

Recreational Camps:

Guidance for Developing a Camp Safety Plan

This checklist is provided as a guide to assist recreational camp operators prepare for the seasonal opening of camps and to meet the requirements set out in [Ontario Regulation 503/17 \(Recreational Camps\)](#).

Every year, 14 days before opening or operating a recreational camp, the operator must submit their Camp Safety Plan in writing to the Medical Officer of Health to PHI.Intake@wdgpublichealth.ca.

Minimum requirements for the Camp Safety Plan are included in this document as well as recommended best practices. The Plan should be incorporated into all camp operations and staff training.

Safety Plan Requirements

The Camp Safety Plan shall include, at a minimum:

General

- Procedures for maintaining camper records including name, address, emergency contact and special dietary or health needs if applicable.
- Procedures for creating health and safety incident reports that occur at camp, including steps to prevent further or repeat incidents.
- Outbreak and increased illness management; including procedures for suspected outbreaks, handling ill campers, animal bites and when and how to notify Public Health.
- Fire safety and protection including fire drills and escape plans.
- A description of all land-based and water-based activities at the camp.
- Identification of potential risks for these activities along with strategies to be implemented to minimize those risks, including required supervision.

- Waterfront safety, including all safety equipment, communication devices and procedures.
- A list of all camp staff members with current first aid certification.
- Procedures to ensure minimum ratios of camp staff to campers are identified and always maintained while the camp is in operation.
- Procedures to ensure all campers 13 years or under and special needs are under continuous supervision by camp staff who are experienced in the leadership and supervision of children.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Operators must identify the emergency risks associated with camp activities. Below is a list of common risks that may be considered. Camps should conduct their own risk assessment to determine which risks are relevant to their operations. Once risks are identified, ensure the emergency response plan clearly outlines each risk and the measures in place to address it.

- Severe weather (e.g., tornado warnings, lightning, extreme heat)
- Power outages
- Missing camper/person procedures
- Lockdown or intruder situations
- Environmental hazards (e.g., wildfire smoke, flooding)
- Off-site evacuation procedures
- Communication plan with parents/guardians and emergency services
- Continuity planning for essential services (water, food, supervision) **Staff roles and responsibilities during emergencies**
- Communication methods (cell, radio, other backup methods)
 - I.e. working, accessible and audible phone with appropriate emergency alert apps installed.
- It is important to be prepared by knowing the weather forecast and having access to the following apps.
 - Download the [WeatherCAN app](#) to get local warnings issued by

Environment Canada, including:

- [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#) notifications. *Note that you must add AQHI notifications under your app settings.
- Check [Environment Canada's map for current alerts](#)
- Designated shelter-in-place and evacuation locations
- Frequency of emergency drills and staff training

Please refer to [Appendix A for an Emergency Response Plan Template](#)

Staff

Adequate medical staff must be provided onsite.

- Campers in the recreational camp are under the continuous supervision of at least one adult who has a current first aid certificate.
- Services of a physician can be obtained immediately in case of a medical emergency.

Increased Illness Management Plan (Outbreak Plan)

An increased illness plan shall include procedures to deal with ill campers or staff that may become sick or develop symptoms while at the camp.

- The camp must have a dedicated space to be used as isolation. The space must be suitable to house ill camper(s) providing sufficient separation until arrangements can be made for ill camper(s) to return home. The dedicated space shall have:
 - Open windows with screens for increased ventilation.
 - Personal protection equipment (PPE), including medical masks, disposable gloves, and isolation gowns.
 - 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- All indoor spaces where hand washing facilities are not readily available must have 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer provided.
- A readily available broad- spectrum cleaner/disinfectant product to be available. It must be suitable for quick and effective cleaning and disinfection of common viral infections, for example Norovirus (common infection spread readily in community settings).

- Cleaner/disinfectant products are commonly accelerated hydrogen peroxide-based products with short contact times of less than five minutes. A few suggestions Virox 5, Percept, Accel TB, and Preempt
- Cleaner/disinfectant products must **not** be expired.
- If a product was left at camp from the previous season, it is likely to be outdated and have lost its efficacy therefore should be replaced.
- Provide written procedures for the clean-up of vomit or other bodily fluids.
- Staff to be trained on how to safely and effectively clean-up spills using the appropriate PPE.
- A ready to go kit for spill clean-up shall include:
 - PPE
 - cleaner/disinfectant product
 - disposable towels
 - disposable garbage bags.
- Emergency phone numbers should be readily available and easy to locate for medical emergencies.
- Non-medical emergency procedures should be clearly outlined.

Recreational water safety

Every camp with a waterfront being used for aquatic activities must be under the supervision of a lifeguard who is at least 16 years of age, and who holds a lifeguard certificate current within the previous two years.

- The number of lifeguards must be provided depending on the number of campers in the water at any given time:
 - Two lifeguards for 1-25 bathers
 - Three lifeguards for 26-100 bathers
 - For more than 100 campers in the water, one additional lifeguard is required for each additional group of 25.
- A copy of all necessary lifeguard certificates must be available on site.

Recreational water safety equipment

The operator must ensure that the following equipment is easily accessible and in good condition during waterfront activities.

