



Operator Guidance for the Safe Management of Open Water Activities

1st edition, 2024

Published by the Water Incident Research Hub



First published March 2024

You may reuse this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium under the terms of a Creative Commons CC BY-ND 4.0 license. To view the license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>.

The authors of this document may not own some images and illustrations, so they cannot be reproduced without the permission of the copyright owner. Enquiries should be sent to <https://www.thewirh.com/contact>.

The Water Incident Research Hub issues this guidance, which applies to UK open water sites operated on a commercial basis. You may choose not to adhere to this guidance and take other action instead if you so wish. If you follow the guidance, it will help you meet your obligations. Enforcement bodies may refer to this guidance to inform the standards that should be in place.

The guidance was published at a time when there was no overarching industry guidance for operators of UK open-water venues. The guidance is aimed at sites in the UK but may be used elsewhere.

Contents

Introduction	5
How to use this guidance	5
Activities covered by this guidance	5
Terminology	6
Part 1: General Requirements	7
Normal Operating Plan (NOP)	8
Emergency Action Plan (EAP)	9
Competency management	10
Control of admissions	11
Site accessibility	12
Changing facilities	12
Safeguarding	13
Safety information	13
Water quality monitoring	13
Equipment	14
Constant supervision	14
Lifeguard numbers	15
Time providing constant supervision	16
Lifeguard rotation	16
Lifeguard positioning	16
Effective supervision	17
First aid	17
Reporting accidents, incidents and near misses	18
Young persons	18
New or expectant mothers	18
Third-party hire	19
Part 2: Activity Requirements	19
Aqua parks	19
Designated swimming areas	20
Open water swimming	20
Scuba diving	21

Stand-up paddleboarding	21
Triathlons	21
Water skiing	21
Bibliography	22

Introduction

1. This document contains health and safety guidance for operators of commercial activities in open water environments in the UK.
2. If you operate commercial activities at an open water site, this guidance is aimed at you to help you comply with your duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the regulations made under it.
3. A visit to an open water site ought to be a safe and enjoyable experience. This guidance will help you minimise the risks to employees and customers without unduly restricting enjoyable and beneficial open water activities.

How to use this guidance

4. This guidance provides practical advice on how to comply with the law relating to the management of health and safety in open water. It covers both employee and customer safety.
5. The document gives management advice and technical information on the health and safety of operating open water sites. For more in-depth technical information on specific issues, please refer to the specific guidance listed below:
 - a. Parental and operator guidance for child supervision policies in swimming pools (GN014:2014).
 - b. Guidance for front-line staff to assist trans people in accessing leisure facilities (UK Active and CIMSPA, 2022).
 - c. Safe use of changing facilities and toilets (CSPU Briefing, 2022).
 - d. Floating play equipment (ISO 25649 parts 1-7).
 - e. Inflatable play equipment (ISO 20187 parts 1-3 and ISO 14960 parts 1-3)
 - f. Buoyancy aids (ISO 12402:2020 parts 1-10).
6. Some segregated areas of open water can fall within the definition of a 'swimming pool', and consequently, some swimming pool guidance may apply. Please note that these documents were aimed towards commercial swimming pools and are of limited applicability to open water sites:
 - a. HSG179:2018. Health and safety in swimming pools (4th edition).
 - b. EN 15288-1 Swimming pools for public use. Safety requirements for design.
 - c. EN 15288-2. Swimming pools for public use. Safety requirements for operation.

Activities covered by this guidance

7. This guidance applies to operating commercial activities at open water sites. These include:

- a. Segregated swimming and non-swimming areas of open water, such as, but not restricted to, rivers, lakes, or quarries.
 - b. Watersports training and competitions conducted at open water sites.
 - c. Aqua parks.
8. This guidance does not apply to:
- a. Indoor or outdoor swimming pools are operated as part of hotels, leisure centres, or health clubs (see HSG179:2018).
 - b. Temporary artificial swimming pools, paddling pools, or spa pools.
 - c. Coastal water activities.
 - d. Artificial inland surf pools and lagoons.
 - e. Open water sites on private land are not used for commercial activities.
 - f. Ornamental ponds.
 - g. Domestic swimming pools (see EN 16582 Parts 1, 2 and 3).
9. Under the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authorities) Regulations 1998, the local authority is the enforcing authority for all open water sites unless it is the operator controlling the commercial activities, wherein the HSE is typically the enforcing authority.

