

Improving swimming pool management understanding of Health and Safety legislation through attendance at the RLSS UK National Pool Management Qualification (NPMQ)

Diane Standley¹

Royal Life Saving Society United Kingdom (RLSS UK)¹

Background/Introduction

The lack of knowledge in both, understanding and compliance with law, regulation and guidance in managing swimming pools.

Program

The RLSS UK National Pool Management Qualification, (NPMQ).

Aims/Objectives

To ensure that all candidates that attend the course have a full understanding of their legal obligations with regards to the management of a swimming pool environment and in addition they understand their employers' legal obligations in the same regard.

Target

The qualification is aimed at any level of manager in a swimming pool environment. The qualification is delivered in the UK and Ireland with courses being delivered in Bahrain and requests for courses in the UAE.

Method

In 2008 RLSS UK commissioned a survey due to changes in legislation, specifically Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 (and subsequently the Health and Safety Offences Act 2009). The survey asked questions of Senior Managers, General Managers and Junior Managers in all sectors of the UK pool industry operation. Together with case study evidence where operators have found themselves in court, increasing insurance costs and claims, the survey was commissioned as a 'health check' for RLSS UK members. The results highlighted a disparity of knowledge between senior management and front line management.

The qualification was written as the survey results clearly identified some worrying knowledge gaps in both understanding, and complying with, law, regulations and guidance. Having a responsibility to the industry we serve, RLSS UK Ltd has developed the NPMQ to provide a solution to the difficulties the swimming operators face. The content of the qualification is based directly on the gaps that were identified in the survey results. Using feedback from the industry, advice from Health and Safety professionals and regulatory lawyers, the qualification took two years to create. After completing and passing an online foundation element the RLSS UK NPMQ is a four day course involving four specific subject areas relating to the management of swimming pools.

Element 1 – The Principles of Risk Management

Element 2 – Managing the Team

Element 3 – Understanding the Law

Element 4 – Serious Incident Management System

Following each day all candidates undertake an individual assessment and on day four of the course all candidates complete an end of course assessment. Each element concludes with a management toolbox which is designed to be used back at the leisure facility. The toolbox contains a plethora of sample templates that assist operators with their compliance of legal requirements relating to the management of swimming pools and their environments. So this is not just an academic course but it's also a functional programme of learning that can be quickly applied in the workplace. The course combines traditional Tutor presentation techniques plus video presentation, individual and group work and the use to e-learning. The RLSS UK NPMQ is managed and administered by IQL UK, a fully owned trading subsidiary of the RLSS UK.

Results

The RLSS UK NPMQ has been delivered to over 250 candidates since January 2010 with a considerable amount of courses planned for the remainder of 2011. Feedback has been excellent and suggests that the course meets the objectives of the swimming pool operators in the UK. It is the intention to re-run the survey in 2012 to establish if the disparity of knowledge has reduced. The structure of the RLSS UK NPMQ can be replicated in non aquatic environments and the principles of the course can be applied outside of the UK for all aquatic environments.

Corresponding Author

Diane Standley, Chief Executive

The Royal Life Saving Society UK

River House, High Street, Broom Warwickshire B50 4HN

Email: distandley@rlss.org.uk