



World Water Safety

## **INTERNATIONAL LIFE SAVING FEDERATION**

Gemeenteplein 26 – 3010 Leuven – Belgium  
Tel: (32.16) 89.60.60 – Fax: (32.16) 89.70.70  
E-mail: [ils.hq@telenet.be](mailto:ils.hq@telenet.be) - Web: [www.ilsf.org](http://www.ilsf.org)

### **LIFESAVING POSITION STATEMENT - LPS 09**

## **RECERTIFICATION FOR BEACH AND OPEN WATER LIFESAVERS**

NOTE: This statement is intended for those persons, acting in a professional paid or volunteer capacity, who are trained in the techniques of water rescue and resuscitation and who assume a duty to safeguard members of the public at aquatic sites. They may be called lifeguards, lifesavers or both. This statement is not directed at members of the public trained in water safety and rescue techniques, but without a duty to respond, who may also be known, in some areas of the world, as lifesavers.

The standards recommended in this position statement are the minimum that ILS recommends. ILS encourages organisations to exceed these recommended minimum standards where local conditions and/or expectations of lifesavers are warranted.

### **BACKGROUND**

It is the primary role of a lifesaver to ensure the health and safety of the users of a specified aquatic environment through enforcing all facility/venue policies and procedures and through preventive actions, responding to persons likely to come into or in difficulty or in a hazardous situation, and to rescue persons in danger and provide necessary after care.

It has been a tradition for many lifesaving organisations to have a period during which lifesavers and lifeguard qualifications/certifications are deemed to be current. The period of currency varies from country to country and organisation to organisation, and experience shows the period during which a certificate is deemed current can vary from one year (annual), two years (biennial) or to three years.

Further, there are those countries or organisations with certifications with a validity period of greater than one year that request a lifesaver to be re-assessed annually for one component of the certificate such as cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or rescue breathing.

One study of lifeguards, for example, found clear demonstration of the value of in-service training (Turner et al 2003) and the lifeguards to be “constantly practicing skills and training”.

Experts in the field of lifesaver training and rescue believe that lifesavers need to be able to demonstrate that they have retained effective mastery of the skills and techniques that are required of lifesavers. This includes the physical capability to affect those skills and techniques. This type of re-certification or proficiency/performance testing can also provide an opportunity for lifesavers to update information and techniques.

The WHO Guidelines for Safe Recreational Water Environments, Volume 1 (WHO 2003) recommend that lifeguards (and lifesavers) should have appropriate training and hold a suitable current qualification. This would normally be from an appropriate and recognized training and assessment agent. Lifesavers should, for example, be competent in lifesaving methods, swimming and the most current methods of resuscitation. Requalification should be undertaken at regular intervals, and practical rescue and resuscitation skills should be practised frequently. Both fitness and technical knowledge are required.

Research in CPR and AED (automatic external defibrillation) training has shown that on-going refresher training is required for maintenance of skill and confidence in readiness for use in real emergencies. For example, in Woollard et al 2004 the study concluded that “initial training improved performance of all CPR skills, although all except compression rate had deteriorated after 6 months. The proportion of subjects able to correctly perform most CPR skill was higher following refresher training than after the initial class.” In a more recent study, Woollard et al (2006) showed that “refresher classes held more frequently and at shorter intervals increased subjects' self-assessed confidence, possibly indicating greater preparedness to use an AED in a real emergency”. Further, in Christenson J. et al (2007), it was found that “after primary training/retraining, the CPR skills of targeted lay responders deteriorate nominally but 80% remain competent up to 1 year. AED skills do not deteriorate significantly and 90% of volunteers remain competent up to 1 year”.

The American Red Cross Health Safety & Community Services section reviewed 24 research studies on the retention of CPR skills and motivational preparedness; Red Cross conducted six of these studies and the remaining 18 were drawn from published peer reviewed journals. Many of the studies point to the need for a program of on-going periodic education, reviews and skill practice sessions.

The International Life Saving Federations has reviewed this issue and has developed this Position Statement based on consensus expert opinion.

This statement addresses the need to regularly reconfirm that the lifesaver remains effective.

## **STATEMENT**

1. Lifesavers need to successfully complete a formal qualification to be eligible to provide their services.
2. Proficiency training and retesting ensures that lifesavers maintain the required skills, knowledge, judgement and physical capability to perform their duties. This type of training can also provide an opportunity for lifesavers to update information and techniques
3. The International Life Saving Federation recommends that an appropriate proficiency (performance) test be undertaken annually in advance of taking up a position as a lifesaver.

4. Proficiency(performance) test must include:
  - a. Timed swim (400 metres in 8 minutes)
  - b. Basic life support and first aid at an appropriate level
  - c. Ability to escape from grips and patient recovery
  - d. Patient management
  - e. Any skill deemed appropriate by management or the certification authority
5. Re-certification must be undertaken within a three-year period or whatever the local jurisdiction requires, whichever is less. Re-certification requirements:
  - a. Where a candidate has undertaken annual proficiency (performance) tests within the three-year period the candidate is re-certified for another year.
  - b. Where a candidate has not undertaken any proficiency (performance) test within the three-year period, the candidate must re-certify in full.

## DEFINITIONS

- Certify: “to issue a license or certificate to provide proof as meeting a standard”
- Proficient: “having or showing knowledge and skill and aptitude”
- Qualification: “an official record of achievement awarded on the successful completion of a course of training”
- Re-certify: “to renew the certification of, especially certification given by a licensing board”
- Test: “a series of questions, problems, or physical responses designed to determine knowledge, intelligence, or ability”

## REFERENCES

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