basis with all staff members.

### **CONDUCT WEEKLY INSPECTIONS OF FIRE RELATED EQUIPMENT AND AREAS**

Include inspections of:

- Fire alarm systems - are they operating properly?
- EXIT signs - are they posted?
- Exits - are they free of obstructions? Unlocked?
- Fire extinguishers - are they properly placed?
- Smoke detectors - are they provided when required?

### **FOLLOW THE ACTION PLAN**

**Sound the alarm.** At the first sight of flames, smell of smoke or notification that there is a fire in camp, yell FIRE and sound the alarm.

**Notify the Fire Department.** The Fire Department emergency number, 911, must be posted at all phones. The operator will ask for the phone number, and the address of the building, what is burning and the location of the fire. Stay on the line, if possible. Let the emergency operator end the conversation.

**Evacuate the building.** Each counselor should know and have a direct visual of each camper in his or her group at all times. Take a quick head count.

While important, the speed of emptying a building should be secondary to maintaining proper order and discipline for proper and prompt evacuation.

Have at least 2 escape routes for every room, a normal route and an emergency route if the normal route is not passable.

Keep calm. Never try to hide. If the room is smoky, crawl along the floor. Feel the doors; if they are warm, do not open them. When you leave a room, close the door behind you. If your clothes catch on fire, stop, drop to the ground and roll around.

**Assemble, take attendance, notifies authorities of anyone unaccounted for.** Designate a responsible person to meet the arriving Fire Department units to explain where the fire is located, and inform them of any other pertinent information.

After evacuating the camp, assemble everyone at a prearranged place, at a safe distance from the building.

As soon as the camp is assembled outside, take a roll call. If a camper is missing, check all other places; ask the other campers on the last known whereabouts of those missing. Notify firefighters immediately.

## Camper Orientation Plan

The camper orientation plans should include the following:

### **Tour of Camp, Description of Hazards, Designating Off-Limit Areas**

All campers must receive a tour of camp. In addition to camp facilities such as bathrooms, office and eating areas, identify potentially hazardous areas to all campers. These areas may include the storage area, kitchen area and boiler room and custodian's supply area. Make campers aware of off limit areas. Along with identifying the hazards, give reasons why these areas were determined hazardous.

### **Reporting of Illnesses and Incidents**

Encourage campers to report to camp staff any illness or injuries they may arrive with, or which occur at camp. Make campers aware that any form of physical or sexual abuse must be reported to the health director, counselor or other staff member. Explain to campers that if they feel uncomfortable telling a particular staff member about an incident, there is other staff willing to listen and assist them.

### **Buddy System**

Explain the method of bather accountability (Buddy System) to the campers. Explain all of the rules such as properly entering and leaving the swim area and pairing up with a buddy of similar ability, and staying in the assigned swimming area.

### **Fire Drills and Evacuation**

Instruct campers how to exit assembly areas and sleeping areas. Instruct campers about where to assemble after exiting a building. Explain the purpose of fire drills and required camper conduct.

### **Out of Camp Trips**

Prior to leaving on any trip, give campers a description of the area to be visited and what to do if they become lost. Discuss rules of conduct that may apply to the trip.

## Aquatics Safety Plan

The plan should give special attention to swimming and other water-related activities. They present the greatest danger. Regardless of where the aquatic activities occur, the children's camp remains responsible for meeting rule requirements for camper protection. When using off-site facilities, it is especially important to coordinate with the facility. The safe and proper operation of the bathing facilities used by a camp depends upon a well written and fully implemented aquatics safety plan. Your plan must include a bather accountability (buddy) system. Failure to implement a complete buddy system has been a significant contributing factor in almost every camper drowning.

### **Provide Adequate Supervision**

All programs that have pools or other swimming activities whether on-site or off site must have a Camp Aquatics Director (Waterfront Supervisor) in charge of the swim area. The rule requires "*(a) An individual currently certified as a lifeguard and having a current cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification must direct swimming, boating, canoeing, watercraft, water skiing, and other aquatic activities. (b) A minimum of one (1) counselor for each fifteen (15) campers shall supervise watercraft and swimming activities. (c) At each aquatic site, a minimum of one (1) currently certified lifeguard for each thirty (30) campers must be provided.*"

### **Assessment of Camper Swimming Ability**

The plan should require during the first swimming session, a swimming proficiency tests be given to determine each child's swimming ability. It is recommended a Progressive Swimming Instructor with current certification as a Water Safety Instructor or an acceptable equivalent; administer these tests (a lifeguard is not qualified to conduct this test) using the standards of the American Red Cross or its equivalent. Based on the test, divide the children into groups based on swimming ability. For example, group children as non-swimmers and swimmers.