Terminology

10. The following terms are used in this guidance in accordance with the below definitions:
- a. 'Aqua park' – inflatable, floating play equipment typically organized and arranged as an assault course on water.
 - a. 'Beach' – natural or artificial area formed by sand, gravel, pebble, rock, or other material that facilitates access to the water and the bathing area where commercial activities are carried out and where the operator provides services.
 - b. 'Child' – anyone who has not yet reached the official minimum school leaving age as defined by section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and section 31 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
 - c. 'Commercial activities' – any activities that involve the exchange of money or substitutes for money in exchange for access or enjoyment of open water at the site.
 - d. 'Constant supervision' – duty to observe, supervise and provide early intervention to protect the safety of customers using the water.
 - e. 'Customers' – users of open water who take part in commercial activities at open water sites.

- f. 'Designated swimming area' – a segregated and demarcated area of open water adjacent to a beach which is designed for swimming, leisure, or other water-based physical activities by customers.
- g. 'Lifeguard' – person responsible for providing constant supervision.
- h. 'Non-swimming area' – areas with a water depth of 1.35 metres or less.
- i. 'Pool' or 'swimming pool' – facility, with one or more water areas, intended for swimming, leisure, or other water-based physical activities (see EN 15288-1:2018).
- j. 'Swimming area' – areas with a water depth greater than 1.35 metres.
- k. 'Shall' – this is an action we think all operators must take.
- l. 'Should' – guidance provided to help you comply with the law, but you are free to take other action that would comply with the law.
- m. 'Operator' – owner, occupier, or party responsible for the commercial activities.
- n. 'Open water sites' – natural bodies of inland (not coastal) water including, but not limited to, canals/aqueducts, dry ground, drain/wells, lake/loch/loughs, marshes, ponds, quarries, reservoirs, and rivers/streams/ditches/burns.
- o. 'Young person' – a person between 16 and 18 years old.

Part 1: General Requirements

Risk assessment

- 11. All operators of open water sites shall conduct a risk assessment. Operators shall record the significant findings of their risk assessment where they employ five or more people. See www.hse.uk/risk for more general information.
- 12. The risk assessment should identify the hazards arising from the following aspects of your commercial activities (where applicable) and the risk posed to customers:
 - a. Use of open water.
 - b. The commercial activities taking place.
 - c. Equipment used to enjoy, maintain, or improve safety at the open water site.
 - d. Emergency situations that may arise.
 - e. Use of the open water site by others when commercial activities are not taking place at the open water site.
- 13. Open water sites present several hazards, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Deep water.

- b. Cold water.
 - c. Water speed and force.
 - d. Water-borne pathogens (e.g., septicaemia, leptospirosis).
 - e. Collision with the open water surround, bed, other customers, and/or customer-operated equipment (e.g., falls, diving).
 - f. Contact with electricity via electrical equipment, fixtures, and fittings.
 - g. Obstructions to visibility in open water include high turbidity, specular and diffuse reflection, mist/fog, and turbulence.
 - h. Obstructions to access and egress from open water.
 - i. Surfaces with low slip resistance and low slip-resistant conditions (e.g., ice).
 - j. Uneven surfaces and steep gradients.
 - k. Adverse health events triggered by cold water or exercise.
 - l. Adverse weather events (e.g., lightning storms).
 - m. Exposure to working outdoors (heat exhaustion, heat stroke, hypothermia).
 - n. Movement of heavy or awkward loads.
 - o. Vehicles (e.g., in car park areas, deliveries).
 - p. Unruly behaviour or misuse of equipment.
14. The risk assessment shall be completed and approved by competent persons. Where appropriate, the site operator should instruct the help of a competent advisor to assist it with its risk assessment, the implementation of its control measures, or the provision of assurance around the effectiveness of its controls.
15. Employees shall be made aware of the significant findings of the risk assessment and the relevant controls that shall be carried out to ensure the site is safe.

