



United States Lifesaving Association

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Guideline: Open Water Lifeguard Agency Certification

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Introduction

All lifeguards and other open water rescuers, regardless of assignment, are expected to use their skills and abilities to help prevent injury and drowning in the aquatic environment. Not all lifeguard assignments are the same however, so the training and standards needed by lifeguards in different assignments varies.

The most challenging assignment for a lifeguard is safeguarding natural bodies of water, which USLA refers to as open water. Unlike pools and waterparks, which are relatively similar regardless of locale, the crowd conditions, water currents, waves, dangerous animals, weather, and related conditions of open water differ greatly and pose unique obstacles to maintaining water safety. Furthermore, the responsibilities of open water lifeguards can include a wide variety of special assignments. Some examples are law enforcement, boat rescue, marine firefighting, cliff rescue, emergency dispatching, and flood rescue. Many beach lifeguards in California, Florida, and Hawaii are employed full time on a year-round basis, with some agencies providing 24-hour public safety service similar to that of a police or fire department.

When open water lifeguarding began in the 1800's, training standards and lifesaving techniques were set by local employers and varied widely. In the decades that followed, they were shared, becoming increasingly similar. In 1980, USLA co-hosted a conference in Galveston, Texas in an effort to develop guidelines for establishing nationally agreed upon open water recreational beach standards. All of the major groups in the US concerned with preventing loss of life in and

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around the water were represented. (You may download a copy of the report of this conference from the Lifeguard Library at www.usla.org.)

The Galveston conference resulted in consensus on many issues, such as minimum swimming skills, age, and training needed by beach lifeguards. Shortly thereafter, USLA developed and published a booklet called Guidelines for Open Water Lifeguard Training. It embodied the core recommendations from Galveston, but went further to recommend curriculum standards and other minimum recommended standards. It has since been revised to the document you now read.

In developing open water lifeguard training standards, USLA concluded that a single, rigid training program covering the widely varying conditions in open water areas throughout the United States would be prohibitively lengthy. It was also considered impractical and unnecessary, particularly since most lifeguards work for a single employer for their entire lifesaving career. USLA therefore designed a program with core instruction in basic lifesaving techniques, but one which requires local employers to adjust the training, within established parameters, to address local conditions. For this reason, a lifeguard trained under the USLA system must be retrained if the lifeguard moves to another area.

USLA does not “certify” lifeguards or lifeguard instructors. Instead, USLA certifies lifeguard employers, including their training programs and standards, which follow USLA guidelines. The USLA certification system is therefore, in effect, an accreditation system for local lifeguard training programs.

We consider our guidelines consistent with those of the highest quality open water lifesaving programs in the United States today. Many agencies surpass them and are strongly encouraged to continue providing the levels of excellence they have achieved. Lifesaving can continue to progress only if lifesaving agencies are willing to exceed the current norms, experimenting with new techniques and advanced equipment, the best of which will become the standards of tomorrow.

Since USLA is an organization of open water rescue professionals, our certification programs are designed to meet the needs of rescuers in this environment. Our Lifeguard Agency Certification Program is designed for public safety agencies that provide preventive lifeguarding services. Our companion Aquatic Rescue Response Team certification program is designed for public safety providers which do not provide preventive lifeguard services, but have responsibility for responding to open water emergencies. The document you now hold details requirements for the USLA Lifeguard Agency Certification Program. For information on the ARRT program, contact USLA at our website (www.usla.org) or at 866-FOR-USLA.

Guidelines

Introductory Note: Training conducted under the USLA Lifeguard Agency Certification Program must be conducted on the beaches of the agency where the lifeguard will be employed or on nearby beaches with comparable conditions and geographic features. To be certified an agency must adhere to the following USLA requirement: "Lifeguards assigned to water surveillance have the primary responsibility of observing and managing persons in the water, as well as to provide assistance to persons in the water and shall not be assigned to any duties other than public safety."

Chair National Certification Committee: If you have questions not answered by this document, you may email the National Certification Committee Chair at certification@usla.org.

