

## REMEMBER WHEN? 30 + Years of Changes in BSA Aquatics 1989 - 2022

- 2022** Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat online training revised due to software changes. Some updates and clarifications, such as new life jacket labels, but no policy changes.  
New BSA Local Council Aquatics Committee Resource Kit available online.  
New BSA Aquatics Management Guide available online.  
Kayaking BSA and Scuba BSA training cards updated with new patch designs. Gender-neutral changes anticipated for other awards.
- 2021** Inaugural class of Female Eagle Scouts.  
CMAHC recommends dropping experience requirement for Lifeguard Supervisor training. (Fourth edition of MAHC scheduled for 2021 not released as of Oct 2022.)  
Requirement updates to Lifesaving MB include Swimming MB as prerequisite and CPR guidance by certified instructor. Minor changes to Motorboating and Rowing MB requirements. Latest requirements at scoutin.org. Pamphlet updates on hold for both print and Amazon digital versions.  
Major revision of *BSA Aquatics Staff Guide* available for free download.  
“Camp” definitions updated in NCAP standards. Aquatics Staff requirement (SQ-406) applies to council camp properties and programs, including day, short-term, and long-term camps. See: NCAP Circular 15  
Online training in Workplace Harassment Prevention for Employees required for camp staff.  
US Coast Guard announces new law requiring use of engine cut-off switches. Exceptions apply. State jurisdictions may impose other requirements.  
This statement added to *Guide to Safe Scouting*: “Full-face snorkel masks (combinations of a built-in snorkel with a mask that covers the mouth and nose) are prohibited.”  
BSA scuba policy updated in *Guide to Safe Scouting*. Changes to medical contraindications. Policies on council programs, such as prohibition on filling tanks, moved to NCAP standards.  
NCAP Circular 16 discusses changes for 2022 for scuba programs at camps and conduct of aquatics activities for Adventure Programs and Activities.
- 2020** BSA files for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy; considers Churchill Project and other initiatives to position organization for success after restructuring. (Resolution pending as of Oct 2022).  
Covid pandemic causes cancellation of most NCS aquatics sessions. Hiatus for in-person lifeguard training by national agencies. One-year extensions granted for BSA Aquatics Instructor. Many council camp programs cancelled, delayed, or modified.  
Printed *Aquatics Supervision* manual discontinued as supply item. Available as free download.
- 2019** Boy Scout program changed to Scouts BSA on Feb 1 with inclusion of all-girl troops. Scouts BSA Handbook for Girls released in Jan (both print and Kindle). New Handbook for Boys released later in the year.  
NCAP National Camp Standards influenced by the CDC Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC). PS-201C: Equipment provided as specified in the MAHC (rescue tube, signaling device, PPE carried by lifeguards on duty with polarized sunglasses when appropriate.) SQ-406B: Lifeguard Management plus other items added to training for supervisors of separated program areas, SQ-406C: Lifeguard competency is tested and documented.  
Prohibited Activities updated. Includes cliff diving or jumping, aerobatics while wakeboarding, parasailing, bubble ball, flyboarding, whitewater paddling on Class V or above, and any activities that do not follow *Age-Appropriate Guidelines*, *Safe Swim Defense*, or *Safety Afloat*.  
Annual Health and Medical Record updated.

New digital version of *Outdoor Program and Property Manual* released. Links to *Aquatics Staff Guide* and other resources rather than duplicating material.

US Coast Guard issues new guidance for lifejacket certification and labels. Icons consistent with Canadian standards designate flotation, turning ability, and use.

Digital version of *Reading the Rhythms of Rivers and Rapids* may be viewed or downloaded at <https://vimeo.com/342035469>

**2018** National Camping School Aquatics Lesson Plan revised.

Brochure for Whitewater Rafting BSA award available online at [scouting.org](http://scouting.org).

Youth Protection Training updated.

Revisions made to CDC MAHC, for example, lifeguard requirement to carry PPE rather than to have readily available.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announces it will no longer charter Scout units beginning in 2020.

Lion Cub Scout program for kindergarten aged youth moves from pilot to standard program.

New Lion, Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos handbooks issued to reflect girl dens. Available in print from Supply Division and also Kindle versions from Amazon.

