



World Water Safety

## INTERNATIONAL LIFE SAVING FEDERATION

Gemeenteplein 26 – 3010 Leuven – Belgium  
Tel: +32/(0)16-89.60.60 – Fax: +32/(0)16-89.70.70  
E-mail: ils.hq@telenet.be - Web: www.ilsf.org

### LIFESAVING POSITION STATEMENT - LPS 20

## REDUCED LIFEGUARD COVERAGE DUE TO COVID-19

### PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Lifeguard agencies that are not in a position to provide a full lifeguard service due to COVID-19 should conduct a risk assessment, increase communications to that fact, provide safety warning signs and close facilities where necessary. Lifeguard training should also be carried out using appropriate social distancing, personal hygiene and PPE considerations.

### BACKGROUND

ILS acknowledges that different jurisdictions around the world have introduced restrictions on mass gatherings including at swimming pools and the beach, introduced social distancing regulations and closed borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Different countries are at different stages in relation to tightening and relaxing these restrictions and that the current information in relation to COVID-19 is very fluid, that is, changing rapidly.

It is further noted that any advice should be flexible during a pandemic event. It is to be expected that further waves will follow, and that any advice may be redacted or progressed against the threat to local, regional or national situations. Updated information on how some lifeguard agencies are handling COVID-19 can be found at the following websites. <sup>(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)</sup>

This statement addresses the issue where some lifeguard agencies and beach operators are experiencing difficulties in obtaining adequate lifeguard training and staffing due to the impacts and effects of COVID-19. <sup>(7)</sup>

The main concern of the ILS is the health, safety and well-being of our members, the general public and lifeguards.

## STATEMENT (recommendations)

1. On beaches and pools that are normally staffed with lifeguards, but, due to COVID-19 those lifeguards are no longer present and on duty, the ILS advice is that the operators of the facility or beach make very clear communications about this situation, both on the beach and in the pools, and on all relevant social media including websites, Facebook, Twitter, local radio networks etc.
2. Although appropriate safety signage and public rescue equipment on beaches cannot replace lifeguards, they can increase the safety level on the beach.
3. ILS encourages lifeguard agencies and beach operators to undertake a risk assessment to facilitate safe training and operational environments for lifeguards, with no or low exposure to infectious diseases, so appropriate lifeguard staffing levels can be reached. Refer to local regulations in relation to use of clubrooms and the like as well as personal hygiene requirements (hand sanitiser, single use of equipment, not presenting to duty with cold or influenza like symptoms etc) as well as providing appropriate Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for training and operational service.
4. If the beach is assessed to be too dangerous without full lifeguard coverage, it should be closed for water activities.
5. Consideration should be given to providing minimum surveillance and/or emergency call out operations where qualified and sufficient resources are available.

## LEVEL OF EVIDENCE

The presence of lifeguards at bathing places is well-documented and proven to increase water safety in general and reduce drowning accidents specifically.<sup>(8)</sup> Proper safety signage, public safety announcements and public rescue equipment is also known to contribute to safer behaviour and reduced risk at bathing places.<sup>(9)</sup>

## POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author has no conflict of interest with the stakeholder industry, technology, persons or organisations that are identified and/or impacted by the position statement.

None of the participants in the consensus process leading to this statement has a conflict of interest with the stakeholder industry, technology, persons or organizations that are identified and/or impacted by the position statement.

## REFERENCES

1. DLRG statement on corona virus <https://www.dlrg.de/informieren/die-dlrg/aktuelles-zur-corona-krise/>.
2. Surf Life Saving Australia statement on corona virus. <https://sls.com.au/covid-19/>
3. USLA statement on corona virus <https://www.usla.org/page/covid-19>
4. Lifesaving Society Canada statement on corona virus <http://www.lifesavingsociety.com/safety-management/covid-19.aspx>
5. Surf Life Saving New Zealand statement on corona virus <https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz>
6. Guidance to UK SAR responders COVID-19 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/search-and-rescue-framework-uksar>
7. RNLI statement on reduced beaches being covered in the UK <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-52559248>
8. USLA statistics <https://www.usla.org/page/STATISTICS>
9. International Lifesaving Federation Drowning Prevention Strategies <https://www.ilsf.org/library/ils-drowning-prevention-strategies-2/>

## APPROVAL

Statement approved by ILS Rescue Commission