



# United States Lifesaving Association

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[www.usla.org](http://www.usla.org)

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September 30, 2016

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Honorable John T. Rhodes, Mayor  
Honorable City Council Members  
Myrtle Beach City Council  
P. O. Box 7411  
Myrtle Beach, SC 29572

RE: BEACH LIFEGUARD STANDARDS

The United States Lifesaving Association is America's nonprofit, professional association of beach lifeguards and open water rescuers. The USLA works to reduce the incidence of death and injury in the aquatic environment through public education, national lifeguard standards, training programs, promotion of high levels of lifeguard readiness, and other means.

Based on emails, media reports, and preliminary investigations of recent drowning cases, the USLA has identified the Myrtle Beach system combining lifesaving and commercial activities to be an unreliable means of protecting swimmers. In addition, it was found that at times local lifeguard providers have falsely claimed to meet the standards for USLA certification and illegally utilized the USLA logo on agency apparel. Since the City Council sets the requirements for Myrtle Beach lifeguard agencies, the USLA is offering our assistance to advise how your lifeguard providers can come into compliance with national norms for lifeguarding, achieve the standards required for national certification, and clear up any confusion regarding current practices.

The United States Lifesaving Association offers a national Lifeguard Agency Certification Program, which has been in existence since 1993. It is an accreditation program for beach lifeguard agencies that follow USLA minimum standards for lifeguard fitness, training, and equipment. Currently, 140 lifeguard agencies meet USLA certification standards. A list can be found on our website at: [www.usla.org/certified](http://www.usla.org/certified). The list of certified agencies includes large and small agencies, municipal and private agencies, and non-profit and for-profit agencies. No Myrtle Beach lifeguard agency has demonstrated compliance with USLA standards and none are currently certified by the USLA.

We are pleased to note that the Myrtle Beach Fire Department has a team that is certified under the USLA's Aquatic Rescue Response Team (ARRT) program. This program is for non-lifeguard agencies that respond to reports

(e.g. 9-1-1 calls) of aquatic emergencies. The emphasis of training in the ARRT program is on rescue, rather than prevention, which is a key role of lifeguards.

The fee for certification is minimal (\$300 for three years). Requirements for certification include a timed swim test, minimum forty hour training course (to be provided by the agency itself), first aid and CPR certification, and appropriate lifesaving equipment. In addition, 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."

The USLA will not certify any beach lifeguard agency that assigns lifeguards to a dual role of public safety and commercial activity because all water safety professionals agree that a distracted lifeguard cannot properly maintain safe surveillance of the water. In the interest of public safety, we encourage Myrtle Beach to change its standards in accordance with USLA certification standards with respect to this and other points of the USLA certification program.

For those who cite the use of American Red Cross (ARC) lifeguard standards by Myrtle Beach lifeguard providers to be sufficient, please note the ARC has consistently stated that its training is not designed nor is it appropriate for the training of lifeguards at surf beaches. The USLA works closely with the ARC nationally in a variety of areas. Just as USLA training is not appropriate for pool lifeguard work, ARC training is not appropriate for surf lifeguard work. In a variety of areas, it directly conflicts with USLA training due to the unique nature of the surf environment.

The use of the USLA trademark logo on uniforms and websites by one or more lifeguard agencies in Myrtle Beach is a violation of US trademark law. The USLA has made legal notification as appropriate when we have become aware of violations. The bottom line is that no lifeguard agency in Myrtle Beach is authorized in any way to use the USLA's logo or other intellectual property. USLA certified agencies are permitted to use USLA logos under certain limited conditions.

The USLA allows individual lifeguards to join the USLA through local chapters. The Horry County Chapter of the USLA invites all beach lifeguards and individuals to join the USLA. There are membership classifications for lifeguards and non-lifeguards. However no lifeguard agency in the USA is a USLA member because the USLA does not offer membership to lifeguard agencies. Thus the USLA provides membership opportunities to individuals, but only certification opportunities to lifeguard agencies. Any assertion by a lifeguard agency that it is a USLA member is untrue.

With the increase in public use of beaches across the nation, beach lifeguards are now recognized as professional rescuers who provide drowning prevention, water rescue, and emergency medical response to hundreds of millions of beach visitors each year. Myrtle Beach is currently one of a handful of communities left in the USA that still allows lifeguards to vend at the same time they provide public safety. The USLA strongly

encourages the Myrtle Beach City Council to define the lifeguard's responsibilities as a professional rescuer only and stands ready to assist in developing a lifeguard system to meet the standards established as such.

I welcome your questions. Our organization stands ready to advise and assist as needed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter Davis  
USLA President

cc: John Peterson, City Manager