1. Steps to Certification

- 1.1. Read the standards for open water lifeguards, trainees, and instructors to ensure that your agency is in compliance. If you do not employ full time lifeguards, you can ignore standards for these personnel. Existing lifeguard agencies which meet the certification guidelines may apply for certification and become certified at the appropriate level upon review and approval of the certification officer, certification committee and board of directors at the meeting following approval of their application. Newly established lifeguard agencies which apply for certification and meet the certification guidelines must operate for a period of one (1) season before certification may be approved.
- 1.2. Read the *Minimum Equipment Standards* and ensure that your agency is in compliance.
- 1.3. Read the *Required Course Curriculum* and ensure that your agency's basic training course includes all elements listed (except those specifically noted as optional). The curriculum is intended to ensure a broad understanding of the basic aspects of lifesaving, but allows tailoring to address local conditions. A copy of the third edition of *Open Water Lifesaving – The United States Lifesaving Association Manual* (2017) must be available to each trainee. Agencies are encouraged to utilize the lesson plans provided by the United States Lifesaving Association. The Resource Material section may also be of assistance.
- 1.4. An agency wishing to have its training program and standards nationally certified submits a completed certification application — which can be found at www.usla.org/certification — with all required documentation. A payment covering the application and review fee must be enclosed or submitted.
- 1.5. The USLA Executive Director or designee will review the application for completeness, consult with the Chair of the Certification Committee, work with the applying agency to address any shortcomings, and then send a copy to a Certification Officer from the USLA region in which the agency lies. The Executive Director or designee will attempt to choose a Certification Officer who is geographically close to the applicant, but who is not employed or affiliated with the applicant.

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- 1.6. Within thirty (30) days of receiving an application (sooner in urgent circumstances), the Certification Officer is responsible for conducting a thorough review and submitting written findings. The review must include, at a minimum, checking all documents submitted and ensuring that they show the agency to be in compliance with the current guidelines of USLA, at either the minimum or advanced level. It is also suggested, but not required, that an on-site review be conducted for most agencies. An on-site review is required for newly established agencies.
- 1.7. Upon receiving the written findings of a Certification Officer, the Executive Director or designee will file a copy of the findings and forward a copy to the Certification Committee Chair for review by the National Certification Committee. This committee, which normally meets in May and November in conjunction with the Board of Directors, is responsible for recommending approval or disapproval to the Board, with final approval requiring a majority vote of the full Board. In cases in which an applying agency fails to meet the necessary deadlines for application and can demonstrate that it would be prevented from operating as a result of a delay in approval until the next Board of Directors meeting, the Certification Chair, in consultation with the President, may provisionally certify an agency found to meet all requirements until the next Board of Directors meeting, at which time the Board of Directors shall approve or disapprove the application.
- 1.8. In any case of a finding by the Certification Committee and concurrence by the USLA Board of Directors, at any time, that an applying agency provided information in the application that was materially false or misleading, the application and agency certification shall be deemed void, the application fee shall be retained by USLA, and the agency shall be advised of the reason. A subsequent application by the agency shall not be accepted for a period of one year from action by the USLA Board of Directors and shall require documentation of full resolution of the issues which caused revocation.
- 1.9. Upon favorable decision by the Board of Directors, a certificate so stating and signed by the President and Certification Committee Chair, will be issued and valid for a period of three (3) years. The agency must then reapply, again submitting the current fee. The Board of Directors may extend certification by up to six-months for good cause, but shall not extend beyond six-months. Recertification of an agency that has been granted an extension will be for two and one-half years.
- 1.10. Any changes to the recommended guidelines and standards which may be made by the Board of Directors after an agency has been certified become effective for future applications and renewals, but create no mandate for currently certified agencies. However, all certified agencies are strongly encouraged to adhere to the most current recommended guidelines.
- 1.11. By applying for and accepting certification, the certified agency agrees to maintain all standards asserted in the application during the application and certification period. USLA certification is valid only so long as the certified agency continues to maintain these standards. In any case in which the USLA Certification Committee Chair determines that a certified agency's program fails to meet these standards, the Certification Committee Chair may suspend certification of the agency, which

