

# CAMP WHISPERING PINES

*Est. 1945 • Lake Wren, Maine*

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## LIFEGUARD STAFF HANDBOOK

*New Employee Onboarding & Operational Reference Guide*

<b>STAFF COPY</b>
Employee Name: _____
Season: _____
Post Assignment: _____

*This handbook supersedes all previous editions. Questions? Contact the Head Lifeguard or Camp Director.*

### A Note from the Camp Director

Welcome to the Camp Whispering Pines team.

You have been selected to serve as a lifeguard for the upcoming summer season, and we are pleased to have you on staff. The position you are about to assume carries significant responsibility. The safety of our campers — children whose parents have entrusted them to our care — rests, in no small part, in your hands.

This handbook has been prepared to ensure that every member of the lifeguard staff enters the season with a clear understanding of our policies, procedures, expectations, and history. Please read it in its entirety before your first day of active duty. You will be asked to sign an acknowledgment form confirming that you have done so.

Camp Whispering Pines has operated continuously since 1945. We have maintained an excellent safety record, and we intend to continue that tradition. Our standards are high because our mission demands it.

We look forward to a safe, productive, and memorable summer.

Sincerely,

**Gerald T. Hoffmann**

Camp Director, Camp Whispering Pines

Summer 1994

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## Section 1: About Camp Whispering Pines

### 1.1 History and Mission

Camp Whispering Pines was founded in the summer of 1945 by Harold and Myrtle Hoffmann on the eastern shore of Lake Wren in northern Maine. What began as a small operation serving 42 campers from the greater Portland area has grown into one of the region's most established residential summer camps, now serving approximately 280 campers per session across eight-week and four-week enrollment periods.

The camp's mission, as established by its founders and reaffirmed by each successive director, is as follows:

*"To provide children of all backgrounds a safe, structured, and enriching outdoor experience that fosters character, friendship, and a lifelong respect for the natural world."*

### 1.2 Facilities Overview

The camp occupies 214 acres of forested land adjacent to Lake Wren, a freshwater glacial lake approximately 1.3 miles in length and 0.6 miles at its widest point. The waterfront spans approximately 800 linear feet and is divided into designated swimming, boating, and restricted zones.

On-site facilities include:

- Main Lodge and Dining Hall
- Eight residential cabin clusters (Birch, Cedar, Elm, Fir, Oak, Pine, Spruce, and Walnut)
- Waterfront area including swimming beach, boat dock, and canoe storage
- Infirmary (staffed by a registered nurse, June 10 – August 22)
- Athletics fields (softball, archery, ropes course)
- Waterfront Equipment Shed (combination: 7-2-4, changes annually — obtain from Head Lifeguard)
- Lifeguard Station (permanent structure, northeast end of beach)

### 1.3 Lake Wren: What You Should Know

Lake Wren is a spring-fed lake with generally clear visibility, though conditions can change. Staff should be aware of the following:

- Water temperature ranges from approximately 58°F (early June) to 76°F (late July/early August).
- A submerged sandbar extends approximately 30 feet from the north end of the swim area. It drops sharply on the far side and is marked with buoys.
- Motorized watercraft are not permitted in the designated swim area. Camp-operated motor boats (used for rescue operations) are stored at the north dock.
- Algae bloom events have been recorded in late July in past years. Consult the Head Lifeguard if water clarity appears abnormal.

### 1.4 A Note Regarding Camp Lore

Staff and returning campers may reference the name Silas Thorne. Mr. Thorne served as a lifeguard at Whispering Pines during the 1970s and early 1980s and was involved in an incident in the summer of 1986.

We ask that staff neither encourage nor elaborate upon stories related to this matter when speaking with campers. If directly asked, redirect the conversation. See your supervisor for additional guidance if needed.

## Section 2: Lifeguard Employment & Conduct

### 2.1 Employment Classifications

The following position classifications exist within the lifeguard staff:

Title	Minimum Requirements	Supervisory Authority
<b>Head Lifeguard</b>	Age 21+; current ARC Lifeguarding; 3+ seasons experience; First Aid & CPR/AED certified	Full authority over waterfront operations
<b>Lifeguard II</b>	Age 18+; current ARC Lifeguarding; 1+ season experience; First Aid & CPR/AED certified	Supervises Lifeguard I in Head LG's absence
<b>Lifeguard I</b>	Age 16+; current ARC Lifeguarding; First Aid & CPR/AED certified	None (reports to LG II or Head LG)

### 2.2 Required Certifications

All lifeguard staff must maintain current certification in each of the following prior to the first day of active duty. Photocopies of certifications must be submitted to the Camp Director's office no later than June 1.

