



May 7, 2020

Best Practices for Re-Opening Beach Operations

IMPORTANT: Governor Murphy has left the decision concerning the re-opening of public beaches and boardwalks during the COVID-19 pandemic solely to local government officials. This Safety Director's Bulletin is limited to a review of the Best Practices for local governmental unit employees who are assigned to work on the beaches, including lifeguards and badge checkers. The Safety Director is not opining on the advisability of opening beaches to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Safety Director strongly encourages local governmental officials to consult with their local or county department of health and attorney before making the decision to open beaches to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Safety Directors Office has received many inquiries regarding lifeguard and beach operations amidst the COVID-19 epidemic. Lifeguards, and their employers, like other public safety providers, want to know how to protect themselves and others.ⁱ

Lifeguards play an extremely important role in protecting visitors. Their primary responsibility is life-saving and to mitigate the risks that the ocean presents to bathers. In addition to this, they are role models, and their actions and conduct assist with maintaining order on the beach and in the water. They are being recorded, observed and people take note as to how they comport themselves while working.

Providing strong policy guidance and training is very important. Public employers need to prepare Lifeguards to be prepared to not only deal with the lifesaving aspects of their job but the new challenges that they will confront during this pandemic.

Encouraging "Best Practices" begins with assessing the risk by creating a checklist to provide direction. These are some of the topics that should be on your list:

- Lifeguard Training / Licensing
- Training, CPR & Personal Protective Equipment
- Training on COVID-19, transmission, signs of illness, reporting
- Training on Universal Precautions and the use of Personal Protective Gear
- Enforcement / Discretion on enforcing Governor Murphy's Executive Orders
- Requesting Police Assistance

Each local government entity is unique, and the Safety Director encourages communication amongst your personnel to identify any additional risks that should be added to this list.

The *U.S. Lifesaving Association*, *OSHA*, *PEOSH*, the *New Jersey Department of Health*, and the *Center for Disease Control* are sound resources for information on Lifeguard operations, implementing safety precautions, and dealing with communicable diseases.

This bulletin is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.

The following represent suggestions for implementing “Best Practices” for lifeguard operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- Create written directives that are in compliance with best business practices; access the NJMEL Handbook for general policy guidance, the U.S. Lifesaving Association, OSHA, PEOSH, the New Jersey Department of Health, and the organization that endorses your CRP Training (American Heart Association / Red Cross) for task policy guidance.
- Conduct training programs on those directives and allow personnel to ask questions about procedures and safety issues.
- Conduct a walkthrough of operations, identifying potential exposures and procedures that may need to be updated, <https://www.nj.gov/health/workplacehealthandsafety/peosh/public-employees/>
- Access the United States Lifesaving Association website for information on Lifeguarding and COVID-19, <https://www.usla.org/page/covid-19>
- Provide training to your Lifeguards on the COVID-19 Virus. The training should include; how the virus is transmitted, how to recognize the basic and advanced symptoms of the virus, social distancing, and the advantages of using personal protective equipment.
- Follow the recommendations of the CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>, and the Governor’s Office as it relates to social distancing at work, avoiding large meetings, minimizing close training, and close proximity to others while on the beach and on the guard stand.
- Be an example and encourage all of your personnel to practice good personal hygiene, including regular hand washing.
- Use universal precautions when providing medical aid, including N95 masks, medical gloves, and safety glasses. Avoid mouth to mouth or mouth to mask resuscitation. Use a bag-valve-mask.
- Demonstrate how the regular cleaning of surfaces with which you, your fellow lifeguards, and the public come in contact with can reduce exposures.
- Avoid touching other people, including your fellow lifeguards, unless necessary.
- Consider regular temperature checks by lifeguards.
- If you feel ill, advise your supervisor immediately, and follow the CDC guidelines, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Many local government entities employ seasonal help to assist with beach operations, including beach badge checkers. It is important to take all appropriate and necessary precautions to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the badge checkers and the public, and the Safety Director is recommending the implementation of the following “best practices.”

- If at all possible, in order to reduce interaction with members of the public, badge checkers should not be “roving” the beach areas and should be stationed only at beach entrances.

- Badge checkers should be provided with face coverings, and receive training for (a) proper wearing of the covering/mask over the bridge of the nose, and under the chin, and (b) maintaining a “social distance” of six feet if possible while checking beach tags. Employers should consider lightweight barriers such as caution tape to indicate visitors the safe distance from badge checkers.
- Provide employees with break time for repeated handwashing throughout their workday.
- Provide employees with wipes or hand sanitizer, for times when they are unable to leave their workstation.
- Train employees on the proper notification procedures if they feel ill, and follow the CDC guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

Our goal is to keep our employees safe and to mitigate the risks that confront them while in the performance of their duties. By creating these “best practices” and providing strong policy guidance we can mitigate many of the risks that Lifeguards and seasonal employees may be confronted with during their tour of duty!

Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

United States Lifesaving Association: <https://www.usla.org/>

OSHA – COVID-19: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

NJ Department of Health - <https://www.nj.gov/health/workplacehealthandsafety/peosh/peosh-health-standards/>

Universal Precautions: Open Water Lifesaving – United States Lifesaving Association Manual

ⁱ United States Lifesaving Association. “Lifeguarding and COVID-19”, April, 28, 2020. <https://www.usla.org/page/covid-19>