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suspension is effected via written notice to an appropriate agency representative. A letter of suspension shall include details of the reasons and an explanation of how the suspension may be appealed, which shall be via a written letter to the USLA President, with copy to the Certification Committee Chair. This suspension shall be effective for 30 days, during which the National Certification Committee shall be consulted. With concurrence of the National Certification Committee, suspension may be extended an additional 60 days (for a total of 90 days). Within 90 days of suspension, the USLA Board of Directors or, between regular meetings of the Board of Directors, the USLA Executive Board shall review information provided by the Certification Committee Chair, the agency, and any other appropriate sources, and shall render a decision to revoke certification, to reinstate certification, or to take any other appropriate action. A letter of suspension shall include the following language: "As of the date of this letter, you are no longer operating as a certified and approved USLA agency. All rights and privileges accompanying USLA certification have been suspended until further notice. You are instructed to remove all USLA signs, symbols and/or certification documents from public view."

- 1.12. The collection and publication of national lifesaving statistics is a critical service of USLA. The submission of annual statistics to USLA for each calendar year by March 1 of the following year is a requirement for any agency to achieve and maintain certification. This can be accomplished by mail or via the USLA website (www.usla.org). In the case of certified agencies which do not report their statistics by that date, a letter will be sent advising that failure to provide statistics within 30 days will result in suspension until and unless compliance with this requirement is achieved. That suspension will not require the procedures listed in #11 above, except that the Chair of the Certification Committee will send a letter of suspension and suspension shall be effective until a valid statistical report is received by USLA for the year in question.

2. USLA Certification Officer

- 2.1. Certification Officers are the persons primarily responsible for evaluating whether an applying agency adheres to the recommended guidelines of USLA at either the minimum or advanced level. Certification Officers then make recommendations to the national Certification Committee, which recommends approval or disapproval to the USLA Board of Directors. Certification Officers serve without compensation. The following are the criteria under which a Certification Officer may be appointed.
 - 2.1.1. Membership -- A candidate must be a current voting member of USLA.
 - 2.1.2. Lifesaving Experience -- A candidate must have a minimum of 4,000 hours experience as an open water lifeguard.
 - 2.1.3. Supervisory/Instruction Experience -- It is recommended, but not required, that a candidate for the position of Certification Officer have supervisory experience in an open water lifeguard agency and/or experience as an instructor in an open water lifeguard agency.
 - 2.1.4. Summary of Qualifications -- A candidate must compile a resume detailing qualifications.

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- 2.1.5. Nomination -- A candidate must be recommended for appointment by the Regional Council.
- 2.1.6. Appointment -- The USLA President shall have the sole discretion for appointment of a Certification Officer once nominated by a Regional Council. It is recommended that the President attempt to balance the need for an adequate number of Certification Officers from each region against the administrative burden posed by having more than is necessary.
- 2.1.7. Term of Appointment -- Appointments shall be for no more than two years, at which time a candidate may be reappointed under the same terms as for initial appointment.
- 2.1.8. Certification -- No Certification Officer may certify an agency with which the Certification Officer is currently affiliated.

3. Open Water Lifeguard Instructor

- 3.1. The following are standards for instructors of open water lifeguard training programs. These are the standards for lead instructors. This does not preclude the use of assistants, field training officers or others who do not meet these standards. Open Water Lifeguard Instructors are directly responsible for ensuring that standards are met and that all training modules are taught by persons with proper credentials.

Standards To Be Met and Maintained Include:

- 3.1.1. Work Experience – Must have worked a minimum cumulative total of 1,000 hours of employment compiled in no fewer than three seasons as a seasonal open water lifeguard or a full time open water lifeguard at a lifeguard agency which meets the standards of USLA. (Agencies applying for initial certification may need to request a waiver from this requirement.)
- 3.1.2. Education – Must possess a high school diploma or equivalency certificate.
- 3.1.3. Medical Aid Certification – Must be currently certified by an agency recognized by the Federal Government or the state government in the state of employment to instruct any medical aid or CPR course provided to trainees by the employing agency or must ensure that a person so certified is responsible for providing such training.

Additional Standards for Advanced Agency Certification Include:

- 3.1.4. Work Experience – Must have worked a minimum cumulative total of 2,000 hours of employment compiled in no fewer than five seasons as a seasonal lifeguard or above at a lifeguard agency certified as meeting the minimum standards of USLA.
- 3.1.5. Training Experience – At least two seasons experience as an instructor or assistant instructor of a program which meets the minimum standards for USLA certification.
- 3.1.6. Scuba Certified – Certified as a scuba diver by a nationally recognized certifying agency.