- American Red Cross Lifeguarding (or equivalent, subject to Camp Director approval)
- CPR for the Professional Rescuer (adult, child, and infant)
- AED operation
- Standard First Aid

Certifications that expire during the camp season must be renewed prior to expiration. It is the employee's responsibility to track and maintain certification status. Failure to maintain valid certifications may result in suspension from active duty without pay until resolved.

### 2.3 Code of Conduct

As a member of the lifeguard staff, you are expected to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct at all times. The following behaviors are expressly prohibited:

- Consumption of alcohol or any controlled substance on camp property or during any period of on-call duty
- Use of tobacco products in view of campers
- Abandoning a post without explicit authorization from a supervisor
- Engaging in personal conversations, reading materials, or other distracting activities while on active guard duty
- Use of profane or inappropriate language in the presence of campers or their families

- Physical altercations of any kind
- Fraternalization with campers beyond what is required by professional duties
- Operating any camp watercraft without authorization

Violations of the Code of Conduct may result in verbal warning, written warning, suspension, or immediate termination, at the discretion of the Head Lifeguard and Camp Director.

## 2.4 Dress Code

Lifeguard staff are required to wear the following while on duty:

- Camp Whispering Pines lifeguard uniform shirt (red, issued by camp) or regulation red swimwear
- Camp-issued whistle on a breakaway lanyard at all times
- Polarized sunglasses (UV protection; personal equipment, not provided)
- Sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher is strongly recommended and will be available at the lifeguard station

Street clothing, non-regulation swimwear, and personal hats or caps are not permitted while on active duty.

## Section 3: Waterfront Zones & Post Assignments

### 3.1 Designated Swimming Zones

The Whispering Pines waterfront is divided into three primary swim zones, demarcated by buoy lines and signage:

Zone	Depth Range	Eligible Swimmers	Notes
<b>Wading (Zone A)</b>	0 – 2.5 feet	Non-swimmers; all campers age 7 and under	Highest supervision ratio required (1:8)
<b>Intermediate (Zone B)</b>	2.5 – 5 feet	Beginner + intermediate classification	Swimmer classification test required
<b>Deep (Zone C)</b>	5 – 12 feet	Advanced classification only	Includes diving platform access (authorized campers only)

### 3.2 Swimmer Classification

All campers must complete a swim classification test within 48 hours of arrival. The test is administered by a Lifeguard II or the Head Lifeguard. Classification determines which zones a camper may access without special supervision.

- Non-Swimmer: Cannot demonstrate basic floating and stroke competency
- Beginner: Completes a 25-yard swim in any stroke without stopping; demonstrates back float
- Intermediate: Completes a 50-yard swim in two different strokes; treads water for 1 minute

- Advanced: Completes a 100-yard swim using freestyle and backstroke; treads water for 3 minutes; surface dives to 6 feet

Classification wristbands must be worn at all times in the waterfront area. Non-swimmer: red. Beginner: yellow. Intermediate: blue. Advanced: green. Counselors are responsible for ensuring campers wear their wristbands. Lifeguards are responsible for enforcing zone access.

### 3.3 Staffing Requirements by Activity

- Open Swim (all zones): Minimum 3 lifeguards; Head LG or LG II must be present
  - Cabin Swim (single cabin group, Zone A/B only): Minimum 2 lifeguards
  - Boating/Canoeing: Minimum 1 lifeguard in rescue-ready position on dock; 1 spotter per 4 watercraft
  - Swimming instruction: Minimum 2 lifeguards; instructor does not count toward supervision ratio during active instruction
  - Fishing dock: No swimming permitted; 1 lifeguard on visual watch required if more than 6 campers present
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## Section 4: Daily Duties & Operational Procedures

### 4.1 Pre-Opening Inspection Checklist

The opening lifeguard (assigned by Head LG on weekly rotation) is responsible for completing the following inspection before any camper accesses the waterfront. All items must be checked and logged in the Daily Waterfront Log (located at the Lifeguard Station).