New printing of *Aquatics Supervision* with minor updates including Scouts BSA & Whitewater Rafting Award.

The US Coast Guard grant management team started a program in 2014 to develop voluntary standards for teaching on-water boating skills for power boats, sailboats, and human-power craft. Various modules of the National On-Water Standards, or NOWS, program became available in 2017. The BSA Aquatics Subcommittee began a self-assessment of BSA boating merit badge content in 2018. Few changes were identified and those will be incorporated as the merit badges run through their normal revision cycle.

**2017** Red Cross issues new edition of Lifeguard Training program. Digital participant manual available for free online. Instructor material, including videos, available for free download on Instructor Corner, but that again requires ARC instructor credentials.

BSA LG Instructor Manual revised. Available for download at [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org).

*Aquatics Staff Guide* updated. Available for download online.

Safety Afloat whitewater policies revised. Unit trips on Class III whitewater require special training. Trips on Class IV only authorized in rafts with a professional guide on board. Helmets required for Class II and above.

New *Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety* modules for canoes and kayaks in moving water. Details provided in 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of instructor guide available online.

New whitewater rafting award under development.

**2016** New Boy Scout Handbook. Swimming requirements for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Class unchanged.

Two volume Troop Leader Guidebook replaces Scoutmaster Handbook.

Program Features for Troops, Teams, and Crews released. Vol 1 includes Paddle Sports; Vol 2 includes Scuba Diving.

New edition of Lifesaving Merit Badge pamphlet. Skills essentially the same.

Digital versions of Swimming and Lifesaving merit badge pamphlets released.

Joint ACA-BSA video, *Reading the Rhythms of Rivers and Rapids*, released.

Revisions made to CDC MAHC, but none impact lifeguarding and supervision.

- 2015** Revised Cub Scout program released. Academics and Sports program, which included swimming, is retired. New optional adventures for Cub Scout ranks include Floats and Boats for Tiger (prone glide in shallow water), Spirit of the Water for Wolf (25 ft swim in shallow water), Salmon Run for Bear (attempt beginner classification), and Aquanaut (attempt swimmer classification) for Webelos and Arrow of Life. Each adventure also includes basic swimming and boating safety in addition to indicated swimming skills. Den Leader Guides provide program suggestions. (Some changes in overall process made in 2017.)

Changes to Safety Afloat updated on online version of Guide to Safe Scouting. Dens and packs may now conduct boating activities. Revised policy clarifies that nonswimmers may paddle in a canoe or tandem kayak with a skilled adult swimmer rather than merely riding as a passenger.

2015 printing of *Aquatics Supervision* has updates on Safety Afloat and Cub Scout programs.

- 2014** Simplified medical form released.

Instructor material for Aquatics Supervision: Swimming & Water Rescue and Paddle Craft Safety courses updated to match text revisions. Available online.

New editions of Water Sports and Rowing merit badge pamphlets with minor updates.

New edition of Canoeing merit badge. New options for re-entry and boat-to-boat rescue.

New edition of Swimming merit badge with significant requirement revisions. Clothes inflation and competitive/snorkeling options eliminated to focus on stroke development.

New edition of BSA Fieldbook. Includes chapters on Canoeing and Kayaking and Rafting.

Paul R. Christen National High Adventure Base at The Summit, New River Gorge, West Virginia begins first year of operation.

BSA Aquatics Play Structure Policy added to online version of Guide to Safe Scouting. Guidance documents for specific devices available online.

BSA enters agreements with USA Swimming Foundation and USA Triathlon to promote swimming as a life skill for safety and physical fitness.

BSA becomes founding member of Water Safety USA, a consortium of agencies with programs in drowning prevention.

- 2013** Revised edition of *Aquatics Supervision* released. Retail price changes from \$16 to \$30.

BSA Lifeguard requirements and Instructor Manual revised, available online. 2-year validity.

New format for National Standards and Camp Accreditation. Camp aquatics director position requires both current BSA Aquatics Instructor and professional lifeguard cards. Lifeguard card also required for NCS aquatics section attendance.

New version of Safe Swim Defense flyer, item 34370.

New BSA Stand Up Paddleboarding award implemented with assistance of American Canoe Association. Brochure available online.

Small Boat Sailing merit badge revised.

CDC releases first edition of the Model Aquatics Health Code.