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4. Open Water Lifeguard Trainee

4.1. An Open Water Lifeguard Trainee is a lifeguard in training. This category was created to address the needs of some agencies to train lifeguards in-service, rather than the preferred method of conducting a training academy prior to assignment. Medical aid and CPR training must be given and the swim standard met before the lifeguard is given any assignment on the beach. The remaining training must be provided within 30 calendar days from the first day of deployment of the lifeguard. Open Water Lifeguard Trainees may work only under the direct and immediate supervision (side-by-side in the same station or area) of a Full Time Open Water Lifeguard or a Seasonal Open Water Lifeguard, either with at least 1,000 hours experience.

Standards To Be Met and Maintained Include:

- 4.1.1. Age – A minimum of 16 years of age.
- 4.1.2. Swimming Ability – Demonstrates an ability to swim 500 meters (550 yards), without equipment that enhances buoyancy or propulsion, over a measured course in ten minutes or less. USLA requires that each applying agency have a written policy in place detailing its required swim test. The policy may, for example, be published in a policy manual or included in an official job announcement and must make clear that this is a standard that must be met and maintained by all lifeguards.
- 4.1.3. Health & Fitness – Possesses adequate vision, hearing acuity, physical ability and stamina to perform the duties of an open water lifeguard as documented by a medical doctor, or the doctor's designated physician's assistant or ARNP (advanced registered Nurse Practitioner).
- 4.1.4. Medical Aid Certification – Certified as having successfully completed a medical aid course accepted by the Federal Government or by the state government in the state of employment. Total formal medical aid training, including the certified medical aid course (but not the CPR course), shall be no less than 21 hours.
- 4.1.5. CPR Certification – Currently certified as having successfully completed a course in providing one person adult, two person adult, child and infant cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), including obstructed airway training, AED, BVM, and use of barrier devices, accepted by the Federal Government or by the state government in the state of employment (basic life support for healthcare providers).
- 4.1.6. Strength & Stamina – Successfully completes a pre-employment test demonstrating adequate physical strength and stamina to perform the duties of an open water lifeguard.

5. Season Open Water Lifeguard

5.1. A Seasonal Open Water Lifeguard is a lifeguard employed part time, whether hourly or seasonally. For lifeguard agencies which provide services seasonally, the only employees are usually seasonal. Therefore, these agencies are not required to meet standards for Full Time Open Water Lifeguards.

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Standards To Be Met and Maintained Include:

- 5.1.1. Age – A minimum of 16 years of age.
- 5.1.2. Swimming Ability – Demonstrates an ability to swim 500 meters (550 yards), without equipment that enhances buoyancy or propulsion, over a measured course in ten minutes or less. The annual swim standard must be met before returning to lifeguard duties. USLA requires that each applying agency have a written policy in place detailing its required swim test. The policy may, for example, be published in a policy manual or included in an official job announcement and must make clear that this is a standard that must be met and maintained by all lifeguards.
- 5.1.3. Health & Fitness – Possesses adequate vision, hearing acuity, physical ability and stamina to perform the duties of an open water lifeguard as documented by a medical doctor, or the doctor’s designated physician’s assistant or ARNP (advanced registered Nurse Practitioner).
- 5.1.4. Medical Aid Certification – Certified as having successfully completed a medical aid course accepted by the Federal Government or by the state government in the state of employment. Total formal medical aid training, including the certified medical aid course (but not the CPR course), shall be no less than 21 hours.
- 5.1.5. CPR Certification – Currently certified as having successfully completed a course in providing one person adult, two person adult, child and infant cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), including obstructed airway training, AED, BVM, and use of barrier devices, accepted by the Federal Government or by the state government in the state of employment (basic life support for healthcare providers).
- 5.1.6. Training – Certified as successfully completing a course consisting of a total of not less than 40 hours in open water lifesaving which meets the curriculum requirements of the United States Lifesaving Association. This shall not include the minimum training hours required for medical aid or CPR.
- 5.1.7. Scuba Training – Any lifeguard who will be required to utilize scuba in the course of employment must, at a minimum, be certified as a scuba diver at the basic level by a nationally recognized certifying agency.
- 5.1.8. Strength & Stamina – Successfully completes a pre-employment test demonstrating adequate physical strength and stamina to perform the duties of an open water lifeguard.

