



# Camp Walden

## Water Safety Overview

Fall 2011

Camp Walden's waterfront is the centerpiece of our extensive program. Long Lake provides campers with an array of activity options and endless fun, and its beauty complements almost everything that we do. But water activities demand a highly trained and vigilant staff to keep campers safe. The following is an overview of our water-safety protocols and procedures. (Note: All Walden staff have completed at least one year of college, with the exception of a handful of graduates from our Counselor Intern program.)

1. Walden hires Red Cross-certified lifeguards to supervise all waterfront activities. As mandated by the State of Michigan, lifeguards must provide copies of all certifications. In addition, we have members of our waterfront staff who have undertaken additional training to become Water Safety Instructors (WSIs).
2. Prior to arriving at camp, Walden lifeguards complete additional online instruction designed specifically for summer-camp lifeguards. During staff week, they undergo training specific to Walden's waterfront and must prove to our Waterfront Director that they are capable, vigilant and mature individuals. *Our belief is that, when it comes to water safety, there is no substitute, technological or otherwise, for a watchful, well-trained staff.*
3. Every boating activity is staffed by at least one lifeguard. This includes kayaking, canoeing, windsurfing, sailing, swimming, and fishing classes. Waterski, wakeboard, and tubing classes require a lifeguard on the boat as well as a lifeguard supervising campers on shore. For all boating activities, campers and staff are required to wear U.S. Coast Guard Association-approved flotation devices (i.e. life jackets).
4. During all waterfront periods, Walden's waterfront director and/or assistant waterfront director oversee the action *FROM THE WATER*, either on what we call a "crash boat" or a jet ski. Should a boat or boater require help, the "crash boat" can quickly provide assistance.
5. Each waterfront activity—canoe/kayak, windsurf, sailing, waterskiing, swimming—is led by an Area Director. Each Area Director carries a walkie-talkie that provides instant communication with the Waterfront Director and other Area Directors throughout the A-B period.

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6. All campers must pass a swim test in order to participate in waterfront activities. As per state law, Walden's swim test requires that campers swim 12 lengths between our docks (one length is approximately 23 yards) and tread water for 45 seconds. Our waterfront staff observes and notes the swim skills of each camper. Campers who do not pass the swim test are *strongly encouraged* to take swim instruction. The Waterfront director compiles a list of these "Bluegill" swimmers, as we call them, and distributes the list to all administrative staff. Cabin counselors accompany their campers to the swim test and are well aware of those who do not take or pass the test.

7. Swimming at Walden takes place only in our designated swim area. This area is bound by two docks and divided into three camper swim areas. Campers "check in" to and "check out" of a swim area in pairs using a "buddy number" system.

8. Walden campers frequently travel to rivers and lakes around Northern Michigan for overnight and day trips. These outings **always** include at least one lifeguard, in addition to other staff members (state law requires a 1:10 ratio of lifeguards to swimmers). For trips out of camp we maintain a ratio of between 1:3-1:5 staff to campers, depending on camper age.

9. Walden adheres to all State of Michigan laws and American Camp Association guidelines on waterfront safety, including a strict prohibition on nighttime waterfront activities.

10. Our Waterfront Director, Ann Bosenbark, has worked at Walden for 30 years. As a physical education teacher at Napoleon High School in Napoleon, OH, she instructs swimming and certifies Red Cross lifeguards. Her experience and expertise are invaluable assets to Walden's waterfront.

If you have any unanswered questions about water safety at Walden, please contact us. We are more than happy to speak to you!

*Scott Ruthart and Liz Stevens*  
Directors/Camp Walden