



# County of Santa Cruz

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## PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

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BARRY C. SAMUEL, DIRECTOR

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September 13, 1999

AGENDA: September 21, 1999

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

SUBJECT: LIFEGUARD STAFFING RATIOS

Dear Members of the Board:

During Budget Hearings your Board directed the Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services Department to report back on lifeguard staffing ratios. The ratios provided for your review are for swimming pools and programs which are comparable either by type of facility, program, or proximity to the Simpkins Family Swim Center. To prepare this report we did a survey of facilities and programs and researched professional guidelines for staffing aquatic facilities. The County Parks Department operates within state safety codes, national professional standards, and maintains an appropriate lifeguard to swimmer ratios.

S u r v e y e d

Based on the criteria stated above, it was decided to contact the following Parks and Recreation Departments:

1. **Campbell** — small municipal recreation department. One aquatic facility with “typical” 25 yard rectangular pool and summer programs.
2. **King City** — similar type of facility as ours with water slide.
3. **Milpitas** — 25 yard pool with a wading pool and typical summer recreation programs.
4. **Monterey Sports Center** — indoor facility with two pools and a water slide. Reasonably close in proximity.
5. **Roseville** — similar type of four pool facility with water slide and comparable programs and community use.

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6. **Sacramento** — large municipal recreation department. Fifteen aquatic facilities, all with “typical” 25 yard rectangular pools, one with a 50-meter pool.
7. **San Lorenzo Valley School District** — single pool with limited usage and programming. Close proximity.
8. **Santa Cruz City** — medium size municipal recreation department, very close in proximity. Two aquatic facilities, one at a local high school and one at a regional park. The regional park facility is a small version of the Simpkins Family Swim Center.
9. **Scotts Valley** — small swim facility, limited programming, close in proximity.
10. **Sunnyvale** — medium size municipal recreation department, five facilities each with 25 yard pools.

The following chart shows the departments which were surveyed and their peak daily attendance for recreation swim, the number of lifeguards that they have on the deck for those days, the number of pools at the facility in question, and the swimmer to lifeguard ratio:

Agency	Swimmers at Peak capacity	Number of Lifeguards	Swimmers/Lifeguard	No. Pools/Facility
1 King City	100	11	9.1	4
2 Scotts Valley	40	2	20.0	1
3 Campbell	85	4	21.3	1
4 Sunnyvale	90	4	22.5	1
5 SLV High School	125	5	25.0	1
6 Sacramento	225	8	28.1	2
7 <b>Santa Cruz County</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>4</b>
8 Milpitas	225	6	37.5	2
9 Roseville	500	13	38.5	4
10 Santa Cruz City	200	5	40.0	3
11 Monterey Sports Center	250	5	50.0	2
<b>Average</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>2</b>

**Staffing Analysis**

The staff to swimmer ratio at the Simpkins Family Swim Center is consistent with other facilities that have multiple pools with the exception of King City which has much lower attendance than the Simpkins Family Swim Center. The facilities that have a lower staffing ratio than us, either have single use pools, Milpitas and the City of Santa Cruz, or have pools which allow staff to monitor multiple areas, Monterey Sports Center and Roseville. How the different water features are incorporated into the pool design effects staffing levels.

Both Monterey’s and Roseville’s water slides enter into their large pool, thereby allowing the lifeguard at the splash down point to both observe their portion of the larger pool and the splash down location. The design specifications, for the water slide installed at the Simpkins Family Swim Center, requires two staff for safe operation. Additionally, due to the contiguous nature of Roseville’s zero depth entry, 25 yard 5 lane lap pool and water slide, they place lifeguards into

the zero depth entry portion, who watch the entire shallow area and are backed up by the lifeguards on the deck.

California code requires guards "adequate enough to maintain constant surveillance." There is no specific swimmer to guard ratio for California. Oregon has a code which utilizes a "10/20 guest protection standard". Oregon defines 10/20 as a "system which enables and requires a lifeguard to consistently and completely scan his/her assigned guest protection zone within 10 seconds and, should the guest need assistance, reach the guest and begin managing an incident within 20 seconds. The Santa Cruz County Parks Department has adopted the 10/20 guidelines.

