

What are recognizable strokes?

If you've read the Must Sees for the Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross or National Lifeguard programs, then you've seen the phrase "recognizable strokes – any combination." But what does this actually mean and how can you best evaluate it?

In this case, a "recognizable stroke" Must See isn't asking for textbook-perfect technique; it's simply asking whether the candidate can demonstrate a stroke that is clearly recognizable to you, the evaluator.

So, for Lifesaving and National Lifeguard instructors evaluating this item, it's important to remember that:

- Recognizable strokes include front crawl, back crawl and breaststroke. They also include the following without arm action: whip kick, eggbeater, scissor kick and inverted scissor kick.
- Every swimmer is different. Body type, flexibility, strength, previous training and physical limitations all influence how a stroke looks.
- You should focus on the overall movement pattern, smooth propulsion and continuous forward progress rather than small technical imperfections.
- If you need a reference for key characteristics of each stroke, use *Appendix C* of the *Bronze Medals Award Guide*.

A recognizable stroke doesn't need to look identical from one swimmer to the next. The goal is consistent evaluation based on the characteristics of the stroke, not perfection of technique.

For additional guidance, instructors and examiners can also refer to the [Bronze Instruction Videos](#) and [Strokes and Skills video resources](#) available for purchase, which demonstrate the key characteristics of recognizable strokes and skills used throughout the Bronze and National Lifeguard programs.

A busy week

National Drowning Prevention Week (July 19–25, 2026) and World Drowning Prevention Day (July 25) were a huge success thanks to our affiliates and partners! Using our theme, "Prepare to be Water Smart®," the goal was to teach community members how to be safe in, on and around water to prevent drowning. Our team attended nine amazing water safety events, and we know there were many more being held at pools and community initiatives across the province.

We loved seeing the action on social media too. Sharing data, tips and more online is a great way to engage your community and spread awareness.

The week ended on World Drowning Prevention Day, July 25, when a whopping 31 Ontario landmarks and buildings were illuminated in blue light to help raise awareness for drowning prevention around the world.

Thank you for your ongoing support! Mark your calendars now: NDPW will take place July 18–24, 2027.



Ontarians get ready for the world stage

The Lifesaving World Championships are taking place in South Africa later this year, and Ontario's representatives reflect the depth, talent and commitment to lifesaving sport in our province. From athletes to officials, they all bring a unique perspective shaped by years of dedication, training and service to the sport.

For some, their selection is a meaningful recognition of their work and experience. Edmund Chan from Richmond Hill calls it "a privilege to be selected and an honour to serve in an official role." Open athlete Izzy Speiran from Saugeen Shores shared that her selection was especially meaningful after suffering an injury at Worlds in 2024. "I was more motivated than ever to be selected again and prove myself on an international stage," Speiran said.

Also from Saugeen Shores, Youth athlete Olivia Abbott said her selection meant she stood out and that "all my training paid off to make my dream a reality." Each selection represents years of hard work and a shared passion for lifesaving sport, which is why, as Clotilde Anne-Marie Friedmann from Iqaluit (Nunavut, which operates under the Ontario branch) noted, "having the opportunity to stand alongside world-class athletes and officials on the global stage is both humbling and deeply exciting."

As this prestigious competition draws closer, preparation has already begun. For Markham Open sprinter Jonelle Halog, this means developing speed endurance on the sand. "Beach Flags alone can run 10 to 20 rounds, and without sport-specific conditioning, that volume really wears on the body," he said. "My training structure has me peaking at exactly the right time for Worlds." That steady preparation speaks to the discipline and professionalism that Ontario's lifesaving community continues to bring to the international stage.

And it's not just the athletes who have been working hard to prepare for Worlds. Cynthia Cakebread, a lifesaving sport official for nearly two decades, shared that "attending and officiating at regional, provincial and national competitions is always important to hone skills and see advances in technique." Another official of over fifteen years, Tara Vanderlinden, prepared by attending courses, evaluations and competitions in Europe and recently was designated as an ILS level A referee, the highest level in our sport.

Attending a World Championship is about more than just the competition. "I can't wait to see international friends, visit a new part of the world and swim with athletes my age," said Sarah Ingleton, Masters athlete and official from Mississauga. Halog notes his excitement for "soaking up South Africa's rich history and culture, taking in the nature and, of course, sampling the food!" Those sentiments capture the excitement, camaraderie and global spirit that make the World Championships such a meaningful event.

