
THIRD READING

Bill No: SCR 192
Author: Stern (D), et al.
Amended: 8/3/26
Vote: 21

SUBJECT: Open water lifeguards

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This resolution recognizes open water lifeguards as first responders, in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and drowning prevention, as provided.

ANALYSIS: This resolution makes the following legislative findings:

- 1) California's open water lifeguards, employed by various cities, counties, fire departments, harbor districts, park districts, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and others, serve and protect beaches and lakes across the state and conduct aquatic rescues, respond to medical emergencies and traffic collisions, execute tactical extrications, and more, all of which fall under the tenets of a first responder classification.
- 2) The United States Lifesaving Association and the California Surf Lifesaving Association document that, based on statistics from 46 reporting California lifeguard agencies over the past 26 years from 2000 to 2025, inclusive, California's open water lifeguards have protected more than 4.5 billion patrons and performed an astounding 96 million preventative actions or mitigating incidents, and effected 1.4 million rescues.
- 3) Open water lifeguards not only protect human life but also safeguard property, preserve evidence, and protect the environment, which together represent the four core tenets commonly used to define a first responder.
- 4) In the performance of their duties, open water lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant risk to their own lives and physical safety in dynamic and hazardous ocean, surf, and shoreline environments.

- 5) Lifeguards have given their lives in the line of duty protecting the public on California's neighboring coastlines, including Newport Beach ocean lifeguard Ben Carlson, who died on July 6, 2014, while rescuing a distressed swimmer, a sacrifice memorialized by the Ben Carlson Memorial and Scholarship Foundation and honored by the lifesaving community statewide.
- 6) The Legislature recognizes the value of all California public agencies employing open water lifeguards, including, but not limited to, cities, counties, fire departments, harbor and port districts, park districts, and the Department of Parks and Recreation, formally recognizing open water lifeguards as first responders in their training frameworks, emergency planning documents, and mutual aid agreements, commensurate with the scope and gravity of the duties those lifeguards perform.

This resolution recognizes professional open water lifeguards, including, but not limited to, ocean lifeguards, lake lifeguards, and all nonsworn open water lifeguard personnel employed by state, county, municipal, and district agencies throughout California, as first responders in acknowledgment of their essential role in emergency response, public safety, and drowning prevention.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/5/26)

Crystal Cove Lifeguard Association
Long Beach Lifeguard Association
Santa Cruz State Lifeguard Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/5/26)

None received

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8/5/26 15:18:32

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