Normal Operating Plan (NOP)

16. All operators of open water sites should have an NOP or equivalent setting out their planned arrangements for operating their commercial activities. An NOP will typically contain, but not limited to:
- a. Access and egress arrangements.
 - b. Map of the open water site.
 - c. Significant hazards associated with the site.
 - d. Admissions policy requirements including parent to child ratios, any minimum age for access, and parental responsibilities for children at the open water site.

- e. Requirement, permitted, or prohibited use of any equipment.
 - f. Open water site 'rules' to advise customers on safe access, use and enjoyment of the site.
 - g. Arrangements for supervision, including lifeguard numbers, the ratio of lifeguards to customers, zones of responsibility, allocated lifeguard positions or patrol routes and other such arrangements as applicable.
 - h. Communication strategy, lines of communication and command, hand signals and use of communication equipment.
 - i. Personal protective equipment and other safety equipment, its location, storage, maintenance and use.
 - j. In an emergency, means of raising the alarm, alerting lifeguards and other supervisory staff, and means of summoning emergency assistance.
 - k. First aid provision, equipment, and facilities.
 - l. Accident, incident and near miss reporting.
17. The NOP shall be completed and approved by competent persons. Where appropriate, the site operator should instruct the help of a competent advisor to assist it with its NOP, the implementation of its control measures, or the provision of assurance around the effectiveness of its controls.
18. Employees shall be made aware of the significant findings of the NOP and the relevant controls that shall be carried out to ensure the site is safe. Employees shall have access to a copy of the NOP whilst at work.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

19. The EAP, or equivalent document, will set the emergency plans for the site. The emergency plans shall include:
- a. How customers and employees will be alerted to danger.
 - b. How employees should respond to danger, including their duties and responsibilities.
 - c. Where employees and customers should assemble after exiting the water.
 - d. How communication with customers will be carried out during the emergency.
 - e. The location of key escape routes.
 - f. Adjustments to processes and procedures to accommodate those with additional needs.
 - g. How to isolate relevant vehicles or equipment.

- h. The information and training that shall be provided to employees and how frequently or under what conditions it shall be repeated.
 - i. Any tests or exercises that will be periodically completed to ensure emergency preparedness.
- 20. All operators of open water sites should have an EAP or equivalent setting out their planned arrangements in the event of an emergency. An emergency action plan will typically contain, but not limited to:
 - a. In-water search, rescue, and recovery.
 - b. Underwater search and recovery.
 - c. Site evacuation procedures.
 - d. Isolation and recovery of vehicles or equipment from the water.
 - e. Tackling small fires
- 21. The EAP shall be completed and approved by competent persons. Where appropriate, the site operator should instruct the help of a competent advisor to assist it with its EAP, the implementation of its control measures, or the provision of assurance around the effectiveness of its controls.
- 22. Employees shall be made aware of the significant findings of the EAP and the relevant controls that shall be carried out to ensure the site is safe. Employees shall have access to a copy of the EAP whilst at work.

Competency management

- 23. New employees are at particular risk in the first six months of the job. Follow these six steps to protect new employees (see www.hse.gov.uk/diversity/new-to-the-job.htm):
 - a. Assess the capability of the new starter
 - b. Plan and provide an induction.
 - c. Ensure control measures to protect new workers against risks are up to date and properly used and maintained.
 - d. Provide suitable and sufficient information, instruction, and training.
 - e. Provide effective supervision.
 - f. Check that employees understand the information, instruction, and training they have received and can perform the work safely.
- 24. All employees should receive appropriate health and safety information and training, including:
 - a. A site induction to identify the location of key features, equipment, and hazards.

