



National Lifeguard Recertification

Notes for Examiners

July 2025



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

NATIONAL LIFEGUARD

RECERTIFICATION NOTES FOR EXAMINERS

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The Lifesaving Society is Canada's lifeguarding expert. The Society works to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education initiatives, water-incident research, aquatic safety management services, and lifesaving sport.

Annually, over 1.5 Canadians participate in the Society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard and leadership training programs. The Society sets the standard for aquatic safety in Canada and certifies Canada's National Lifeguards – the professional standard for lifeguards in Canada.

The Society is an independent, charitable organization educating Canadian lifesavers since the first Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion Award was earned in 1896.

The Society represents Canada internationally as an active member of the Commonwealth Royal Life Saving Society and the International Life Saving Federation. The Society is the Canadian governing body for lifesaving sport – a sport recognized by the International Olympic Committee and the Commonwealth Games Federation.

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Ces Notes sont disponibles en français.

NOTE TO EXAMINERS

The purpose of the National Lifeguard Recertification is to confirm that lifeguards continue to perform at the National Lifeguard standard. Candidates are expected to actively participate in 100% of the recertification.

National Lifeguard certification remains “current” for 24 months from the last certification / recertification date. However, National Lifeguards may recertify at any time or as often as they desire, regardless of the certification date of the original award.

These Notes will guide your recertification planning.

RECERTIFICATION COMPONENTS

- ❑ A National Lifeguard recertification must include the following components:
 - Welcome and opening remarks on behalf of the Lifesaving Society
 - All mandatory recertification items (see Recertification Test Items and Test Sheets below)
 - Closing remarks including evaluation results for each candidate
 - Completion of the National Lifeguard Recertification test sheets

SUGGESTED TIME GUIDELINES

- ❑ A minimum allocation of 4 hours is recommended for a National Lifeguard Recertification exam based on a group of 12 candidates. The actual time needed will vary depending on:
 - Recert format
 - Number of candidates and National Lifeguard Examiners
 - Open water conditions (waterfront and surf)
 - Number and type of evaluation activities selected

PREREQUISITES

- ❑ Candidates must present proof of certification for the award being recertified (e.g., a National Lifeguard Pool certification must be presented at a National Lifeguard Pool recertification). Prerequisites need not be current.

ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

- ❑ The environment necessary to adequately prepare candidates for supervision and rescue response in each of the four National Lifeguard options are outlined below:

Option	Environmental Requirement
Pool	An artificially constructed basin in which persons can swim, wade or dive that is equipped with a filtration system and meets water clarity standards for safe swimming (e.g. clearly see the bottom of the pool at the deepest point). The pool must be a minimum of 15 meters in length (25 meters preferred) along the longest axis of measurement, 5 meters in width and a minimum of 1.5 meters in depth (3 meters preferred) at the deepest end.
Waterpark	An aquatic facility or swimming pool with a minimum of: • Three (3) types of basins or zones (e.g., swimming pool, wave pool, catch basins, river ride), • Three (3) aquatic features with moving water or moving riders such as a wave pool, water slide (minimum 3 m in height), and other activity (e.g., river ride, flow rider, inflatable waterpark, zip line, rope swing).
Waterfront	Is an outdoor open water environment that has water at least 1.5 metres in depth and has shore access that persons can use for aquatic activities. Entry and/or exit from the water may take place using a beach, dock, jetty, or pier.
Surf	An open water environment with beach access and: • A minimum wave height of 1 m at least 60% of the time, • Two (2) ocean features such as tides, currents and wave-breaking zones.

EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

- ❑ The following chart identifies the equipment required in the updated National Lifeguard program.

	X = Mandatory O = Optional			
Equipment	Pool	Waterpark	Waterfront	Surf
Resuscitation manikin with lungs	X	X	X	X
AED trainer	O	O	O	O
Barrier devices (pocket mask with a one-way mechanical valve and hypoallergenic medical examination gloves)	X	X	X	X
Bag-Valve-Mask	O	O	O	O
First aid kit (practice); contents include band aids, gauze, dressings and triangular bandages, blankets, towels, medication placebos, and auto-injector trainers for in-class use	X	X	X	X
Submersible manikin	O	O	O	O
Buoyant rescue aid (minimum 50 newtons of buoyancy) such as a rescue tube, rescue can, ring buoy, or an adult lifejacket or PFD	X	X	X	X
Non-buoyant rescue aids, such as a throw line, throw bag, and reaching pole	X	X	X	X
Spineboard or other appropriate device	X	X	X	X
9 kg (20 lb.) weight	X	X	X	X
Whistles	X	X	X	X
Timing device	X	X	X	X
Distance measuring device (100-200 m)	N/A	N/A	X	X
Masks, fins, and snorkels	N/A	N/A	X	X
Paddleboard or rescue craft	N/A	N/A	X	X

Where water clarity in waterfront or surf environments is reduced, it is recommended that candidates be advised to wear high-visibility swim caps or vests (e.g., neon yellow or pink) when participating in in-water activities.