Red Cross issues new edition of Swimming and Water Safety.

Cooking merit badge now required for Eagle. Takes first place in popularity, bumping First Aid and Swimming merit badges to second and third.

**2012** New DVD “Safety Afloat & Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety” released. Contains DVD version of Safety Afloat online training and material for Paddle Craft Safety instruction.

Minimum age for Aquatics Supervision: Swimming & Water Rescue and Paddle Craft Safety reduced to 15. Safe Swim Defense or Safety Afloat training added as prerequisite.

Red Cross releases revised Lifeguard training program. Certifications valid for two years.

Five National Outdoor Badges for Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts recognize knowledge and experience in camping, hiking, riding, adventure, or aquatics.

Cub Scout Aquatics Supervisor training no longer offered.

New Kayaking merit badge. (Jumped to 20<sup>th</sup> in popularity with 36,200 earned in 2013)

Safe Swim Defense online training and DVD including ‘Remote Area Setup’ video released.

Pilot programs for camp PWC training. (National approval needed for camp programs in 2014)

**2011** New online version of *Safety Afloat* training.

Digital versions of most BSA aquatics literature items distributed at NCS.

**2010** New Scuba Diving merit badge. Scuba policy revised.

Aquatics policies in online Guide to Safe Scouting brought up to date, including scuba.

New Aquatics Staff Guide produced for distribution to all camp aquatic staff members.

NCS Aquatics Section lesson plans revised. Several policy statements in Section V of Camp Program and Property Management no longer up-to-date.

New edition of Boy Scout Handbook.

Online process for reporting fatalities & serious incidents. “Pink” folder turns “Orange” in 2013.

H&S Committee notes DOL ruling requires councils to offer Hep B shots to paid lifeguards.

**2009** *Aquatics Supervision: A leader’s guide to youth swimming and boating activities*, No 34346, published. Item number later changed to 34347 without text revision.

New adult leader training programs in Swimming & Water Rescue and Paddle Craft Safety provide skill training consistent with Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. *Aquatics Supervision* serves as text.

New *BSA Lifeguard Instructor Manual* released. Standardized course outline utilizes Red Cross material expanded to cover BSA camp situations.

*Aquatics Supervision* serves as resource for aquatics special awards and contains application forms and instructor material for Kayaking BSA, Snorkeling BSA, Scuba BSA, Boardsailing BSA, and Mile Swim BSA.

National Camp Standards require review of aquatics program by council committee. Suggestions for council aquatics committees included in *Aquatics Supervision*.

Slight modification to National Camp Standards re Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat training. Units encouraged but not required to conduct their own safe swim activities. Training for Aquatics Supervision added in 2010.

Red Cross releases revised *Swimming and Water Safety* text and WSI program. Restful swimming strokes introduced earlier in learn-to-swim progression.

American Canoe Association publishes new texts for Canoeing and Kayaking.

BSA medical forms revised; exam by health care professional required yearly for all participants in events over 72 hrs, not just those over 40 yrs of age.

**2008** Revised Swimming, Lifesaving and Motorboating merit badge pamphlets.

Tour permits revised; 2 yr expiration of SSD and SA training specified. Becomes "Tour Plan" in 2011.

AHA advocates compression only CPR option for lay rescuers in circumstances that do not include youth or water rescue victims. Red Cross CPR/AED training for the professional rescuer required for BSA Lifeguard in 2009. (New ICC guidelines in '10)

National Safe Boating Council and Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety phasing out "PFD" acronym in favor of "life jacket" for common usage.

All aquatics merit badge pamphlets reprinted in color.

*Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat* texts revised. Basic concepts unchanged, but details clarified. Abbreviated versions updated in Lifesaving, Swimming, Canoeing, Whitewater, and Small-Boat Sailing pamphlets. Complete version in *Aquatics Supervision* and *Guide to Safe Scouting*.

BSA Weather Smart training for leaders introduced. Revisions to *Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat* are consistent with recommendations on activity limitations due to lightning.

Federal Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act effective Dec 2008. Camp pools must be compliance prior to opening in 2009.

Camp Standards changed to reflect DOL ruling of 16 as minimum age for open water lifeguards.

**2007** Waterskiing merit badge changed to Water Sports to allow use of wake boards.

Revised Red Cross Lifeguard materials released.

