

GUIDELINES FOR OPEN WATER LIFEGUARD
AGENCY NATIONAL AWARDS PROGRAM

THE UNITED STATES LIFESAVING ASSOCIATION



Amended September 26, 2007



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United States Lifesaving Association
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Award Categories & Descriptions

National Award for Readiness & Incident Response

- An agency has presented evidence that demonstrates its ability in providing high levels of lifeguard readiness and preparedness, and/or has presented an example of a high level of readiness and preparedness during a response to a major incident, mutual aid call, or mass casualty that brings great credit to the agency and to the profession.

National Award for Commitment & Dedication to Public Safety

- An agency has presented evidence that demonstrates a measurable accomplishment in providing commitment and dedication to public safety through a variety of ways that brings great credit to the agency and to the profession.

National Award for Training & Development

- An agency has presented evidence that demonstrates professional growth and information sharing by providing high levels of lifeguard training and staff development that brings great credit to the agency and to the profession.

National Award for Drowning Prevention Achievement

- An agency has presented evidence of measurable statistical records including documentation of relative categories and conditions demonstrating a remarkable achievement in drowning prevention that brings great credit to the agency and to the profession.

National Award for Open-Water Safety Achievement

- An agency has presented evidence of measurable statistical records including documentation of relative categories and conditions demonstrating a remarkable achievement in open-water safety that brings great credit to the agency and to the profession.

National Award for Professional Achievement

- An agency has presented evidence demonstrating a variety of achievements which may include advancing its image, equipment, certifications, relations, standards, regulations or other related area that enhances the lifesaving profession and brings great credit to the agency and to the profession.

National Award for Distinguished Safety Service

- An agency has presented evidence demonstrating that it has accumulated three or more of the six nationally recognized awards in a variety of achievements that brings great credit to the agency and to the profession. This is the USLA's second highest achievement award.

National Award for Excellence in Lifesaving

- An agency has presented evidence demonstrating that it has accumulated all six of the nationally recognized awards in a variety of remarkable achievements that brings extraordinary credit to the agency and to the profession. This is the USLA's highest and most prestigious achievement award.

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PART I: COVER PAGE

If you are interested in nominating an open-water lifesaving agency for one of the National Awards listed below, please read all the information listed in Part IV for Eligibility and Procedures prior to commencing. If you believe the agency qualifies, begin by completing this application Cover Page and follow the instructions in Part II and III. Be sure to type or neatly print. Failure to comply with any part of this application process may result in the disqualification of your application.

Agency Nominee _____

Agency Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

Agency must be USLA Certified: (please indicate) Regular _____ or Advanced _____

Nominator _____

Title _____ USLA Member No. _____

Region _____ Chapter _____

Nominator's Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

National Award Categories

(Circle only one category for the nominee)

- National Award for Readiness & Incident Response
- National Award for Commitment & Dedication to Public Safety
- National Award for Training & Development
- National Award for Drowning Prevention Achievement
- National Award for Open-Water Safety Achievement
- National Award for Professional Achievement
- National Award for Distinguished Safety Service
- National Award for Excellence in Lifesaving

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PART II: MATERIALS

1. Cover Page

- Attach the completed Cover Page to the top of EACH application copy.
- Be sure to submit ten (10) copies of your application packet so that each USLA Regional Representative can review it in committee (9 Region Reps and 1 Committee Chair).
- Include a non-refundable \$25 application fee (check payable to USLA) to cover administrative costs.

2. Essay & Materials

- Submit your essay responses typed on a separate sheet of paper with the corresponding question numbers.
- See the essay questions in Part III below for the corresponding award category.

3. Two Letters of Recommendation

- Submit a total of two (2) letters of recommendation for your agency nominee.
- These recommendations must be written by an agency employee, officer, manager, administrator, etc. who can provide written testimony to the achievement of the agency being nominated.