- One or more buoyant rescue aids attached to a shoulder loop with a 6mm line at least 1.60m in length
- One or more reaching poles of 3m or greater in length
- One or more throwing aids attached to a 6mm line and at least 8m in length
- A spinal board
- A paddle board or boat when any part of the swimming area is more than 50m from shore
- First aid kit equipped with, but not limited to, the following supplies in sufficient quantities:
 - a standard first aid manual
 - incident report forms
 - safety pins and tweezers
 - individually wrapped adhesive dressings
 - sterile gauze pads (50 x 50 x 75 mm and 100 x 100 mm)
 - individually wrapped sterile surgical pads suitable for pressure dressings
 - waterproof adhesive tape, triangular bandages and water-resistant, sterile bandages
 - rolls of splint padding and roll up splints
 - scissors, non-permeable gloves
 - resuscitation pocket mask
 - instant ice packs, antiseptic solution
 - blanket and pillow

Tick identification and Animal bites

Your safety plan should include what to do if a tick is found on a camper or an animal bite occurs.

- WDGPH website should be reviewed <https://wdgpublichealth.ca/your-community/ticks-lyme-disease> for information on tick removal and to assist with identification procedures.

- Download our [Tick ID card](#) (PDF, 2 pages, 288 KB)
 - Encourage campers to cover up by wearing closed footwear, light colored clothing and tucking pants into socks when exploring areas that may be prone to ticks.
 - Encourage the use of bug repellents and follow the manufacturer's directions.
 - Encourage staff and campers to [Perform full-body checks](#) daily.
- All animal bites including pets, bats and wildlife must be reported to WDGPH. More information and to report incidents at [Animal Bites and Rabies](#).
- Rabies vaccination certificates for any pets on site must be available on site

Ventilation

- Windows in sleeping areas must open to provide air flow
- Windows must be provided with screens in good repair to prevent entry of insects and other vermin

Pest control

The operator must ensure the camp buildings are kept free from pests and conditions that would harbour pests.

- Pest control measures are available on site and available if requested

Lighting

Minimum lighting intensity for specified rooms/buildings:

- Lighting is adequate. Note: A flashlight is not considered as minimum lighting in a sleeping area. Fixed lighting is required.

Drinking water supply

- Drinking water system complies with requirements of applicable legislation: [Ontario Regulation 170/03 \(Drinking Water Systems\)](#)

- Water sample(s) have been submitted and results are on site and/or available before opening inspection.

Sanitation facilities

- Sanitation facilities are clean, sanitary, well-maintained and equipped with necessary supplies.

Food preparation

- Food preparation areas must be in compliance with [Ontario Regulation 493/17 \(Food Premises\)](#).
- Certified food handler certificates are on site and available for inspection.

Recommended Best Practices

Consistent compliance and safety are made easier when a safety plan is incorporated into the overall camp operations and management system. Things to consider include:

- Keep it simple. A binder sitting on a shelf serves little purpose. A simple and easy-to-read set of procedures and forms will be much easier to learn and more likely to be used.
 - Procedures are more consistently followed when they include the purpose behind them, for example the “why” The rationale behind a procedure for cleaning and disinfecting an area after a sick camper vomits is to prevent infecting other campers.
 - Monitoring and verification activities. Monitoring checklists can be created and used daily or weekly. Checklists should have space to sign off when reviewed or ‘verified’ confirming the monitoring was conducted and that any issues were addressed.
 - Clear accountability and identified roles. Each job in the camp should have a written job description with roles and responsibilities. Training requirements for each position should be laid out and documented.
 - Communication channels among camp staff, administration, and parents or guardians should be established.
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- Consider daily staff huddles to share issues or learnings from the previous

day or weekly debriefs to reinforce the things that went well and look for opportunities to improve.

More information

For more information, please contact Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health at PHI.Intake@wdgpublichealth.ca or 519-822-2715 ext. 4753

Appendix A

This Emergency Response Plan is provided as a template for recreational camps. Each camp must review and tailor this document to reflect its specific location, facilities, staffing structure, camper needs, and operational activities. Camps should ensure that designated shelter areas, communication procedures, and emergency contacts are site-specific and up to date before implementation.

Emergency Response Plan – Tornado

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure a rapid, coordinated, and safe response in the event of a tornado or tornado warning. Prompt action helps protect campers and staff from severe weather hazards by ensuring everyone moves to safe shelter and remains supervised until the threat has passed.

Scope

This procedure applies to all staff and volunteers responsible for camper supervision during camp operations. It applies during all camp activities, including indoor programming, outdoor activities, waterfront programming, field trips, overnight supervision and transitions between activities.

A tornado emergency may include conditions where a tornado warning has been issued, a tornado has been sighted in the area, or severe weather conditions indicate an imminent risk of a tornado.

Actions

If a tornado warning is issued or a tornado is sighted, staff should take the following steps immediately.

Move to shelter:

Staff should immediately move campers to the designated tornado shelter or safest indoor location available. Safe locations typically include basements, interior rooms, or hallways on the lowest level of a building, away from windows and exterior walls.