- b. Training on the control measures relevant to their role as contained in the risk assessment, NOP, EAP, and any other relevant site policies, procedures or processes.
 - c. Aspects relevant and specific to the performance of their role.
 - d. Safe use of any equipment specified by the operator for use in the role.
25. The provision of information and training should be repeated periodically and take into account the capability of each employee. Operators shall provide further information and training on being exposed to new or increased risks because of changes in responsibilities, the type or use of new equipment, new technology, or new systems of work.

Control of admissions

26. Operators shall consider published industry guidance (see GN014:2014) to help them determine their admissions policy and include the following information in their policy:
- a. Opening times and when admission will be permitted.
 - b. How admissions will be monitored and controlled.
 - c. The maximum number of customers who can safely use or be supervised whilst undertaking commercial activities at the open water site.
 - d. When a child requires supervision by a responsible person.
 - e. The responsibilities of the responsible person when supervising the child.
27. The admissions policy shall:
- a. Be displayed at site entrances, the water's edge, on the operator's website and in changing areas (as applicable).
 - b. Be published in a language customers can understand.
 - c. Use recognised pictograms, symbols, and coloured markings where appropriate.
 - d. Be enforced by staff at the facility.
28. When establishing the maximum number of customers who can safely use or be supervised whilst undertaking commercial activities at the open water site, you should consider:
- a. The capability of the lifeguards to effectively monitor customers in the water and using any beach or adjacent areas.
 - b. The capability of the lifeguards to reach and rescue a customer in the water within a reasonable time.
 - c. The activity, spacing, risk of collision and safety of customers using the water.

29. Operators should consider when setting their policy on permitting children to use open water without supervision from a responsible person:
 - a. The policy on the use of personal floatation devices.
 - b. The swimming ability of the child.
 - c. The child's experience in using open water.
 - d. The age and maturity of the child.
30. If the operator has reason to believe that a child would not be safe to use open water unaccompanied by a responsible person, the operator shall require a responsible person to provide in-water supervision whilst the child uses the water. The operator has the right to refuse any customer who does not comply with the admissions policy.
31. Operators should consider when setting their policy on the responsibilities of the responsible person for a child's supervision and take additional measures, where appropriate, to safeguard children:
 - a. The swimming ability of the responsible person.
 - b. The responsible person's experience of using open water.
 - c. Whether the responsible person is familiar with the child's swimming ability.
32. Operators should take reasonable steps to prevent unauthorized access to the open water site, such as, but not limited to:
 - a. Erecting appropriate barriers around the perimeter of the site.
 - b. Providing appropriate signage.
 - c. Storing equipment securely when the site is not in use.

Site accessibility

33. Operators should ensure they communicate information about the accessibility of the site to those with additional needs at site entrances and via their websites, as applicable. Further guidance on accessibility can be found in ISO 21902:2021.

Changing facilities

34. Operators shall ensure their changing and hygiene facilities (e.g., toilets, showers) are accessible to all customers and safe for use by children. Further guidance on ensuring changing and hygiene facilities are accessible for all customers and safe for children can be found at www.ukactive.com/standards/ and <https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/>.

Safeguarding

35. Operators shall ensure that where children are permitted access, their welfare and safety is protected by putting in place appropriate safeguarding arrangements. Operators should consider whether their employees require checks from the Disclosure and Barring Service and carry out and maintain checks where appropriate.

