

**New York State Department of Health  
Children's Camp Program Fact Sheet for Tubing**

It is the responsibility of the camp operator to comply with the following:

- A **statement**, signed and dated by the parent/guardian of each participating camper, must be on file at the children's camp. The statement must indicate the parent/guardian was informed/aware that: (1) the camper will participate in the tubing activity and may become immersed in streams that are not approved for swimming by the permit-issuing official (PIO); (2) qualified camp staff will determine the suitability of the weather and water conditions at the time of each use; and, (3) the location may be remote or inaccessible to allow for prompt transfer to an emergency medical health care facility should it be needed.
- Each **participating camper** must: be **12** years of age or older; have a current medical history/physical record on file at the children's camp which documents the camper is not restricted from swimming; be a "swimmer" per assessment conducted by the children's camp's progressive swimming instructor (PSI), with record of assessment on file at the children's camp; and be trained on specific activity rules, restrictions and hazards.
- The children's camp's **written plan** must: describe the general itinerary, location(s) of potential site(s) and stream classification(s) proposed for tubing: detail the criteria used to determine if a site is safe for tubing and provide a corresponding self-inspection form staff must use to make this determination\*; outline staff and camper training provided prior to use of such sites; describe supervision requirements and staff duties for use of the site(s); outline the buddy system; detail emergency procedures, including the lost camper procedures and communication method(s) to obtain assistance; and list minimum equipment to be brought to the trip. \*A safety checklist must be completed at the time of use, then maintained on file in the camp for review by the local health department.
- Qualified and certified **staff** must be provided as required by Subpart 7-2 and be classified as swimmers by a PSI (i.e., 1 staff per 8 campers, a trip leader and at least one counselor). Additionally, the trip leader or an assistant must be qualified and certified as a pool and beach lifeguard (see current bureau fact sheets) and complete the safety checklist. Additional lifeguards must be provided at a 1:25 ratio. It is recommended that a minimum of two staff be certified in American Red Cross CPR for the Professional Rescuer or a course deemed equivalent.
- Acceptable equipment must be provided and used, and shall include at least a properly sized and fitted United States Coast Guard approved life jacket and white water helmet for each participant, a pocket face mask and small first aid kit. Protective footwear must be utilized by all participants.

- The following rules are enforced:
  - Water is entered only when approved and directed to do so by the trip leader.
  - No swimming
  - No diving.
  - No jumping into the water from cliffs, water flumes, or rope swings.
  - No tubing at night or during thunderstorms.
  - Only one occupant per tube. Tubes may not be tied together.
  - Excessively loose clothing and clothing with unsecured strings is prohibited.
  - Hazards are discussed with participants.
  - The buddy system is used.
  
- Compliance with all items on the following **safety checklist** must be met during site use and included on the self-inspection form:
  1. A recent rain storm has not excessively raised the stream level and velocity. (The trip leader must be familiar with “normal” conditions in order to assess these characteristics.)
  2. No thunderstorm is imminent and the air and water temperature is sufficient to protect against hypothermia.
  3. All safety equipment is present, properly fitted, and is in satisfactory condition.
  4. All staff are present and qualified in accordance with the written safety plan.

## Proposed addition to the safety plan guideline

### ➤ Tubing

- In accordance with the International Scale of river difficulty, describe the degree of difficulty of the watercourse and the camper prerequisites for participation. Prerequisites should include but should not be limited to a minimum age, swimming ability, physical ability and health.
- Describe the use of personal floatation device, helmets, footwear and other safety equipment.
- Indicate the minimum qualifications and positioning within the group on the water course for the trip leader, lifeguards, and other staff. What are the staff to camper ratios for each?
- Describe the buddy system that will be employed? What instruction is given to the buddies for staying together and regrouping if they separate?
- What emergency services are available? How will the services be contacted?
- List the rules and general safety information provided to campers and staff prior to the activity. Describe communication signals that are utilized on the water to communicate from the lead to trailing tuber.
- Describe the use and content of parental permission forms.
- List the criteria staff will use to determine if the activity is safe to conduct on the day of the trip. As a minimum, include appropriate weather and stream conditions.

### Side Bar

Floating down a stream in an inflated tire inner tube, commonly called 'Tubing', combines the cooling off aspects of swimming with the enjoyment of boating. This combination is not unlike that of a water park ride; however, the tubing environment is much less controlled. Bottom characteristics, emergency assistance availability and stream depth and velocity vary throughout the watercourse and can be influenced daily by precipitation and controlled water releases from dams and reservoirs.

A properly fitted lifejacket and white water helmet as well as, the use of protective footwear is essential for safety as participants are likely to fall out of the tube in areas of the stream that have the roughest water conditions. It is for this reason that tubing may not be appropriate for everyone. The staff positioning of and limiting the spacing between the lead and rear participants is critical to facilitate proper supervision and emergency care. A lifeguard or first aid certified staff who has floated too far down stream from a person needing assistance is not easily summoned for help.