Additional Standards for Advanced Agency Certification Include:

- 5.1.9. Medical Aid Certification – Certified as an emergency medical responder in a medical aid course accepted by the Federal Government or by the state government in the state of employment, which is equivalent to Department of Transportation Emergency Medical Responder. Total formal medical aid training in the certified medical aid course, including CPR training, shall be no less than 40 hours.

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5.1.10. Training – Certified as successfully completing a course consisting of a total of not less than 48 hours in open water lifesaving which meets the curriculum requirements of the United States Lifesaving Association. This shall not include the minimum training hours required for medical aid or CPR.

6. Full Time Open Water Lifeguard

6.1. A Full Time Open Water Lifeguard, also known as a Permanent Open Water Lifeguard, is a lifeguard appointed to a full time, year round position as a lifeguard at an open water beach, who has successfully completed a probationary period. A probationary full time open water lifeguard must, at a minimum, meet the minimum standards of a Seasonal Open Water Lifeguard during the probationary period.

Standards To Be Met and Maintained Include:

- 6.1.1. Experience – Must have worked no less than 1,000 hours as an open water lifeguard at the beaches of the hiring agency.
- 6.1.2. Age – A minimum of 18 years of age.
- 6.1.3. Education – Must possess a high school diploma or equivalency certificate.
- 6.1.4. Swimming Ability – Demonstrates an ability to swim 500 meters (550 yards), without equipment that enhances buoyancy or propulsion, over a measured course in ten minutes or less. Demonstrates an ability to successfully perform an open water rescue. USLA requires that each applying agency have a written policy in place detailing its required swim test. The policy may, for example, be published in a policy manual or included in an official job announcement and must make clear that this is a standard that must be met and maintained by all lifeguards.
- 6.1.5. Health & Fitness – Possesses adequate vision, hearing acuity, physical ability and stamina to perform the duties of an open water lifeguard as documented by a medical doctor, or the doctor’s designated physician’s assistant or ARNP (advanced registered Nurse Practitioner).
- 6.1.6. Medical Aid and CPR Certification – Certified as an emergency medical responder in a medical aid course, accepted by the Federal Government or by the state government in the state of employment, which is equivalent to Department of Transportation Emergency Medical Responder. Total formal medical aid and CPR training, in the certified medical aid course, shall be no less than 40 hours.
- 6.1.7. Training – Certified as successfully completing a course consisting of a total of not less than 48 hours in open water lifesaving which meets the curriculum requirements of the United States Lifesaving Association. This shall not include the minimum training hours required for medical aid and CPR.
- 6.1.8. Scuba Training – Any lifeguard who will be required to utilize scuba in the course of employment must, at a minimum, be certified as a scuba diver at the basic level by a nationally recognized certifying agency.

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6.1.9. Strength & Stamina – Demonstrates the ability, through a test of strength and stamina, to perform the rigorous physical duties of an open water lifeguard.

Additional Standards for Advanced Agency Certification Include:

6.1.10. Medical Aid and CPR Certification – Certified as an Emergency Medical Technician.

7. Recurring Training

7.1. Recurring training is essential to ensuring that personnel maintain adequate levels of knowledge and fitness to continue to perform lifesaving tasks. In addition to maintaining the minimum standards necessary for the position, employees should be provided drills and formal training to ensure high levels of performance.

Standards for Recurring Training:

7.1.1. Daily Physical Training - Employees are provided daily opportunities, conditions permitting, for activities such as swimming, rescue board training and running.

7.1.2. Annual Rescue Skills Training - Subsequent to initial training being provided, employees are provided a minimum of 16 hours per year in formal training.

Additional Standards for Recurring Training for Advanced Agency Certification:

7.1.3. Regular Drills - Drills are conducted such as mock rescues and other emergencies at least once per month which allow each employee some degree of participation.