Safety information

36. Safety information and signage should be considered as part of your package of risk control measures. They can be used to warn customers where:
- a. There is deep water.
 - b. There are submerged or partially submerged hazards.
 - c. There are sudden changes in water depth between adjacent swimming and non-swimming areas.
 - d. Walkways become slippery when wet.
 - e. The water quality is unsafe.
 - f. Equipment is out of use/broken.
 - g. To provide instructions on the safe use of equipment.
37. Where safety information or signage is provided, the operator shall:
- a. Maintain the signage.
 - b. Locate the signage in appropriate positions where customers can review it and remain unobstructed.
 - c. Ensure employees are competent in understanding and responding appropriately to safety signage.
 - d. Ensure the information on the signage remains accurate.
38. Site employees should bring the information contained on signage to the attention of customers where appropriate.
39. Operators should consider displaying and providing a health commitment statement for use on-site. For further information on the use of health commitment statements, see <https://www.ukactive.com/standards/>.

Water quality monitoring

40. Operators should monitor the water quality to ensure it is safe to use. Operators should:
- a. Check the water quality periodically and determine the appropriate interval between checks.

- b. Close the venue where water quality is unsafe and communicate the closure to customers via signage on site and other social communication channels as applicable.
- c. Operators shall only reopen the site once water quality tests confirm the water is safe to use.

Equipment

- 41. Operators should ensure that equipment, including personal protective equipment, is:
 - a. Appropriate for its intended use and minimises the risk of injury or ill-health to employees or customers.
 - b. Provided for employees to use free of charge.
 - c. Used by employees in accordance with the operator and manufacturer's instructions.
 - d. Appropriately stored when not in use.
 - e. Maintained to ensure it does not pose a risk to health and safety.
 - f. Calibrated where appropriate.
 - g. Quarantined when unsafe for use, awaiting repair, or maintenance.

Constant supervision

- 42. Constant supervision is the observation and supervision of in-water activities by lifeguards. Operators shall put robust measures in place to ensure the safety of customers whilst in the water. These should focus on:
 - a. Preventing customers from getting into difficulty by intervening early and promoting responsible behaviour.
 - b. Identifying pool users in difficulty.
 - c. Procedures to effectively perform a rescue.
- 43. You will need to conduct a site risk assessment to determine whether you should provide constant supervision by lifeguards and take into account the following:
 - a. The age, swim ability, and specific health or additional needs of customers permitted to use the water.
 - b. The effectiveness of the admissions policy in place to ensure children are effectively supervised.
 - c. The potential consequence of not reaching a drowning casualty before they become submerged in the water.

- d. The time it may take to identify, detect, initiate a rescue, and reach a casualty in the water.
 - e. Any requirements to use safety equipment, such as personal floatation devices or tow floats, whilst in the water, and the effectiveness of these devices.
44. A requirement for all users to wear personal floatation devices whilst in the water is likely to be the most effective policy for preventing or reducing the effects of drowning in open water. The time to identify, detect, initiate and rescue a casualty is likely critical when personal floatation devices are not worn and increases the likelihood that lifeguards should be provided.
45. Where constant supervision is provided, the operator shall:
- a. Ensure those lifeguards receive appropriate training on observation, supervision, early intervention, rescue, recovery, and first aid skills.
 - b. Allocate a suitable position or patrol route from which the lifeguard provides constant poolside supervision.
 - c. Determine the number of lifeguards required.
 - d. Provide the equipment or vehicles a lifeguard needs to protect their own safety, deliver effective rescues, and provide appropriate training on their use.
 - e. Specify the maximum working time for providing constant supervision.
 - f. Provide guidance to lifeguards on how to rotate and change over responsibility for constant supervision.
46. Where constant supervision is not provided, the operator shall:
- a. Ensure their admissions policy requirements are appropriate.
 - b. Provide detailed site rules, including the mandatory use of any safety equipment.
 - c. State clearly at the site entrance, in changing areas, and on the water's edge that lifeguards are not provided at this site.
 - d. Secure access to the site when not in use.
 - e. Provide means for customers to summon emergency assistance.
 - f. Provide emergency responders during opening hours who are able to respond, perform a rescue and recover the customer to a point where emergency service personnel can transfer the customer to the hospital if applicable.

Lifeguard numbers

47. Where the operator risk assessment determines that constant supervision shall be provided, operators shall then determine the appropriate number of lifeguards to

provide for each of its commercial activities. The appropriate number shall be specified in the NOP.