RECERTIFICATION TEST ITEMS & TEST SHEETS

- ❑ To earn National Lifeguard recertification, candidates must perform all test items as written and demonstrate the Must Sees. On National Lifeguard recertifications, only the items marked with the (†) symbol in the *National Lifeguard Award Guide* are evaluated. These are:

National Lifeguard Pool Recert

6b	Physical standard: object recovery
6c	Physical standard: sprint challenge
6d	Physical standard: endurance challenge
8b	Pool supervision: scanning and observation
11a	Management of distressed or drowning victim
11b	Management of submerged, non-breathing victim
11d	Management of an injured victim
12a	Lifeguard situation: single guard
12b	Lifeguard situations: team

National Lifeguard Waterpark Recert

6a	Physical standard: sprint challenge
6b	Physical standard: object recovery
8a	Waterpark supervision: positioning and rotation
8b	Waterpark supervision: scanning and observation
11a	Management of distressed or drowning victim
11b	Management of submerged, non-breathing victim
11c	Management of spinal-injured victims
11d	Management of an injured victim
12	Lifeguard situations: team

National Lifeguard Waterfront Recert

7	Use of Rescue craft
8a	Physical standard: sprint challenge
8b	Physical standard: endurance challenge
10b	Waterfront supervision: scanning and observation
12a	Management of distressed or drowning victim
12b	Management of submerged, non-breathing victim
12d	Management of an injured victim
13a	Lifeguard situation: single guard
13b	Lifeguard situations: team

National Lifeguard Surf Recert

4	Use of Rescue craft
5b	Physical standard: endurance challenge
7b	Waterfront supervision: scanning and observation
9a	Management of distressed or drowning victim
9b	Management of submerged, non-breathing victim
9c	Management of spinal-injured victims
9d	Management of an injured victim
10	Lifeguard situations: team

- ❑ The Society has produced separate National Lifeguard test sheets for use on original courses and recertification exams. They are available as fillable PDFs. Recertification test sheets feature only the mandatory items evaluated in a recertification.

NATIONAL LIFEGUARD AWARD GUIDE

- ❑ The updated (January 2022) *National Lifeguard Award Guide* details item descriptions, purpose statements, learning outcomes, evaluation criteria (Must Sees) and notes for National Lifeguard Instructors and Examiners.

- ❑ In preparation for the recertification exam, review the mandatory recert test items and review “Note to National Lifeguard Instructors” at the beginning of the award guide, especially:
 - The updated curriculum
 - Evaluating candidates at the National Lifeguard standard
 - Evaluating knowledge
 - Candidate safety
 - Lifeguarding situations
- ❑ Share with candidates, the principle found in the Notes of each At-a-glance page in the award guide, that: *The competency demonstrated by candidates in achieving the Must Sees in the skill test items should be evident in their performance in lifeguard situations.*
- ❑ Note the new single-lifeguard situation item in Pool and Waterfront Options.
- ❑ Note the guidance for Waterfront and Surf regarding:
 - Use of wetsuits (Note in At-a-glance)
 - Sprint challenge and Endurance challenge items performed in a pool
- ❑ The Management of an injured victim item and the Supervision: scanning and observation item may be evaluated separately or within lifeguarding situations (single lifeguard and/or lifeguard team).

DESIGNING SITUATIONS

- ❑ In lifeguard situations, scenarios may include any of the test items within the National Lifeguard option (e.g., public relations, drowning non-swimmer, submerged victim, spinal-injured victim, injured swimmer, facility emergency, environmental emergency). **Note that first aid conditions are limited to those outlined in Appendix A.**

- ❑ Situations should be simple, realistic and based on those commonly encountered by lifeguards in real life. Examiners will adapt scenarios to a pool, waterpark, waterfront or surf environment (e.g., heat exhaustion in a pool setting could be caused by sauna use versus sun exposure at a waterfront).
- ❑ Recent statistics show that lifeguards most commonly deal with drowning non-swimmer and minor wound (nosebleeds, minor cuts and scrapes) interventions. When designing scenarios for specific user groups or facilities, ensure that they are realistic (e.g., children are more likely to require a public relations intervention for a rule infraction; adult swimmers are more likely to suffer from a medical emergency; an allergy attack may be more realistic in an outdoor environment with a bee sting). Situations that may/may not involve first aid treatments include:
 - Public relations (e.g., rule infractions, facility inquiries, unsupervised toddlers, missing person)
 - Facility emergencies (e.g., chlorine gas leak, power outage, fire alarm)
 - Environmental dangers (storm, cold weather/water, waves, rip tides, etc.)
- ❑ Each scenario set of 3 or 4 situations should include a DNS (minor or major), a wound management scenario and/or other first aid intervention (minor or major), and a public relations or facility/environmental emergency.
- ❑ The design and number of minor and major emergencies needs to ensure that all candidates have an opportunity to demonstrate to the evaluator's satisfaction that they are performing at the National Lifeguard standard.
- ❑ Design the majority of situations to occur in the water.
- ❑ Whenever possible, include a minimum of 10 simulated patrons in addition to the victim(s) for the evaluation of situations.

- ❑ *Alert* defines a minor and major emergency. The loss of patron supervision, a reduction in facility access or an event that endangers the safety of patrons or staff should be considered when determining the emergency type.
 - When a minor situation occurs, there is no loss of coverage and patrons are not restricted in their use of the facility. More than one lifeguard/assistant lifeguard may be needed to respond to the situation, but there are enough lifeguards/assistant lifeguards available to provide effective coverage and patrons still have reasonable access to the facility.
 - When a **major** situation occurs, coverage is compromised, deficient, or not adequate resulting in reduced or restricted access to areas of the facility or an evacuation of the facility.