On top of the medals these Ontarians hope to bring home, they also look forward to bringing back knowledge and experience. Cakebread believes that getting to see new approaches and getting better rule clarifications make a difference for our events at home. Speiran spoke about her plans to spend some time with the McMaster Lifesaving Club after Worlds. "I love coaching and I hope to pass along some skills I develop with the National Team," she said. Likewise, Halog, a track and strength-conditioning coach, is taking this opportunity to "help put lifesaving sport on the map not just in Ontario, but across the country. I want to introduce my own athletes to the sport, and I plan to bring back everything I learn."

Fuelled by their own ambitions and the strength of the province's lifesaving community, these stellar Ontario representatives will join their teammates from across the country to compete from November 25 to December 13 in South Africa. Go Canada!



When staff training meets certification: where's the line?

Picture this: you're running an in-service with your lifeguard team. Everyone is practicing rescues, reviewing teamwork and sharpening their skills. Toward the end of the day, someone asks:

“

Since everyone demonstrated the skills, can we just certify them?

”

It's a fair question. But it's also where the distinction between staff training and certification starts to matter.

The good news is that staff training and certification courses can absolutely work together. In fact, when planned well, they complement each other beautifully. The key is understanding that they aren't automatically the same thing.

Training builds skills. Certification confirms standards.

Think of staff training as practice. Staff are encouraged to ask questions, receive coaching, make mistakes, try again and continue improving in a safe space.

Certification, on the other hand, is different. It is a formal assessment of the published program standards. Candidates must successfully demonstrate the required knowledge and skills, and the examiner must be confident that every required Must See was achieved.

One doesn't automatically become the other.

How to offer a staff training session as a certification course

The trick to combining staff training and certification isn't about *what* you're teaching. It's *how* you're delivering it.

Before the course even begins, everyone should know:

- Is this a staff training session?
- Is this a certification or recertification course?
- Is it intentionally designed to be both?

When certification is part of the plan, all program requirements still need to be met, including required content, instructional time, evaluation, prerequisites, documentation and the appropriate instructor and examiner roles. Refer to our Ontario [Program Guide](#) for the requirements.

Get the best of both worlds

Staff training is one of the best investments an organization can make. It develops confidence, strengthens teams and improves the quality of supervision around the water. We suggest you do it often. Certification serves a different but equally important purpose. It intentionally confirms that individuals have demonstrated the competencies required by the program.

When those two worlds are thoughtfully combined, everyone benefits. Good planning and communication keep the line between the two clear.

For further questions or discussion on this topic, [email us](#).



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Building safer aquatic environments: the evolution of Lifesaving Society Safety Standards

In response to changing operational realities, emerging risks, new research and lessons learned from incidents and investigations, aquatic facilities in Ontario must evolve to become better, safer places for their communities. Supporting this effort are Lifesaving Society Safety Standards. Safety Standards are more than policy documents; they provide operators, municipalities, universities, schools, camps and aquatic facilities with practical guidance that reflects current evidence, industry experience and best practices.

The development of these standards is a structured process designed to strengthen drowning prevention and improve aquatic safety across the province.

Why Safety Standards matter

Ontario's aquatic environments are diverse and are growing increasingly complex. New technologies, changing staffing models, public expectations and operational pressures create challenges that require clear guidance and consistent approaches.

Lifesaving Society Safety Standards are developed to:

- Reduce drowning and aquatic injury risk.
- Promote consistent operational practices across facilities.
- Translate research and coroners' recommendations into practical application.
- Support operators in strengthening supervision and risk management systems.
- Encourage continuous improvement across the aquatic sector.

These standards do not replace legislation or regulations, they provide a benchmark for enhanced safety practices and operational excellence.

How a Safety Standard comes to be

The development of an Ontario Safety Standard follows a formal 12-step process designed to ensure standards are evidence-informed, technically sound and broadly supported within the aquatic community.

The process begins by identifying emerging issues requiring guidance or regulation. Topics may arise from operational concerns, incident reviews, coroners' recommendations, industry trends or feedback from affiliates and facility operators. The Society's Safety Standards Committee determines whether the topic warrants the development of a formal standard through researching existing provincial, national or international standards and guidelines, academic literature and legal references.

