

A Tale of Two Parks Agencies 2000-2003

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Background

A committee was appointed by the Washington State Office of Financial Management to review drowning deaths at Washington State Parks.

The Review Committee Membership Included:

- Injury prevention specialists
- Water safety officials
- Former administrators in State and King County Parks

Process included:

- Interviews with State Parks administrators, park rangers, and marine patrol
- Review of State Parks forms and newspaper clippings to find drowning deaths
- Review State Parks training manuals and minutes

Methods:

- We compared the review's findings about State Parks with data from City of Seattle Parks for the years 2000-2003

Mission Statements

Seattle City Parks

"Seattle Parks and Recreation will work with all citizens to be good stewards of our environment, and to provide safe and welcoming opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community."



Washington State Parks

"The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission acquires, operates, enhances and protects a diverse system of recreational, cultural, historical and natural sites. The Commission fosters outdoor recreation and education statewide to provide enjoyment and enrichment for all and a valued legacy to future generations."



	Seattle Parks	Wash. State Parks
Rescues and Drowning Deaths		
Number of Rescues by Lifeguards	195	No Lifeguards
Number of Deaths	3	24
Males	3	20
Racial or Ethnic Minorities	2	13



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General Statistics

	Seattle Parks	Wash. State Parks
Number of Parks	10	120
Number of Lifeguarded Beach Parks	9	0
Average Number of Lifeguards / Beach	5.5	0

Number of Visitors

	Seattle Parks	Wash. State Parks
Beaches	564,614	178,622,787

Water Activities Offered

	Seattle Parks	Wash. State Parks
Swim Lessons	9	0
Designated Swim Area	9	Yes

Components of Swim Safety

	Seattle Parks	Wash. State Parks
Standard preventative lifeguard practices	Yes	No
Extensive daily staff training	Yes	No
Staff continuity with individual beaches	Yes	No
Address needs of ethnically diverse communities	Yes	No
Swim Safety Program	Yes	No
Investigate/document every drowning at the parks	Yes	Yes
Centralize collection & analysis of drowning investigations	Yes	No

Components of Boating Safety

	Seattle Parks	Wash. State Parks
Boating Safety Kits for children K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12	Yes	No
Lifeguard safety instruction	Yes	No
Lifeguard loan programs	Yes	Selected parks
Boating safety education offered by Park staff	No	Yes
Participate in regional/national prevention activities	Yes	Yes
Centralize collection/analysis of drowning/accident data	Not Applicable	Yes
Evaluate boating drowning/accident surveillance data	Not Applicable	Yes
Publish boating drowning/accident data	Not Applicable	Yes

Use of Drowning Surveillance Data

	Seattle Parks	Wash. State Parks
Centralized collection and analysis	Yes	No
Distributed in internal publications and annual reports	Yes	No
Budget justification for lifeguard & beach program funding	Yes	No
Identification of improvements for rescue procedures	Yes	No
Identification of key skills for training and treatment	Yes	No

Collaboration with Other Agencies

Seattle City Parks

- Washington State Drowning Prevention Network
- Seattle King County Drowning Prevention Coalition
- 911/E.M.S.
- Harbor Patrol
- Seattle Children's Hospital
- Public Health Seattle & King County

Washington State Parks

- Washington State Drowning Prevention Network
- Seattle King County Drowning Prevention Coalition
- Marine Patrol
- Seattle Children's Hospital
- Safe Kids
- Dive rescue



The Review Committee's Recommendations for Washington State Parks

- Develop a culture of drowning prevention aimed at non-boaters
 - Establish a risk management program
 - Train park rangers
 - Conduct and analyze drowning surveillance
- Reinstate life guards at high use park sites
- Install more lifeguard loan programs
- Expand education programs aimed at diverse cultures
- Collaborate with other agencies involved with drowning prevention and rescue

The Role of Government in Drowning Prevention at Public Parks

- Policy making:
 - Require life jacket availability and use in certain settings
 - Close unsafe bodies of water
- Funding
 - Support safety and prevention oversight and programs
 - Support Environmental beach standards and oversight programs
 - Support Lifeguards/Marine Patrol
- Education / Safety / Skills training
- Address the needs of diverse populations
- Provide information and skill building such as swim lessons or boating safety