48. Operators should take into account the following factors when determining the number of lifeguards to provide:
 - a. The risk of a person submerging and becoming unrecoverable by lifeguards.
 - b. The time it may take for a lifeguard to identify, detect, initiate a rescue and reach the customer in the water.
 - c. The number and frequency of early interventions typically made by lifeguards to manage customer behaviour.
 - d. The number of customers a lifeguard can effectively supervise.

Time providing constant supervision

49. Lifeguards must take regular breaks from providing constant supervision to maintain effective supervision, as the quality of supervision decreases over time.
50. Operators should determine the maximum time a lifeguard can provide effective constant supervision before requiring a rest break. Operators should also determine the appropriate length of that rest break before returning to provide Constant supervision.
51. Guidance from RLSS UK provides that lifeguards should spend no longer than 60 minutes in normal conditions and 90 minutes in exceptional conditions, providing constant supervision (see <https://www.rlss.org.uk/hsg179>).

Lifeguard rotation

52. Lifeguards must regularly rotate when providing constant supervision to ensure the lifeguard continues to provide effective supervision. Operators and lifeguards should take care to avoid constant supervision being adversely affected by lifeguards changing positions.
53. Guidance from RLSS UK provides that lifeguards should spend no longer than 30 minutes in the same position when providing constant supervision (see <https://www.rlss.org.uk/hsg179>).

Lifeguard positioning

54. Lifeguards providing constant supervision in open water environments should be encouraged to move and provide themselves with the best vantage point. This differs from other swimming pool environments for the following reasons:
 - a. The variable and rapidly changing outdoor environmental conditions require that lifeguards are not restrained by an allocated position from which to provide constant supervision.

- b. Customers are typically able to move much greater distances away from an allocated position in open water environments, which may require the lifeguard to move to ensure they can perform a rescue effectively.
55. An allocated position is more likely to be specified by an operator where the open water activity is a designated swimming area.

Effective supervision

56. Effective supervision is the standard of supervision a lifeguard can be expected to provide. Whether a lifeguard meets the standard of supervision depends on a number of contextual factors and must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
57. The following factors should be taken into account when assessing whether a lifeguard is meeting the standard of supervision:
- a. Whether the lifeguard is suitably equipped to perform their duties safely and effectively.
 - b. Whether the lifeguard provided constant supervision from the position or patrol route allocated by the operator, except when providing early intervention to protect the safety of customers.
 - c. Whether the lifeguard was actively observing and supervising customers within their allocated zone.
 - d. When providing early intervention, whether the lifeguard minimises the time they are away from their allocated position.
 - e. When necessary, whether the lifeguard is proactive in providing early intervention to educate and instruct customers on the safe use of the water.
 - f. When necessary, whether a lifeguard performs an effective rescue and recovery of the casualty to an area where they can be extracted by the emergency services.
 - g. Whether duties are carried out promptly without undue delay.

First aid

58. Under The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981, an operator shall provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities, and staff to ensure that employees receive immediate attention if they are injured or taken ill at work.
59. The Regulations do not require you to make first-aid provisions for non-employees, such as customers and other third parties. However, the HSE recommends that you include them in your first aid needs assessment and make provision for them as part of your overall duty of care towards them.
60. As a minimum, operators shall:

- a. Have a suitably stocked first aid box.
 - b. An appointed person will take charge of first-aid arrangements.
 - c. Information for all employees giving details of first-aid arrangements.
 - d. Ensure first-aid equipment is quickly and easily located.
 - e. Ensure that first-aid equipment is of a type that does not pose any additional risk to the injured person.
61. The findings of your first-aid needs assessment will influence what you include in your first-aid box (see www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid). BS 8599-1:2019 may also help you determine the suitable contents of your first aid box.
62. First aid shall be carried out by competent staff. The training undertaken by open water lifeguards will generally cover or surpass what is required under first-aid regulations, especially where a lifeguard undergoes regular ongoing training.