### **Divide Swimming Areas**

The camp's swimming areas should be divided into non-swimmer and swimmer areas. Campers will be confined to the area appropriate to their assessed swimming ability. ***All non-swimmers should be confined to waters less than chest deep.***

### **Implement A System of Supervising and Checking Children in the Water and Activate It at Least Every 15 Minutes**

The Camp Aquatics Director is responsible for positioning the counselors, for assigning buddies, for setting up the Board System or other approved accountability system for activating the Buddy System, and for notifying the pool lifeguard in the event of a lost swimmer. They will not be responsible for any life guarding duties.

### **Buddy System**

Buddy system/board system - a buddy system needs to be in use to supervise and account for bathers at all times. Your buddy system/board system would include the way you will implement the following:

- Pairing each camper with a "buddy" of similar swimming ability to provide each camper a "personal protector."
- Accounting for each bather by name, swimming ability, location in the waterfront area and the name, etc., of their assigned buddy.
- Recording the entry and exit of each buddy pair/bathers to the various sections of the waterfront.
- Identifying whom and how will "buddy checks" be performed to account for the bathers and how often they will be held (the maximum interval by the code is 15 minutes).
- What device ("board") will be used to record and maintain the above information during instructional and free swim sessions.
- The signal(s) to be used to call a buddy check. At off-site facilities, be certain your "signal" will not interfere with the facility's "signals."
- One buddy triple can allowed per swim area.

### **Determine appropriate swimming areas and the designated station for the camp aquatic director. Establish a home base.**

The camp's Aquatic Director should examine the waterfront to determine the boundaries to be observed by non-swimmers, and swimmers, and also decide where his or her station will be located at the waterfront for Buddy Checks and supervision. Establish a home base where the group will assemble when out of the water. Note landmarks which will make it easily identifiable to the children.

### **Prepare the children for the swim.**

After changing into their bathing suits, the children are escorted by the counselors and the lifeguards to the Camp Aquatic Director station. When all are assembled the Camp Aquatic Director will:

- Arrange to have the swimming proficiency tests conducted by a Progressive Swimming Instructor (if it's the first swim session for any camper).
- Indicate the location of the camp Aquatic Director's station and the children's home base for easy location.
- Provide boundaries for the non-swimmer and swimmer areas.
- Review the rules of the Buddy System, the accountability system and of the facility. Ensure that campers' are aware of their responsibilities as a Buddy.
- Dispatch lifeguards and senior counselors to their stations.

- Check in buddies set by set.
- Note the time and schedule a Buddy Check within the next 15 minutes.

**Maintain an ongoing record of departures and returns.**

Before a set of buddies leaves the waterfront area, they should indicate their intention to leave to the camp aquatic director. The camp aquatic director will record their departure from the waterfront area on the Buddy Board or other approved accountability system. Upon their return to the waterfront, the buddies must report back to the camp aquatic director who will record their return on the Board.

**Conduct a Buddy Check every 15 minutes and whenever a child is suspected of being missing.**

As soon as a child notices that he or she cannot see his or her buddy, the child is to report the fact to the nearest counselor. The counselor must then immediately report the fact to the Aquatic Director. At this time the camp aquatic director must give the signal to activate the Buddy Check. No longer than 15 minutes after the children first enter the water and at least every 15 minutes thereafter, the camp aquatic director, lifeguard and counselors give the “Buddy Up Signal”. The children, with their buddies, should assemble in the designated area, moving as quickly as possible.

**When the children are assembled, the following takes place:**

Within their swimming skill group, buddies raise their joined hands. The sets of buddies are counted aloud by the camp aquatic director, and silently by another counselor. If a single hand is raised, immediately obtain that child's name, look up the name of his or her buddy, and call that child's name out to the assembled groups. If there is no response, ask the single buddy when and where he or she last saw the missing buddy. Without a moment's hesitation, notify the nearest lifeguard that a child is missing. Request an immediate water search. Activate the lost swimmer plan!

Check the number of sets of buddies against the number that are supposed to be in the waterfront area as indicated on the board. If a set of buddies is unaccounted for, repeat the count and the Board check. If the set remain unaccounted for, notify the nearest lifeguard that children are missing, request an immediate water search. Activate your lost swimmer plan.

