

Near-drowning at Jacob Riis park – A case study of physical fitness needed by oceanfront lifeguards

Carl Martinez¹

U.S. DOI/National Park Service¹

Endurance capacity in swimming is generally considered to be important for successful outcomes in oceanfront lifeguard work. But so, too, is endurance capacity in running. A near-drowning incident at Jacob Riis Park shows why. Lessons learned from that incident may be useful to others elsewhere. Specifically:

1. The rigorous performance yardstick used at Jacob Riis Park to measure preemployment endurance capacity in running, is a good indicator of potential to handle the physical rigors of on-the-job emergencies. But it is not a guarantee.
2. Daily on-the-job training should include elements that build upon, and also increase, the endurance-capacity minimums in running and swimming measured for in the preemployment test for Jacob Riis Park oceanfront lifeguards.
3. Lifeguards should be prepared to respond immediately to life-threatening emergencies – minus motorized equipment. For that equipment may not always be where it is needed, nor when it is needed.
4. Where the saving of human life is concerned, one should prepare for the unexpected. That is, for what is possible – and not only for what is probable. For, at worst, one will simply be over-prepared.

Corresponding Author

Carl Martinez
Water Safety Coordinator
U.S. DOI/National Park Service
210 New York Avenue
New York United States of America 10305-5019
Email: carl_martinez@nps.gov
Telephone: +1 718 3544623