Reporting accidents, incidents and near misses

63. Employers have a duty under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2015 to report certain work-related injuries, ill health, and dangerous occurrences to the appropriate local authority or the HSE (see www.hse.gov.uk/riddor).
64. Careful recording and analysis of any incidents or near-misses at the site to identify relevant trends will help to ensure that safety arrangements remain appropriate. A periodic review of accidents, incidents and near misses should be conducted by the operator at least once per year.
65. Further guidance on accidents, incident and near miss management, analysis and evaluation can be found in ISO 45001:2018 (see <https://www.iso.org/standard/>).

Young persons

66. Employers are responsible for ensuring a young person, who is an employee, is not exposed to a risk to their health and safety as a result of their age. Further guidance around managing the safety of young people can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople.

New or expectant mothers

67. Employers are responsible for taking additional care where employees are new or expectant mothers. Employers are responsible for ensuring, once they become aware that an employee is expecting to have a baby or has recently had a baby, that a risk assessment is carried out and measures put in place to protect mother and baby from hazards arising from work or the workplace. Further guidance on the management of new or expectant mothers can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/mothers.

Third-party hire

68. There should be a contract which specifies the tasks and responsibilities transferred from the operator to the third party during the hiring period. The operator should ensure that the third party has one or more responsible, competent persons at the site to carry out its responsibilities during the hiring period.
69. The operator should regularly check if the third party is complying with the requirements of the contract.

Part 2: Activity Requirements

Aqua parks

70. Operators who provide aqua parks for use on open water should consider the following when siting the aqua park:
 - a. The water depth surrounding the inflatable.
 - b. The presence of obstructions or other physical hazards that may cause injury.
 - c. Availability of appropriate anchor points.
 - d. Availability of shelter from the effects of weather.
 - e. Access and egress to and from the water.
 - f. Accessibility for users with additional needs.
71. Operators who provide aqua parks for use on open water should create a policy setting out the rules for the use of the aqua park, including:
 - a. Admissions policy requirements for access to the aqua park.
 - b. Provision of a pre-activity safety briefing to warn customers of the hazards present at the site and related to the aqua park activity to be undertaken.
 - c. Dangerous acts/behaviours whilst using the aqua park shall be prohibited.
 - d. When head protection, personal floatation devices or other protective equipment should be worn.
 - e. When constant supervision should be provided.
72. The operator should demarcate the perimeter of the aqua park using lane lines and buoys. Customers should not swim outside the demarcated area. The operator should instruct lifeguards to intervene when customers swim outside the demarcated area.
73. Operators are responsible for selecting appropriate aqua park equipment and carrying out periodic checks and maintenance as required (see ISO 25649 parts 1-7, ISO 20187 parts 1-3) (see <https://www.iso.org/standard/>).

Designated swimming areas

74. Operators who provide designated swimming areas at open water sites should consider the following when selecting its location:
 - a. The water depth and ability to retrieve submerged customers.
 - b. The gradient and transition between swimming and non-swimming areas.
 - c. The dimensions of the designated swimming area and the ability of the lifeguard to reach the furthest point within a reasonable time.
 - d. Access and egress between the beach and the designated swimming area.
 - e. Access control to manage the number of customers using the designated swimming area at any one time.
 - f. The ability of the lifeguard(s) to effectively supervise and provide early intervention for the number of customers expected to use the designated swimming area at any one time.

75. Operators should consider the following when providing designated swimming areas:
 - a. Admissions policy requirements for access to the designated swimming area and the beach.
 - b. Provision of safety information and signage to educate customers on the hazards associated with the designated swimming area (e.g., deep water, sharp gradient, underwater obstructions, maximum capacity).
 - c. Whether to permit the use of an area where there are steep gradients or the water is greater than 2 metres deep.
 - d. Whether to provide constant lifeguard supervision over the designated swimming area.
 - e. Whether participants should wear personal floatation devices.
 - f. Whether to require responsible persons to be within arms-reach of the person they supervise at all times.