Understanding the goal behind this code is important when determining the number of lifeguards for each individual aquatic environment. The Simpkins Family Swim Center has essentially five different areas which require guarding. The first area consists of the warm water and tot pools. For many reasons, at times this is the most difficult area to lifeguard. There can be up to one hundred twenty-five guests in the area at one time, most of the bathers are smaller children and children who are not strong swimmers and feel much more comfortable in the shallow water. Due to the large number of bathers in the warm water pool and it's smaller size, the bather density can be as much as four times greater than in the 50 meter pool. This is a very busy location with significant activity both in the pools and on the pool deck and during peak use requires three guards.

Area two is the water slide, it is staffed by two lifeguards as determined by product specifications. The shallow end of the 50 meter pool is the third area and is one of the two recreational swim areas and is guarded by up to three lifeguards, depending on the swimmer density. Area four is the center of the 50 meter pool and is guarded by one lifeguard on either side of the pool. This area of the pool is used for adult and teen lap swim. The deep end of the 50-meter pool is area five and is the other recreational swim area. It is used by older children and teens for games, floating in County provided Sport Tubes, and socializing. During peak use this area is guarded on all three sides with the guard at the end of the pool also giving swim tests to insure that only strong swimmers are using the deep water.

**Conclusion:**

As can be seen by the chart, the Santa Cruz County Parks Department's Swimmer to Lifeguard ratio is slightly greater than the average of the 11 agencies surveyed. The Simpkins Family Swim Center is the only agency surveyed with a separate water slide splash down pool. As previously mentioned the waterside requires 2 guards specifically assigned to it. If these 2 guards are removed from the equation, the lifeguard to swimmer ratio for Santa Cruz County would increase to 35.4.

The results of the survey show that on an annual basis Santa Cruz County offers more programs than all but one of the other jurisdictions. During our first summer Santa Cruz County offered, both in number and diversity, programming similar to Roseville, an aquatic facility that has been

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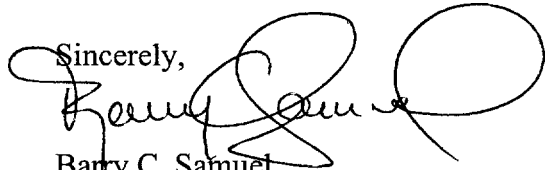
featured in numerous national aquatic and recreation publications for its innovative and high quality programs. Our facility offers the widest range of programs of all surveyed with the single exception of Roseville. King City also has a very unique aquatic setting but doesn't have anywhere near the number of swimmers found either in Roseville or at the Simpkins Swim Center.

It is the opinion of the Parks Department that the data shows that aquatics programs at The Simpkins Family Swim Center operate within state safety codes, has an appropriate lifeguard to swimmer ratio and offers one of the finest aquatic programs in the state.

During Budget Hearings, your Board added two full-time permanent Head Lifeguard positions to the Parks Department. These positions have been provisionally appointed. We are currently recruiting to fill these positions on a permanent basis. The Department offers annual programs and community swimming, along with a nine-month swim lesson program. The weekday hours of operation at the Simpkins Family Swim Center range, throughout the year, from nine hours per day to fifteen hours per day. To help meet the facilities demand, it is the Parks Department's goal to continue to increase the number of permanent lifeguards at the Swim Center in order to stabilize the availability of the best trained and experienced personnel.

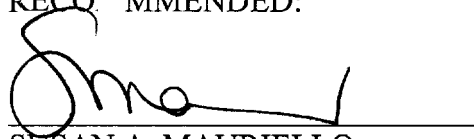
It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board accept and file this report.

Sincerely,



Barry C. Samuel  
Director

RECOMMENDED:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO  
County Administrative Officer

cc: CAO, Parks, County Counsel, Auditor, Personnel