1. Walk the full perimeter of the swim area and inspect buoy lines. Report any displacement or damage to Head LG.
2. Inspect the lifeguard stand for structural integrity. Do not use the stand if damaged.
3. Verify presence and condition of all rescue equipment (consult the Head Lifeguard for the equipment inventory).
4. Check water clarity. If visibility below 4 feet, the deep zone must remain closed until conditions improve.
5. Verify the rescue boat is operational and accessible.
6. Check the first aid kit and restock any depleted items using supplies from the Equipment Shed.
7. Post the day's swim schedule (obtained from the Activity Director by 8:00 a.m.).
8. Record water temperature and general conditions in the Daily Log.

### 4.2 Active Guard Duty Protocols

When on active duty, lifeguards are required to:

- Maintain a standing or elevated position at all times while swimmers are in the water
- Perform a 10-second scanning pattern continuously, covering the entire zone of responsibility

- Rotate posts with other on-duty guards every 30 minutes during extended swim periods
- Blow whistle signals as established in this handbook (see 4.4)
- Never enter the water for non-emergency purposes while serving as the sole on-duty guard
- Maintain a swimmer count at all times; if count is uncertain, initiate a head count immediately

A second lifeguard must be present and active before the on-duty guard may enter the water for any reason, including during an emergency response when solo coverage is not adequate.

### 4.3 Rest Periods and Rotation

Lifeguard posts must rotate every 30 minutes during extended swim periods. Rotation is the responsibility of the Head Lifeguard or designated LG II. The relieving guard must receive a verbal briefing from the outgoing guard covering: swimmer count, any concerns noted, and zone conditions.

Mandatory 10-minute rest periods are required after every 90 minutes of active duty. During rest periods, guards may not be counted in the active supervision ratio.

### 4.4 Whistle Signal System

The following whistle signal system is in use at Camp Whispering Pines. All staff must memorize these signals prior to first day of active duty.

Signal	Pattern	Meaning / Required Response
One short blast	—	Attention / Stop behavior. Swimmers halt; lifeguards scan.
Two short blasts	— —	Clear the water. All swimmers exit immediately. Lifeguards stand by.
Three long blasts	———— ———— ————	<b>EMERGENCY. Activate EAP immediately. All available staff respond.</b>
Repeated short blasts	— — — —...	Thunderstorm / lightning protocol. All personnel clear waterfront immediately; seek shelter in Main Lodge.

### 4.5 Closing Procedures

At the close of each waterfront session:

9. Perform swimmer count and confirm all swimmers have exited water.
10. Retrieve and secure all rescue equipment in the Equipment Shed.
11. Log session details (head count, incidents if any, equipment issues) in the Daily Waterfront Log.
12. Notify Head LG of any concerns before departing the waterfront area.
13. Secure the Equipment Shed (combination lock required).

## Section 5: Communication Protocols

## 5.1 Chain of Command

All communication regarding waterfront operations follows this chain of command:

14. Lifeguard I → Lifeguard II
15. Lifeguard II → Head Lifeguard
16. Head Lifeguard → Camp Director
17. Camp Director → External authorities (EMS, parents, insurance, etc.)

Lifeguard staff should not communicate directly with parents or guardians regarding incidents unless directed by the Camp Director.

## 5.2 Shift Briefings

Each shift begins with a brief verbal meeting led by the Head Lifeguard or designated LG II. Briefings cover: daily schedule, post assignments, known camper medical concerns relevant to waterfront activity, and any equipment or environmental issues. Attendance is mandatory.

## 5.3 Incident Reporting

Any incident—including near-misses, minor injuries, behavioral issues, equipment failures, or unusual observations—must be logged in writing. Forms are located in the Lifeguard Station. Completed forms are submitted to the Head Lifeguard at end of shift, who forwards serious incidents to the Camp Director.

Do not rely on verbal reporting alone. If it is not documented, it did not happen.

