

## Open Water Swim Area Safety Checklist

**Date:**

### Swim Area Information

Name of Swim Area:	Designated Swim Area? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
City/Town:	County:
Body of Water:	

**Check all that apply:**

Ownership	Type of Water	Recreation Activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Lake <input type="checkbox"/> River <input type="checkbox"/> Ocean <input type="checkbox"/> Inland Salt Water <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Wading <input type="checkbox"/> Playing <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming <input type="checkbox"/> Diving <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

**Check all that apply:**

**Notes:**

Boundaries	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/> Designated swim area boundary marked by rope or other marker	
<input type="checkbox"/> Water depth markers indicates: <input type="checkbox"/> shallow water <input type="checkbox"/> deep water	
<input type="checkbox"/> Float line separates shallow from deep swimming area	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bottom of water has no sudden drop-offs (e.g. 3 feet to 5 feet)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Water is clear of rocks, weeds, lily pads, and other potential hazards	
<input type="checkbox"/> Beach is free of glass, litter, and other potential hazards	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Safety Signage	
Safety signs available:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous water conditions (e.g. current)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Allowed water activities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited water activities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dangerous land conditions (e.g. cliff)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifeguard on duty / Hours of operation posted <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifeguard not on duty	
<input type="checkbox"/> Signs are in good condition (e.g. easy to read and to see)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Signs include pictures and/or are in multiple languages	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Lifeguards	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifeguards available	
Dates and hours of operation:	
Available during high use season (e.g. summer): <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifeguard rescues are documented and shared with local public health department and other local agencies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Rescue Equipment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Throwable rescue rope or other rescue device available for public	
<input type="checkbox"/> Landline telephone available	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rescue number (e.g. 911) is posted	
<input type="checkbox"/> Address of site is posted	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Life Jackets	
<input type="checkbox"/> Life jackets allowed at open water site: <input type="checkbox"/> shallow end <input type="checkbox"/> deep end	
<input type="checkbox"/> If no lifeguards, mandatory life jacket use in designated swim area	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Life Jacket Loaner Program (LJLP)		
<input type="checkbox"/> LJLP available		
<input type="checkbox"/> LJLP regularly maintained		
<input type="checkbox"/> LJLP has clear, easy-to-read sign and instructions		
<input type="checkbox"/> LJLP signs and instructions include pictures and are in multiple languages		
<input type="checkbox"/> Life jackets available for: <input type="checkbox"/> infants <input type="checkbox"/> children <input type="checkbox"/> youth <input type="checkbox"/> adults		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		
Swimming Lessons		
<input type="checkbox"/> Free swimming lessons offered		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		
Designated Swim Area Closure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Site closed during hazardous conditions		
<input type="checkbox"/> Dangerous high risk areas area near designated swim area (e.g. cliff) is blocked or closed		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		
Potential Recreation Hazards		
<input type="checkbox"/> Boat >5mph	<input type="checkbox"/> Innertube	<input type="checkbox"/> Land-Based Dock
<input type="checkbox"/> Fish	<input type="checkbox"/> Raft	<input type="checkbox"/> Floating Dock
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Ski	<input type="checkbox"/> Paddle Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Diving Platform
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Watercraft	<input type="checkbox"/> Wake Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

### Successes

What is this swim area doing well? What procedures, systems, and/or policies make this swim area safe?

### Challenges

What are the water safety risks at this swim area?

### Next Steps

Identify immediate, short-term, and long-term actions that will make this swim area safer. Consider policy, systems, environment, and program changes.

## Additional Information and Acknowledgements

For additional forms and info on the checklist, visit the policy section of: <http://www.seattlechildrens.org/dp>

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## Instructions

The Swim Area Safety Checklist is designed to help you assess water safety at a specific site on a body of water. The Checklist can help you identify existing safety measures and actions to improve water safety at the site. To complete this Checklist, take these steps:

1. Take a form to each selected open water site. If you need permission to assess the site, obtain permission before you go.
2. Fill out the checklist by marking each item that is available at the site. Take notes as needed. Example of notes include no swimming sign is hidden by tree or visitors rarely return life jackets to the life jacket loaner program.
3. Take a moment to reflect on and write down the successes and challenges to water safety at the site.
4. Identify and write down immediate, short-term, and long-term actions to improve water safety for the site.
5. Use the information gathered and actions identified to plan your local-level policy change, state-level policy change, and to propose changes to policy makers. You can also use this information for program change, such as adding a life jacket loaner program or lifeguards.

If you are interested in assessing a body of water, complete a checklist for each popular water recreation site. You can compile the results in a report, fact sheet, or presentation.

## Terms Defined

**Designated Swim Area:** Designated swim areas, or bathing beaches, are designated, developed, and maintained for swimming. Designated swim areas can be in lakes, streams, oceans, inland salt water, and other types of water. Designated swim areas are often overseen by a city, county, state, or federal organization. For the purpose of the assessment, designated swim area does not include pools or spas.

**Lifeguards:** Lifeguards refer to those who are certified by the American Red Cross or other certifying agency.

**Life Jackets:** Life jackets, or personal flotation devices (PFDs), refer to those approved by the US Coast Guard. Life jackets do not refer to water wings or other non-approved wearable floating devices. Data shows that most people who drown were not wearing a life jacket. Life jackets provide protection for everyone regardless of swimming ability and water recreation activity.

**Life Jacket Loaner Programs:** Life jacket loaner programs refer to programs that provide US Coast Guard approved life jackets. Life jacket loaner programs are often found at the water and can be at other locations, like fire departments. Some life jacket loaner programs have someone who checks out life jackets while others have life jackets on a board that people can borrow using the honor system.

**Potential Recreation Hazards:** Potential recreation hazards include recreation activities that may pose a risk to the people using the designated swim area (e.g. boating >5mph). These recreational activities may be within the designated swim area or outside of the designated swim area.

**Rescue Equipment:** Rescue equipment refers to rescue equipment available to the public. For the purpose of this assessment, rescue equipment does not refer to rescue equipment available to lifeguards.

**Safety Signage:** Safety signage refers to signs that inform the public about hazardous water and environmental conditions. Signs often include pictures of the hazard and, in areas where multiple languages are spoken, signs can be in multiple languages. Signs are most useful when placed close to the hazard or water.

**Site Closure:** Site closures refer to the closing of sites that are dangerous. E.g. a river is closed when water levels are higher than usual and pose a risk to the public. Site closure also refers to the blocking, fencing, or closing of areas near the designated swim area that are considered dangerous (e.g. a cliff).

**Water Depth Marker:** Water depth markers indicate whether water is shallow or deep. The depth of the water (feet) can be used. However, water levels change during the year and the water depth may have to be changed/marker may have to be moved.