

AOAP Safety Protocol Guidelines for Water Activities

Whether you're heading to a swimming pool, backyard pool, VRBO or rental property, a friend's or relative's house, a lake, river, or any other body of water, it's essential to follow these AOAP (Association of Aquatic Professionals) safety guidelines to ensure a fun and safe experience for everyone.

1. Supervision

- Always designate a responsible, sober adult as a Water Watcher—never leave children or weak swimmers unattended.
- Water Watchers should avoid distractions (phones, books, etc.) and constantly scan the water.
- Rotate Water Watcher duties every 15-30 minutes to maintain alertness.

2. Barriers and Access Control

- Make sure all pools and hot tubs are surrounded by a four-sided fence with self-latching gates.
- Know and follow property-specific safety features (pool covers, alarms, etc.).
- Ensure barriers are secure and children can't access water unsupervised.

3. Swimming Ability

- Swim with a buddy—never alone.
- Choose swimming areas appropriate for your skill level.
- Use life jackets approved by the U.S. Coast Guard for weak or non-swimmers, especially in open water.

4. Learn CPR and Emergency Preparedness

- At least one adult on site should be trained in CPR and basic first aid.
- Know the address of your location and how to contact emergency services quickly.
- Keep a phone and rescue equipment (life ring, reaching pole) nearby.

5. Alcohol and Substance Use

- Avoid alcohol and drugs when supervising children or swimming.
- Alcohol impairs judgment, balance, and coordination—never mix it with water activities.

6. Environmental Hazards

- Check water depth before diving—never dive into shallow or unfamiliar water.
- Be aware of weather conditions (lightning, strong winds, currents).
- Watch for hazards in natural water (rocks, plants, sudden drop-offs, debris, wildlife).
- Use sunscreen and stay hydrated, especially in hot weather.

7. Rules and Communication

- Review and enforce posted rules at public or rental pools.
- Establish clear safety rules for all swimmers (no running, no rough play, stay away from drains).
- Communicate these guidelines to everyone in your group before entering the water.

8. For Rentals and Unfamiliar Locations

- Inspect the area for hazards before swimming.
- Ask the property owner about pool safety features and emergency procedures.
- Ensure pool drains have anti-entrapment covers.

9. Special Considerations

- Keep toys and floats out of the pool when not in use—they can attract young children.
- Know the swimming ability of everyone in your group.
- Don't rely solely on flotation devices or toys for safety.

10. After Use

- Remove access to water when finished (lock doors, close gates, use pool covers).
- Clean up pool toys and floats.

Stay vigilant, communicate clearly, and always prioritize safety! Following these AOAP guidelines can prevent accidents and save lives during any water activity.