8. Minimum Equipment Standards

8.1. Rescue

8.1.1. At least one rescue floatation device (RFD) for each lifeguard on duty.

8.1.2. Mask(s), snorkel(s), and swim fins readily accessible to mount an underwater search and rescue, as appropriate.

8.1.3. Binoculars readily accessible in the beach area, and in each main tower and emergency vehicle.

8.1.4. Marker buoy(s) readily accessible for submerged victim search and rescue.

8.1.5. Swim fins for rescue purposes readily accessible to lifeguards as appropriate according to local conditions.

8.2. Medical

8.2.1. A medical aid kit adequate to treat minor injuries at each staffed lifeguard post.

8.2.2. A medical aid kit adequate to treat both minor and major medical emergencies at each beach area.

8.2.3. Equipment to protect against bloodborne pathogens consistent with OSHA requirements.

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- 8.2.4. Spinal stabilization equipment, including spineboard, head and neck immobilization devices, and fastening devices readily accessible at each beach area.
- 8.2.5. Oxygen readily accessible at each staffed beach area, with all lifeguard personnel trained in its use.
- 8.2.6. A cardiac defibrillator¹ (or defibrillators) readily accessible at each staffed beach area, with personnel trained in its use (highly recommended for all agencies, required to achieve advanced certification or advanced recertification after January 1, 2004).
- 8.3. Communications
 - 8.3.1. Equipment for lifeguards to communicate with the public at a distance (ex: whistles, megaphone(s), air horn(s), etc.)
 - 8.3.2. Two-way radios or similar equipment for lifeguard to lifeguard communication.
 - 8.3.3. Equipment for lifeguards to immediately activate local emergency medical services (EMS).
- 8.4. Personnel Needs
 - 8.4.1. Lifeguards are required to wear an easily identifiable uniform, denoting the wearer as a trained rescuer (ex: "Lifeguard," "Beach Patrol," "Marine Safety") and denoting the employing agency.
 - 8.4.2. Sunscreen for all lifeguard personnel.
 - 8.4.3. Reasonable equipment to protect lifeguards from sun exposure.
- 8.5. Record Keeping and Reporting
 - 8.5.1. A system for documenting lifeguard activities, consistent with USLA standards, with annual statistical data reported to the USLA statistics coordinator by March 1 of each year.

¹ Automatic external defibrillator (AED) or semi-automatic defibrillator

Resource Material

Required for All Students:

- The Open Water Lifesaving – The United States Lifesaving Association Manual, United States Lifesaving Association, B. Chris Brewster - Editor, ISBN 0-536-73735-5

Recommended:

- Advanced Diving Technology and Techniques, National Association of Underwater Instructors, ISBN 0916974545
- Chapman Piloting and Seamanship, Elbert S. Maloney, ISBN 1588160890
- The DAN Emergency Handbook: A Guide to the Identification of and First Aid for Scuba (Air Diving Emergencies), John Lippman, Stan Bugg, ISBN 0959030611
- Emergency Care and Transportation of the Sick and Injured, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, James D. Heckman - Editor, ISBN 0763732486
- Emergency Response, American Red Cross, 1997, ISBN 158480095X
- First Responder, National Standard Curriculum, US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/ems/nsc.htm>
- The Incident Command System (NFA-ICS-SM), National Emergency Training Center, FEMA
- Scuba Lifesaving and Accident Management, YMCA, Tom Leaird - Editor, ISBN 087322132X
- Swiftwater Rescue, Slim Ray, ISBN 0964958503
- Technical Rescue Program Development Manual, United States Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Waves & Beaches, Willard Bascom, ISBN 0385148445

Required Course Curriculum

Terms

Identify means provide a full explanation to students and take steps to validate their comprehension and retention.

Demonstrate means show students how to accomplish the skill and ensure that they can adequately demonstrate an ability perform it.