4. Supplemental Materials (if needed)

- You may submit additional information in this section to demonstrate or emphasize the achievement but this is not a requirement.
- This can be a combination of newspaper articles, journal writings, audio/video documentation, photographs, etc. that provides additional evidence illustrating the agency's achievement.

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PART III: APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be mailed to the USLA and post marked by April 1 of each calendar year. Please include a non-refundable \$25 application fee (check payable to USLA) to cover administrative costs. The USLA will not return any materials submitted with the applications so be sure to mail the copies and keep the originals. It is recommended to mail your package as certified mail or another type of tracking service.

1. Formatting the Application-

Please submit ten (10) copies of the completed application package (Cover Page, Essay & Materials, Letters of Recommendations, and Supplemental Materials) in an 8.5" x 11" format. You must staple each application together in its entirety along with the supporting documentation so that each USLA Regional Representative can review it (9 Region Reps, 1 Heroic Acts Chair).

2. Submitting the Application-

Please mail your application to:

USLA National Awards Program-

I/O Heroic Acts Chair- Recognition, Awards and Presentations Committee

861 Riverland Drive, Charleston, SC 29412

Essay Questions

National Award for Readiness & Incident Response

1. Please describe how the agency has achieved open-water readiness? Give specific examples documenting the high levels of readiness and preparedness.
2. Describe how the agency responded to a major incident, mutual aid call, or mass casualty or injury? How was the call unique? Give examples of team work and performance worthy of national recognition.
3. Please submit any supporting documentation like photographs, newspaper or magazine articles, witness statements, or an agency incident report.
4. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing the agency's high level of readiness and its excellent response to this unusual call for help.

National Award for Commitment & Dedication to Public Safety

1. What is the agency's Mission Statement and explain how it functions to accomplish the mission?
2. Please describe how the agency has served the public with commitment and dedication over the past five years? Articulate how it has been steadily improving over this period.
3. Give specific details outlining the agency's commitment and dedication to public safety? Apply some of the following examples or some of your own to demonstrate the agency's commitment and dedication to public safety: increased staffing, expanded operational hours, improved water surveillance, added equipment to improve service, provided better

management, increased the budget, etc. Provide copies of operational schedules, annual hour sheets, or annual budgets to show increases.

4. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing its high level of commitment and dedication to public safety over the past five years.

National Award for Training & Development

1. Does the agency have a written operational and training manual? How does the agency implement staff training and what does it consist of? What makes the training unique from other agencies?
2. Does the agency train with other agencies? Which agencies and what kind of training do they perform? What are the training goals and objectives?
3. Does your agency support staff development through participation in professional associations? If so, how does it support that development? How has your agency assisted the profession in training and development? Describe the value of the relationship?
4. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing its high level of commitment and dedication to public safety over the past five years.

National Award for Drowning Prevention Achievement

1. The agency must have an outstanding safety record with few to no incidents of drowning as defined by the USLA National Statistics Coordinator for the past calendar year within their jurisdictional operation in a guarded or unguarded area anytime. If there were no deaths from drowning, please submit a letter of verification from the agency's county sheriff or coroner's office for that year. If you are unable to obtain this verification, submit a separate letter explaining the circumstances in which you were unable to meet this request.
2. Were there any deaths from drowning (or presumed drowning) within the agency's operational jurisdiction for any reason over the past calendar year? If so, please explain the circumstances of all deaths from drowning. How many of those were in a guarded area versus unguarded area? Please provide a spreadsheet breakdown showing the incidents, date, time, and location, guarded or unguarded, and any other pertinent information. Please explain how the agency did everything they could to prevent drowning.
3. What are the operational hours of the agency throughout the season or year? Is there an after-hours response team capable of affecting a rescue within a reasonable time frame? How does the agency determine where to place lifeguards or patrols? How do they decide when to open and close guard stations or end patrols? What is the agency's operational philosophy?
4. Over the past calendar year, please list the following: number of people rescued by the agency, number of preventative actions, total estimated annual attendance, number of miles within jurisdiction, and number of permanent lifeguards, part-time guards, and season guards? Please describe the potential for drowning in the agency's operational jurisdiction in terms of high risk (consistent surf and rip currents) to low risk (no surf and little current). List the percentage of public access to the agency's jurisdiction compared to the percentage of poor access. What are the average air and water temperatures from summer to winter?
5. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing the agency for drowning prevention achievement over the past calendar year.