If the count and board totals agree, the camp aquatic director gives the signal to dispatch the counselors and lifeguards to their posts and allow the children to resume swimming. The camp aquatic director notes the time of the Buddy Check on the Buddy Board, and begins the count down for the next Buddy Check.

**Implement a Lost Swimmer Plan**

Having notified the nearest lifeguard of the missing child and having requested a water search, initiate the procedure for finding a child who cannot be accounted for, namely:

- Discontinue the swim activity by clearing the water of children.
- Assemble campers in a secure location away from the water.
- Ensure that designated counselors are providing adequate supervision to campers, and indicate which staff will be engaged in the active lost camper search.
- Begin the land search, searching high risk areas first. (Ex. pool bottom)
- Notify camp director.
- Expand the land search for the lost child.
- Maintain communication with the director.
- If needed notify parents, locate law enforcement.

**Lost Camper Plan**

Supervision and utilizing a Buddy System are excellent measures to prevent lost campers. The plan should include explaining to campers what to do if someone is missing or if they become lost. Include discussion of typical situations in camp and on off-site trips. If a child has been separated from the group, immediately procedures should be activated for finding a lost child.

- Assemble children in a secure place under supervision.

- Notify the director.
- Discover (if possible) the state of mind of the camper. Was she depressed or angry, threatening to run away? Did he fall behind on a hike, or leave to visit a friend in another unit? A camper who does not wish to be found will require a wider and more careful search.
- Institute a systematic search, beginning with high-risk areas (e.g., waterfront, streets);
- Maintain communication with the director.
- If search is unsuccessful, notify police.
- Notify parents.

## Thunderstorm and Lightning Plan

A recommended plan would require at the first sign of an approaching thunderstorm and lightning, instructing campers to seek shelter in a nearby building. If at waterfront, instructing campers to get out of the water and seek safe shelter such as a car, bus or large building. In the building, stay away from windows and open doors facing large trees. Avoid taking a shower or bath or touching large metal objects such as refrigerators, metal bed frames, stoves, sinks or bunks. Avoid handling or using telephones unless necessary. A tent provides no protection against lightning, so the plan should include the evacuation of tents.

## Plan for Handling Medical Emergencies

A camper or staff member may sustain an injury or suffer an illness that requires prompt action to be taken at the site of occurrence. A plan for prompt action, written, presented to the entire staff in training sessions, and posted in strategic places, is necessary. What follows is a suggested plan of action:

1. Make victim and others safe from further harm.
2. Summon first aider.
3. Describe event to first aider.
4. Assess victim as having a life-threatening emergency or a non-life-threatening emergency.

### **Life-threatening emergency:**

- Give first aid\*
- Activate EMS (911)
- Notify Camp Director.
- Notify victim's parents.

\* call poison control if poisoning is suspected. 800.222.1222

### **Non-life-threatening**

- Give first aid
- Notify Camp Director.
- Notify victim's parents.
- Activate EMS (911), if needed.

5. Obtain victim's medical records and signed parental consent for emergency treatment for EMS personnel.
6. Assign adult staff member to remain with victim until arrival of parents.
7. If required, fill out and submit an injury report to the Indiana State Department of Health

## Recommended Camp Staff Training Plan

### **Tour of Camp, Description of Hazards, and Designating Off-Limit Areas**

Staff members should tour the camp facilities and the community. Include off-limit areas, hazardous areas, and areas not routinely used, to familiarize staff with the area if a lost camper search becomes necessary. Familiarize staff with the surrounding community.

### **Provision of First Aid and Emergency Assistance**

Identify the staff trained in First Aid and CPR. Determine and describe the proper location and use of first aid equipment, first aid kits, and CPR masks during orientation.

### **Buddy System**

Train staff members in implementing the Buddy System, which should be fully described in this Plan.

### **Fire Drills and Evacuation**

Give staff complete instructions on how to exit assembly areas and sleeping areas. Instruct staff on the location where campers are to assemble after exiting a building. Explain the purpose of fire drills and required camper conduct.

**Additional Topics:** In addition, address the following areas at the Staff Orientation meetings:

- The chain of command in the camp.
- Supervision of campers (ratios, methods, etc.).
- Acceptable and unacceptable methods for disciplining campers.
- Recognition and reporting of child abuse allegations.
- Reporting of injuries and illness, and sick call.
- Waterfront supervision.
- Lost swimmer and lost camper plans.
- Thunderstorm and lightning safety.

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