I. Basic Rescue

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify the importance of a lifeguard maintaining a position of safety when effecting a rescue.
2. Identify the appropriate method of entry for various types of water conditions, including, if applicable to the agency's beaches:
 - a) Shallow water
 - b) Deep water
 - c) Unfamiliar water
 - d) Surf
3. Identify the characteristics of a proper approach to a victim.
4. Identify considerations when making contact with a victim.
5. Identify the appropriate victim approach for different rescue situations: front surface, rear surface or underwater.
6. Identify the value of a cross-chest tow, modified cross-chest tow, or armpit tow for a given rescue situation.
7. Identify appropriate methods of lifting and removing a victim from the water.
8. Identify the priority of resuscitation over removal of a victim from the water.
9. Identify defenses and escapes from a panicked victim.
10. Identify the advantages of using swim fins during rescues.
11. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of reaching, wading, and throwing assists.
12. Identify the need to assess for spinal injury prior to effecting a rescue or moving a victim.

Skill Objectives

1. Demonstrate the shallow water dive and porpoising.
2. Demonstrate the heads-up breast stroke and heads-up crawl stroke.
3. Demonstrate the front surface approach, rear surface approach, and submerged victim approach.
4. Demonstrate the cross-chest tow, modified cross-chest tow, or armpit tow.
5. Demonstrate appropriate methods of lifting and removing a victim from the water.
6. Demonstrate defenses and escapes from a panicked victim or victims.
7. Demonstrate the donning and use of swim fins.
8. Demonstrate donning and clearing of mask and snorkel.

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9. Demonstrate a surface dive and recovery of a minimum 150 pound victim from a depth of at least ten feet of water.
10. Demonstrate proper spinal injury management during a rescue.

II. Professional Lifeguarding

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify the primary and additional functions of a lifeguard.
2. Identify the need for policies and standard procedures.
3. Explain the role of public relations in lifeguarding.
4. Identify appropriate methods of communicating with the public.
5. Identify functions of tower systems, particularly those used by the employing agency.
6. Identify the uses of mobile vehicle support if used by the agency.
7. Identify the uses of both motorized and non-motorized vessel support.
8. Identify the correct way to interface with other local safety agencies including ambulance services, police, and rescue personnel. Identify the emergency operation plan (EOP) to summon and utilize these agencies when needed.
9. Identify the importance of equipment maintenance.
10. Identify factors which increase the risk of legal action.
11. Identify the purpose of uniforms.
12. Identify the importance of in-service training.
13. Identify the need for skin and eye protection from environmental exposure.
14. Identify the risks of personal injury to lifeguards posed by trauma and biohazards, particularly during training and rescue responses.
15. Identify methods of promoting personal safety through use of wetsuits and other protective gear, and the use of rescue equipment and victims as buffers from sources of injury.
16. Identify the need for and methods to access back-up in emergencies.

III. Environmental Conditions

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify the various types of waves and the forces effecting their formation if the agency serves a beach with wave action.
2. Identify the characteristics and means of recognizing the types of currents experienced in the waters served by the agency.
3. If rip currents are present at beaches served by the agency, identify each of the various types of rip currents.
4. Identify the hazards associated with the following which are present at beaches served by the agency:
 - a) Rip currents
 - b) Longshore currents
 - c) Tidal currents
 - d) River currents
 - e) Inshore holes
 - f) Rocks
 - g) Reefs
 - h) Lightning

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- i) Offshore winds
- j) Bottom contours and composition
- k) Jetties and piers
- l) Sand collapse

IV. Communications

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify the basic functions of a communications system.
2. Identify the usefulness and limitations of the following means of communication:
 - a) Personal contact
 - b) Whistle
 - c) Flags
 - d) Telephones and intercoms
 - e) Two-way radio
 - f) Public address systems
 - g) Megaphones
 - h) Hand signals
 - i) Signs
3. Identify the following arm signals from a lifeguard in the water:
 - a) Assistance required
 - b) Resuscitation required
 - c) Missing swimmer (Code X)
 - d) All clear (OK)
4. Identify the following arm signals from a lifeguard on shore:
 - a) Return to the beach
 - b) Go farther out
 - c) Go left
 - d) Go right
 - e) Stay there (or search there)
5. Identify the diver flag.
6. Identify the signs used by the employing agency.
7. Identify appropriate phone procedures.
8. Identify appropriate two-way radio procedures
 - a) Internal radio procedures
 - b) Radio procedures with other agencies