**2006** National H&S Committee proposes formal recognition/support of council aquatics committees. National Camp Standards to require oversight of camp aquatics programs by local committee – optional in 2008, mandatory in 2009.

Rowing merit badge revised.

American Canoe Association and BSA draft memorandum of mutual support.

**2005** Online, Internet training for *Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat*. Now at <http://www.scouting.org> under MYSCOUTING tab.

New editions of Canoeing, Whitewater, and Small Boat Sailing merit badge pamphlets.

New ECC guidelines for CPR released in December.

**2004** New edition of the BSA *Fieldbook*. Contains information on canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and sailing.

American Red Cross releases new edition of *Swimming and Water Safety* and updates WSI materials, including videos on DVD.

**2003** New scuba policy approved. Allows introductory scuba experience as Boy Scout and Venture program. *Scuba BSA* program released late in year, supported by brochure 19-515.

Revised version of BSA Lifeguard Counselor's Guide relies heavily on ARC material.

Revised edition of Chap V Aquatics in *Camp Program & Property Management*. Most current version available for camp schools in 2004.

United States Lifesaving Association issues new training text, *Open Water Lifesaving*, replacing 1995 *USLA Manual of Open Water Lifesaving*.

**2002** *Snorkeling Safety* updated.

New 'Kayaking BSA' award approved and brochure, 19-510, published.

Swimming MB requirements revised, along with changes to swimming requirements for rank advancement.

Age Appropriate Guidelines published for outdoor activities

**2001** New Swimming and Lifesaving MB requirements and pamphlets.

Revised ARC Lifeguard program.

**2000** New video released in late '99: *Safe Swim Defense ... It Works!* Copies sent to each council, also available from National office.

Revised addition of Waterskiing MB pamphlet printed in 1999.

Minor changes in wording of requirements for BSA Lifeguard.

New 'Snorkeling Safety' guidelines (No 19-176) published, along with revised Snorkeling BSA requirements.

American Heart Association changes CPR techniques. Lay persons no longer advised to check for pulse.

**1999** New edition of *Boy Scout Handbook*. Exploring Posts converted to new Venturing crews or to LFL program.

New Second Class requirements include Safe Swim Defense discussion, Beginner swimmer test, demonstration of reaching and throwing water rescues.

New First Class requirements include Safety Afloat, Swimmer test, clothes inflation, line and tender rescue.

Choice of Swimming, Cycling, or Hiking for Eagle.

H&S committee approved new policy and informed consent statement on Scuba participation by those with asthma or other pulmonary disease.

Procedures formalized by which council can authorize pre-camp swim classification tests.

New H&S course and video released: *Scouting Safety ... Begins with Leadership*.

ARC introduces new *Guard Start – Lifeguarding Tomorrow* program for 11-14 year olds.

- 1998** Revised texts for *Safe Swim Defense* and *Safety Afloat* provide additional details for safe swimming areas, watercraft rescue training, and tailgate review.

Requirements for Waterskiing MB substantially revised.

Revised requirements for Rowing MB allow completion using only a shell.

New printing of Sea Explorer manual.

American Red Cross introduced new programs in *Small Craft Safety* and *Basic Water Rescue*. 'Lifeguard challenge program' provides mechanism for BSA Lifeguards to obtain ARC certification without attending course.

- 1997** CPR manikin requirement re-established for Lifesaving MB. Simplified requirement using device approved by the counselor retained for other MB's.

*Sweet 16 of BSA Safety* introduced as generic safety guidelines.

National workshop in late 1996 revised NCS schedule and lesson plans. New aquatics material distributed in 1998.

- 1996** First aid requirements added to many outdoor merit badges in late 1995. CPR cut from Lifesaving MB and added to all other aquatics merit badges. All pamphlets reprinted with new requirements.

Whitewater MB prerequisite changed from *English gate* to *scout gate*, in essence first half of old sequence.

Water depths for diving from board (9-12 ft) clarified in *Section IV (Aquatics) of Camp Program and Property Management*. *Guide to Safe Scouting* updated at next printing.

Revised *Safe Swim Defense Training Outline* issued.

Revised protocol for medical screening clarified delegation of face-to-face review.