A draft standard is prepared including definitions, rationale, implementation guidance, references and supporting evidence. Drafts undergo review by the Safety Standards Committee before wider circulation to stakeholders, including Society councils, Council of Officers, Area Chairs, Board members, legal reviewers, affiliates and subject matter experts. As comments and feedback are received, edits are made, and if necessary, additional drafts are circulated. Consensus and multiple review cycles help ensure technical accuracy, clarity and practical application.

Final approval of a standard includes a vote by the Safety Standards Committee and a vote from the Society's Board of Directors to confirm alignment with the Lifesaving Society's mission, vision and values. Once approved, the standard gets published on our website and shared for implementation.

But that's not the end of the line! Standards remain living documents. Feedback from implementation is monitored, and all standards are reviewed approximately every five years to ensure continued relevance.

Read our newest Safety Standard: Personal Electronic Devices

One recent example of this work is the development of the *Personal Electronic Devices* Standard, available on the Society's [website](#).

The standard addresses the growing concern of digital distraction in aquatic supervision environments. It reinforces that lifeguards providing direct supervision should not use personal electronic devices while actively monitoring swimmers and emphasizes a readiness to respond.

Looking ahead

As aquatic environments continue to evolve, Ontario's Safety Standards will remain an essential tool in advancing drowning prevention and operational excellence. You can find all our published standards [here](#).

Safety Standards are not simply documents; they are part of a broader commitment to creating safer aquatic environments for everyone, and they reflect a shared responsibility for learning from experience, applying evidence and continuously improving the systems that protect our communities.

Building the staffing pipeline

Staff recruitment begins long before a position on your aquatic team becomes vacant. Many of your future staff may be on your pool deck right now as Bronze candidates. Regular opportunities to enter the certification pathway through Bronze Medallion and progress to National Lifeguard, Swim Instructor and beyond help build a larger pool of qualified candidates from which you can recruit.

What the data says

Ontario certification data from 2021–2026 shows that for every ten candidates who earn Bronze Medallion, about seven (73%) go on to earn Bronze Cross. Of those seven, about five (66%) go on to National Lifeguard and three (45%) to Swim Instructor.

These numbers show why a healthy staffing pipeline needs a large group entering Bronze Medallion each session. Regular Bronze Medallion courses and regular recruitment into them give more candidates the opportunity to continue to National Lifeguard and instructor certifications.

According to the Society's [Aquatic Staff Shortage Addendum Report, Fall 2026](#), Swim Instructor positions are among the most difficult to fill. The certification data helps explain why. Only about three of every seven Bronze Cross candidates go on to earn Swim Instructor certification, compared with about five who earn National Lifeguard. Finding ways to encourage even one more candidate in every Bronze Cross class to continue to Swim Instructor would meaningfully expand the pool of potential instructors. Together, increased recruitment into Bronze Medallion and stronger progression to Swim Instructor could help build a healthier staffing pipeline.

Staffing pipeline strategies

- Promote Bronze Medallion registration through swimming lessons, Bronze Star courses, local aquatic sport teams and other recreation programs.
- Offer Bronze Medallion, Bronze Cross and Swim Instructor courses regularly so candidates can progress without long gaps between them.
- Encourage Bronze Cross and National Lifeguard candidates to take Swim Instructor. Before their current course ends, promote upcoming courses and available employment opportunities.

Certifying more candidates does not guarantee that they will all join your aquatic team, but it creates a larger pool of qualified candidates to recruit from. Show candidates where their certification can take them, connect training courses to available jobs and invite them to apply. Keeping more Bronze candidates moving through your aquatic programs increases the likelihood that qualified people will be ready when positions open.

Read the Society's Aquatic Staff Shortage reports and other resources on the Society's [website](#).

From certification to employment

Ontario certification data, 2021–2026



It's been a busy summer for first aid

On June 22, delivery of the new WSIB Workplace First Aid program began, featuring new courses, resources, equipment and more.

Just before that, the Society launched the First Aid Update Course that walks Standard First Aid instructors, examiners and trainers through the program and course content changes. This is a self-guided online course you can still register for [here](#). Be sure to know your Member ID and double-check your mailing address!