Skill Objectives

1. Demonstrate all methods of inter-lifeguard communication used by the agency including:
 - a) Hand/arm signals
 - b) Whistle systems
 - c) Two-way radios
 - d) Telephones
2. Demonstrate all methods of lifeguard to swimmer communications used by the agency including:
 - a) Personal contact

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- b) Whistle
- c) Public address systems
- d) Megaphones

V. Records and Reporting

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify the need for precision in keeping written records.
2. Identify important details which should be included in an accident report.
3. Identify the importance of incident and activity reports as legal documents.
4. Identify the need for keeping accurate statistics on agency activities.
5. Identify the value of annual reporting of agency statistics to the USLA

VI. Preventive Lifeguarding

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify ways to recognize potential victims and proper water scanning techniques.
2. Identify hazards, such as the following, which are experienced at the locale of the employing agency:
 - a) Calm and rough water
 - b) Cold water
 - c) Jetties
 - d) Piers
 - e) Storm drains
 - f) Rocks
 - g) Reefs
 - h) Creeks or streams
 - i) Rip currents and other water currents
 - j) Water animals, particularly those which can cause harm
 - k) Surf
3. Identify indications and signals of distress from:
 - a) Motorized boats
 - b) Sailboats
 - c) Divers
 - d) Surfers, including stand-up-paddleboarders, sailboarders, and kitesurfers
4. Identify the value of an offshore platform in management of a swimming crowd and identification of victims in distress.

VII. Rescue Techniques and Procedures

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify the usefulness and limitations of the rescue tube and rescue buoy in the following situations:
 - a) Unconscious victim
 - b) Multiple victim rescue
 - c) Defense against a panicked victim
 - d) In-water ventilations
2. Identify the usefulness and limitations of the rescue paddleboard in the following situations:

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- a) Long distance rescue
 - b) Multiple victim rescue
 - c) Rough water or high surf rescue
 - d) Providing ventilations on a rescue board
3. Identify considerations when utilizing a helicopter for a rescue.
 4. Identify considerations when assisting a disabled vessel and the passengers thereof.
 5. Identify considerations of the following rescue situations where they may develop on beaches served by the employing agency:
 - a) Rescue from a pier
 - b) Rescue from rock areas
 - c) Rescue of a scuba diver
 - d) Rescue of victims in a rip current
 - e) Rescue of victims in various surf conditions
 6. Identify the benefits, limitations and proper methods of motorized and non-motorized vessels for the following tasks:
 - a) Preventive lifeguarding
 - b) Calm water rescue
 - c) Rough water rescue
 - d) Multiple victim rescue
 - e) Victim transport
 - f) Victim resuscitation and CPR
 - g) Identify the usefulness and limitations of the landline, if used by the employing agency

Skill Objectives

1. Demonstrate the use of the rescue tube or rescue buoy for the following situations:
 - a) Conscious victim
 - b) Unconscious victim
 - c) Panicked victim
 - d) In-water ventilations
 - e) Multiple victims
2. Demonstrate the use of the rescue paddleboard in the following situations:
 - a) Conscious victim
 - b) Unconscious victim
 - c) Providing ventilations on a rescue board
 - d) Multiple victims

VIII. Medical Aid in the Aquatic Environment

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify conditions which warrant suspicion of spinal injuries.
2. Identify methods of handling suspected spinal injuries.
3. Identify the symptoms and treatments for the following injuries or medical problems:
 - a) Resuscitation of drowning victims
 - b) Injuries from aquatic life common to your area
 - c) Cold water injuries

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Skill Objective

1. Demonstrate methods for safely extricating a person with suspected spinal injuries from distress.

IX. Search and Recovery

Knowledge Objectives

1. Identify methods for establishing landmarks in searches for submerged victims.
2. Identify the usefulness and limitations of the parallel, fan, and circular search patterns.
3. Identify the usefulness and limitations of the use of mask, fins, and snorkel in search and rescue operations.
4. Identify the usefulness and limitations of scuba in search and rescue operations.
5. Identify considerations in body recovery.
6. Identify line and shore signals for search and recovery.
7. Identify the use of cross-bearings in fixing the "last known point" of the victim.

Skill Objectives

1. Demonstrate a parallel, fan, and circular search.
2. Demonstrate the use of cross-bearings and marker buoys.