Account for campers:

Once in shelter, staff should conduct a headcount to ensure all campers are present. Campers should remain together with their assigned group and staff should continue supervision at all times.

Outdoor activities:

If campers are outdoors when a tornado warning is issued, staff should move campers indoors to the nearest safe shelter immediately. If no building is accessible, staff should move campers to the lowest ground available, such as a ditch or depression, and instruct campers to lie flat and protect their head and neck.

Overnight or cabin situations:

If a tornado warning occurs during overnight hours, staff should wake campers and move them calmly and quickly to the designated shelter area. Staff should conduct a headcount once campers arrive at the shelter location.

Remain sheltered:

Campers and staff should remain in the shelter location until the warning has ended, and it is safe to leave. Staff should continue to supervise campers and monitor weather updates during this time.

After the storm:

Once it is safe, staff should check for injuries and provide first aid if needed. Camp staff should inspect buildings and surrounding areas for hazards such as debris, fallen trees, or structural damage before resuming activities.

Emergency services:

Emergency services should be contacted if there are injuries, structural damage, trapped individuals, or other immediate safety concerns.

Communications

Clear and controlled communication is important during severe weather events.

Staff should provide calm instructions to campers and ensure all campers remain supervised during movement to shelter and while sheltering.

Camp leadership should monitor weather alerts through reliable sources and inform staff when warnings are issued or when it is safe to resume activities.

Emergency services should be contacted when injuries, damage, or other safety concerns occur.

Parents or guardians should be notified if the incident results in injuries, significant disruption to camp activities, or if campers must be relocated.

Any communication with media should follow the organization's established communication policies.

Additional Recommendations For Camps

Camps are encouraged to implement the following measures to reduce risk during severe weather events:

- Identify and clearly designate tornado shelter areas within camp buildings
- Ensure all staff know the location of shelter areas and the quickest routes to reach them
- Monitor weather conditions regularly during camp operations
- Ensure staff know how to receive weather alerts and warnings
- Conduct drills so staff and campers understand how to respond to tornado warnings
- Maintain emergency supplies in shelter areas where possible
- Ensure staff are trained in emergency procedures before camp operations begin
- Review and document any severe weather incidents and update procedures as needed.

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Emergency Response Plan – Missing Camper

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure a rapid, coordinated, and safe response when a camper is unaccounted for. Early identification and organized search efforts help reduce risk and support the safe return of the camper while ensuring the supervision and safety of all other campers.

Scope

This procedure applies to all staff and volunteers responsible for camper supervision during camp operations. It applies during all camp activities, including indoor programming, outdoor activities, waterfront programming, field trips, overnight supervision and transitions between activities.

A missing camper is defined as a camper whose whereabouts cannot be immediately confirmed during supervision, attendance checks, or transitions between activities.

Actions

If a camper is unaccounted for, staff should take the following steps immediately.

Confirm and contain:

Stop the group and conduct an immediate headcount. Confirm the camper's name, description, and last known location. Identify the point last seen if known. Ensure all remaining campers are supervised and contained in a safe location.

Overnight or cabin checks

If the camper is discovered missing during overnight supervision or cabin checks, staff should immediately check all cabins, washrooms, and nearby areas. Camp leadership should be notified immediately. If the camper cannot be located quickly or may have left the cabin area, the emergency response procedure and search should begin.

Initial search:

Staff should conduct a rapid search of nearby areas where the camper may reasonably be located. This includes washrooms, buildings, activity areas, nearby trails, and common gathering locations. Staff should check the point last seen and surrounding areas first. If the camper may have accessed a waterfront, road, or other high-risk area, emergency services should be contacted immediately.

Organized search:

If the camper is not located during the initial search, the camp should begin a more structured search of the site. Staff should search buildings, activity spaces, wooded areas,

shoreline areas, vehicles, and site boundaries. Areas should be searched systematically and search efforts should be documented to avoid duplication.

Emergency services:

Emergency services should be contacted if the camper is not located quickly, if the camper may be near water or another high-risk environment, or if there are concerns related to the camper's health, age, or vulnerability.

When the camper is found:

Once the camper is located, staff should assess the camper's condition and provide first aid if needed. Emergency services and parents or guardians should be notified as appropriate. Staff should document where and when the camper was located and any relevant circumstances.

Communications

Clear and controlled communication is important during a missing camper incident.

Staff should communicate essential information only and avoid creating panic among campers. All campers should remain supervised at all times.

Emergency services should be contacted when appropriate and provided with accurate information, including the camper's description, last known location, and areas already searched.

Parents or guardians should be notified by camp leadership if the situation escalates or once the camper has been located.

Any communication with media should follow the organization's established communication policies.

Recommendations

Camps are encouraged to implement the following measures to reduce the risk of missing camper incidents:

- Maintain regular headcounts during activities and transitions
- Ensure clear supervision ratios and defined camper groups
- Establish clear camp boundaries and communicate them to campers
- Ensure staff know the layout of the camp and high-risk areas such as water, roads, and wooded areas
- Ensure staff know how to contact emergency services and camp leadership quickly

- Conduct staff training on missing camper procedures before camp operations begin
- Document incidents and conduct a review following any missing camper event to identify improvements