In July, the Society launched the Emergency First Aid Instructor Transition Course for affiliates to offer in-person.

The Society recognizes that there was a lot of change in a short period of time related to first aid, and we really appreciate your patience, support and partnership during the launch process and as we continue to meet WSIB's guidelines.

You can find more information about this new First Aid program in the new edition of the Society's [Program Guide](#) and get a full list of First Aid equipment on [LifeguardDepot.com](#) here (including the new [Candidate Training Kit](#)). Keep an eye on our [website](#) for more updates and information as we have it.

SPONSOR A LIFESAVING TRIP TO THE POOL

Increasing transportation costs are preventing children from accessing the [Swim to Survive®](#) program. With your help, we can break this barrier and give children access to lifesaving swim skills.

On average, **each child requires \$70** to get them from school to the pool for their three Swim to Survive sessions. Your donation helps cover the cost of transportation so children can attend all three sessions.

- \$12 – gets a child one trip to the pool
- \$24 – gets a child to the pool and back
- \$70 – provides all three round trips to the pool for a child





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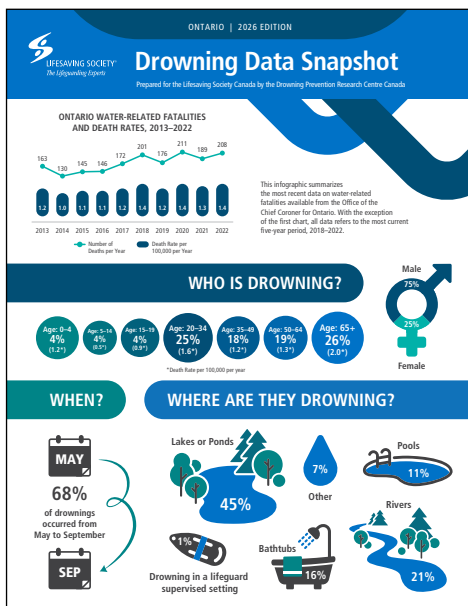
2026 ONTARIO FATAL DROWNING DATA SNAPSHOT

The *2026 Ontario Fatal Drowning Data Snapshot* is here! This infographic snapshot uses data from 2013–2022 to show fatal drowning trends for the province, including:

- Men continue to account for 75% of drowning fatalities in the province.
- The 10-year trends indicate an increase in the number of annual drowning fatalities.
- Drowning death rates among those aged 20–34 and 65 and older are the highest in the province.

Using data to make a difference

Data alone can't prevent drownings, but in the hands of the right people, it can have a big impact. When we as lifesavers understand the drowning problem and share common risks and prevention methods with friends, family and our communities, we make them safer – one conversation at a time. Who will you share this with?



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Making a Splash

Level up your Swim to Survive® program

The Peterborough Board of Education and the City of Peterborough levelled up their Swim to Survive program by joining forces with local fire, police and paramedic services, and the Ontario Provincial Police. These first responders attend fatal and non-fatal drowning incidents and see firsthand the impact of water safety education. Who better to visit grade 3 and 7 classrooms to share Water Smart® safety messages?

They arrange the sessions as follows:

Session 1

- In-class: Fire Service Liaison – What to expect at the pool, what to bring to the pool, swim with a buddy and safe swimming locations (45 min.)
- In-pool: Introduction to Swim to Survive skills (60 min.)

Session 2

- In-class: Police Community Liaison – follow-up to Session 1, lifejackets, boating safety (45 min.)
- In-pool: Development of Swim to Survive skills (60 min.)

Session 3

- In-class: Paramedic Community Liaison – follow-up to Session 2, fast water, cold water and ice safety (45 min.)
- In-pool: Refinement and evaluation of Swim to Survive skills (60 min.)

This enhanced Swim to Survive program was a joint effort put in place after the tragic drowning of a 6-year-old boy in 2010. Since then, Peterborough has grown its team to 12 representatives who share classroom visits among 30 schools across the city and in six adjacent farming communities.

The Peterborough team is now supporting the development of a similar program in the City of Dryden, following the heartbreaking loss of three children to drowning in the summer of 2025.

If you're looking to enhance water safety and help the Swim to Survive program succeed, consider inviting local first responders and safety liaisons into the classroom. It's a great way to unite your community around our drowning prevention mission.