Open water swimming

76. Operators who provide open water swimming at open water sites should consider the following when putting together their safety arrangements:
 - a. Admissions policy requirements for access to open water swimming.
 - b. The provision of induction sessions for first-time open water swimmers.
 - c. The provision of a swim passport scheme that requires swimmers to first demonstrate their competency in open water before being permitted access to open water swimming unaccompanied and unsupervised.

- d. The restriction of activities to those 16 years old or greater.
 - e. The provision of constant supervision by lifeguards or designated hours where customers can swim under lifeguard supervision.
 - f. The provision of lifeguard supervision where identification, detection, and rescue time may put customers at unacceptable risk.
 - g. A requirement to use a tow float with appropriate buoyancy.
 - h. A requirement to wear a brightly coloured swim hat.
 - i. The demarcation and prohibition of customers swimming in areas of open water which are particularly hazardous.
77. Further information on accredited open water swimming sites can be found at Beyond Swim (see <https://beyondswim.org/>).

Scuba diving

78. Operators who provide scuba diving access, facilities, equipment, training, or services are responsible for providing a reasonably safe experience. Further information can be found at the British Sub Aqua Club <https://www.bsac.com/safety/safe-diving-guide/>.

Stand-up paddleboarding

79. Operators who provide stand-up paddleboarding access, facilities, equipment, training or services are responsible for providing a reasonably safe experience. Further information can be found at BSUPA (see www.bsupa.org.uk/) and British Canoeing (see www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/).

Triathlons

80. Operators are responsible for providing appropriate admission, supervision, and monitoring of open water triathlon training sessions, events, and competitions. Further information can be found in the Open Water Swimming Safety Guide for Multi-Sport Events (see www.britishtriathlon.org/).

Water skiing

81. Operators who provide water skiing access, facilities, equipment, training or services are responsible for providing a reasonably safe experience. Further information can be found at BWSW (see www.bwsw.org.uk/).

Bibliography

BS 8599-1. 2019. Workplace first aid kits - Specification for the contents of workplace first aid kits.

CIMSPA. 2014. Parental and operator guidance for child supervision policies in swimming pools (GN014). [online] <https://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/media/1148/>.

CSPU. 2022. Safe use of changing facilities and toilets [online] <https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/>.

HSE. 2023. First aid [online] www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid.

HSE. 2023. New and expectant mothers [online] www.hse.gov.uk/mothers.

HSE. 2023. Reporting of injuries, diseases, and dangerous occurrences [online] www.hse.gov.uk/riddor.

HSE. 2023. Risk assessment [online] www.hse.uk/risk.

HSE. 2023. Young people [online] www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople.

ISO. 2022. ISO 20187 Parts 1 to 3. Inflatable play equipment. [online] <https://www.iso.org/standard/84340.html>.

ISO. 2018. ISO 45001 Occupational health and safety management systems. Requirements with guidance for use. [online] <https://www.iso.org/standard/63787.html>.

ISO. 2017. ISO 25649 Parts 1 to 7. Floating leisure articles for use on and in the water. [online] <https://www.iso.org/standard/61400.html>.

Open Water Swimming Safety Guide for Multi-Sport Events available from www.britishtriathlon.org/.

Port of London Authority. 2020. Safety bulletin 6 of 2020: Use of leashes for stand up paddleboarding. [online] <https://www.pla.co.uk/assets/safetybulletin6of2020-useofleashesforstand-uppaddleboardssups.pdf>.

RLSS UK. 2023. Managing health and safety in swimming pools. [online] <https://www.rlss.org.uk/hsg179>.

Triathlon England. 2016. Establishing and developing safer venues to support mass participation. [online] www.britishtriathlon.org/.

UK Active and CIMSPA. 2022. Guidance for front-line staff to assist trans people to access leisure facilities [online] <https://www.ukactive.com/standards/>.