- 1995** Smallboat Sailing MB text updated with new illustrations. *Boardsailing BSA* referenced.

Snorkeling BSA application, No 19-176 modified. Req. 3, second sentence changed to: Explain *why a BC must be worn in all snorkeling activities not in clear, confined water*.

National Supply no longer distributes clamp on sculling locks since manufacturer did not carry sufficient product liability insurance. Still available from marine supply companies, e.g., M&E Marine Supply, Camden NJ or Defender Industries, Waterford CT. (As of 2022, Davis locks available from various marine supply stores. Old style clamp on sculling locks apparently not available.)

ARC Lifeguard Training revised. Timed requirements eliminated, only rescue tube assists taught. Two-person backboarding illustrations not recommended for BSA use.

Smoke free policy adopted by National Council to be implemented in local councils by end of 1995.

- 1994** Swimming MB pamphlet revised late 1993. Some changes in text and illustrations. Additional stroke required: choice between crawl/trudgen and breast/back crawl.

Lifesaving MB pamphlet revised late 1993. Chin level off deleted, armpit tow added. Saddleback carry replaced by pack strap carry. New material on spinal injury support.

Expanded text and illustrations of sliding seat equipment added to Rowing MB pamphlet.

BSA Lifeguard program revamped. New counselor guide introduces set lesson plans and standardized test. Requirements no longer tied to MB requirements except for First Aid. Decreased emphasis on boating skills; increased emphasis on in-water rescues and physical conditioning mimic those of Red Cross.

H&S Committee approves guidelines restricting scuba diving for persons with asthma/RAD

- 1993** Revised statement of *Qualified Supervision* in Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. Recognizing that the difficulty units experienced in complying with requirement for BSA Lifeguard or equivalent lead to noncompliance or reluctance to engage in aquatics activities, standard change to emphasize responsibility and Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat training, with strong recommendation for lifeguard certification.

*Boardsailing* BSA award introduced, similar to Mile Swim & Snorkeling BSA awards.

Scuba policy for local councils revised. Still NOT an authorized activity for Boy Scout summer camp. Use by employees or in Varsity, Venture, and Exploring programs requires NAUI or PADI certification. See full policy statements for requirements on age, instruction, air supply, etc.

First Aid kits to include gloves, mouth-barrier device, goggles, and antiseptic following recommendation that all blood should be treated as if contaminated with blood-borne pathogens. New OSHA regulations affect Council obligations to employees designated as medical responders

- 1992** Motorboating Merit Badge pamphlet revised.

Three-day re-certification program for Aquatics Instructor BSA added to National Camping School.

Outdoor Skills Instruction *Aquatics* manual No 33026 published. Basic course material for canoeing and kayaking.

Several changes to camp standards in recent years dealing with youth protection. Quality (not mandatory) standard stating that adult leaders and Scouts are not to shower at the same time extended to apply to youth and adult staff members. (Editor note: many old camp pools had a single designated change/shower area for all males.)

- 1991** *CUB AQUATICS SUPERVISOR* rating introduced to train persons with recognized lifeguard certification to conduct aquatics programs in Cub camps. Three-day program conducted by an Aquatics Instructor BSA with Region approval. (Editor note: program cancelled in 2012)

*AQUATICS PROGRAM MANUAL* replaced by Chapter IV of *CAMP PROGRAM AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT*, No 20-920. (Editor note: Chap IV later became Chap V)

First Aid certification added to camp standards for camp aquatics director.

- 1990** New edition of Boy Scout Handbook formalizes replacement of Swimming Skill Award with new 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Class swimming requirements.

If Aquatics Instructor BSA unavailable, conditional accreditation allowed in camp standards changed from WSI to WSI plus Lifeguard Instructor to reflect changes in Red Cross program.

Venture program Whitewater pamphlet No 3465 published.

- 1989** Whitewater Merit Badge added to program.

Canoeing Merit Badge pamphlet revised.

Small-Boat Sailing Merit Badge pamphlet revised.

Snorkeling BSA support materials available.

Explorer Lifeguard introduced, lapsed circa 1991.

*An NCS three-day recertification program for BSA Aquatics Instructor was begun in 1992. Since 1993, changes over the previous five years have been compiled to use in that program. This list is taken from those, with minor edits.*