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# Section 6: Camper Supervision Policies

## 6.1 Supervision Ratios

The following supervision ratios are mandatory and may not be reduced without written authorization from the Camp Director:

- Zone A (Wading): 1 lifeguard per 8 campers
- Zone B (Intermediate): 1 lifeguard per 10 campers
- Zone C (Deep): 1 lifeguard per 12 campers
- Boating/Canoeing: 1 lifeguard per 4 watercraft in the water

These ratios are in addition to any supervising counselors present. Counselors do not count toward the lifeguard supervision ratio.

## 6.2 Buddy System

The buddy system is in effect at all times during waterfront activities. Each swimmer is assigned a partner at the beginning of each session. Buddy checks are conducted every 10 minutes using the following procedure:

18. Lifeguard signals one short blast.
19. All swimmers immediately locate and hold up their buddy's hand.

20. Lifeguard counts pairs. Any unmatched swimmer is identified immediately.
21. Session resumes when all pairs are confirmed.

If any swimmer cannot locate their buddy within 30 seconds of the buddy check signal, the three-long-blast emergency signal is activated and the EAP is initiated.

### **6.3 Prohibited Waterfront Behaviors**

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited and must be enforced consistently by all lifeguard staff:

- Running on the dock or beach area
- Horseplay, pushing, or dunking other swimmers
- Attempting to access a zone beyond a camper's classification wristband
- Swimming under the dock
- Diving in Zones A or B or from the dock in any zone
- Hanging on buoy lines
- Swimming during non-scheduled swim periods
- Use of personal flotation devices as a substitute for swimmer classification (i.e., PFDs do not grant zone access)

First offense: verbal warning and removal from the water for the remainder of the session. Second offense: referral to Head Lifeguard and cabin counselor. Third offense: waterfront privileges revoked pending Camp Director review.

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## **Section 7: Reporting & Documentation**

### **7.1 Daily Waterfront Log**

The Daily Waterfront Log is a permanent record. All entries must be made in black or blue ink. Corrections must be made by drawing a single line through the incorrect entry, initialing, and writing the correction. Entries may not be erased or obscured.

The log is stored at the Lifeguard Station and is the property of Camp Whispering Pines. It may be subject to review in the event of an insurance claim or legal action. Treat it accordingly.

### **7.2 Incident Report Forms**

An Incident Report Form must be completed any time:

- A rescue (successful or attempted) occurs
- A camper or staff member requires first aid
- Emergency services are contacted
- A camper is removed from the water for a safety violation
- Equipment is found to be non-functional or missing
- Any situation occurs that could have resulted in injury, even if it did not

Forms must be completed before the end of the shift in which the incident occurred. Late or missing forms are a disciplinary matter.

### **7.3 End-of-Season Documentation**

At the close of the season, the Head Lifeguard is responsible for compiling and submitting to the Camp Director: all Daily Waterfront Logs, all Incident Report Forms, equipment condition reports, and a summary narrative of the season. These records are retained for a minimum of seven years.

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## **Section 8: Disciplinary Procedures**

### **8.1 Progressive Discipline Policy**

Camp Whispering Pines follows a progressive discipline policy for staff conduct violations. The following steps apply in most situations, though serious violations may result in immediate action at any level:

22. Verbal warning (documented in employee file by Head LG)
23. Written warning (signed by employee; copy to Camp Director)
24. Suspension without pay (duration at Camp Director's discretion)
25. Termination

In the case of gross misconduct—including abandonment of post during active swimming, reporting to duty under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances, or falsification of safety records—immediate termination without prior warning is authorized.

### **8.2 Appeal Process**

An employee who believes a disciplinary action was applied unfairly may submit a written appeal to the Camp Director within 48 hours of receiving the discipline. The Camp Director's decision on all appeals is final.

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## Appendix A: Staff Acknowledgment Form

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that I have received, read, and understood the Camp Whispering Pines Lifeguard Staff Handbook (Summer 1994 Edition). I understand that compliance with all policies and procedures contained herein is a condition of my employment, and that failure to comply may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

I further acknowledge that this handbook does not constitute a contract of employment, and that my employment at Camp Whispering Pines is at-will unless otherwise specified in a separate written agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Employee Printed Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Position / Classification*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Employee Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Head Lifeguard Signature (confirming receipt)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

*Return completed form to Camp Director's Office. A copy will be provided to you for your records.*

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