National Award for Open-Water Safety Achievement

1. The agency must have a commendable safety record and few to no incidents of drowning as defined by the USLA National Statistics Coordinator over the past five years within their jurisdictional operation. Please explain any deaths from drowning (or presumed drowning) within the agency's operational jurisdiction for the past five years? How many of those were in a guarded area versus unguarded area? Please provide a spreadsheet breakdown showing the incidents, date, time, and location, guarded or unguarded, and any other pertinent information. Why should those deaths from drowning not be held against the agency despite their best attempts to promote open-water safety?
2. Why should the agency receive national recognition for open-water safety achievement? What steps has the agency taken to promote every reasonable effort to promote open-water safety over the past five years?
3. What are the operational hours of the agency throughout the season or year? Is there an after-hours response team capable of affecting a rescue within a reasonable time frame? How does the agency determine where to place lifeguards or patrols? How do they decide when to open and close guard stations or end patrols? What is the agency's operational philosophy?
4. Over the past five-year period, please list the following: number of people rescued by the agency, number of preventative actions, total estimated annual attendance, number of miles within jurisdiction, and number of permanent lifeguards, part-time guards, and season guards? Please describe the potential for drowning in the agency's operational jurisdiction in terms of high risk (consistent surf and rip currents) to low risk (no surf and little current). List the percentage of public access to the agency's jurisdiction compared to the percentage of poor access. What are the average air and water temperatures from summer to winter?
5. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing the agency for open-water safety achievement over the past five years.

National Award for Professional Achievement

1. What has the agency done in terms of advancing the professional image of both the agency and the profession? Please list specific examples of actions taken by the agency to enhance its image through uniforms, equipment, identification, certification, public relations, ethical standards, administrative regulations, or whatever else deemed a professional advancement. Submit photographs to illustrate your achievements.
2. What was the previous standard the agency used before implementing the new concept, idea or program? How were they able to measure the success?
3. How has this professional achievement affected the agency and/or the profession? Has the agency attempted to assist other agencies with its new success in an effort to upgrade or promote the profession?
4. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing the agency for the professional achievement over the past calendar year.

National Award for Distinguished Safety Service

After an agency has achieved recognition for at least three different National Awards, then the agency will be considered for this distinguished achievement. The National Award for Distinguished Safety Service is the USLA's second highest achievement award.

1. Please provide the corresponding year and the award names in which the agency received the National Awards. The agency must have received at least three of the following awards:

- National Award for Readiness & Incident Response
- National Award for Commitment & Dedication to Public Safety
- National Award for Training & Development
- National Award for Drowning Prevention Achievement
- National Award for Open-Water Safety Achievement
- National Award for Professional Achievement

2. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing the agency for this distinguished achievement.

National Award for Excellence in Lifesaving

After an agency has achieved recognition for all six National Awards, then the agency will be considered for this outstanding achievement. The National Award for Excellence in Lifesaving is the USLA's highest and most prestigious achievement award.

1. Please provide the corresponding year and the award names in which the agency received all six National Awards. The agency must have received all six of the following awards:
 - National Award for Readiness & Incident Response
 - National Award for Commitment & Dedication to Public Safety
 - National Award for Training & Development
 - National Award for Drowning Prevention Achievement
 - National Award for Open-Water Safety Achievement
 - National Award for Professional Achievement
2. Submit a letter of recommendation from an adjacent agency supervisor (fire, police, or lifeguard) endorsing the agency for this outstanding achievement.

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PART IV: ELIGIBILITY & PROCEDURES

Eligibility

- The agency nominee must be USLA Certified as Regular or Advance.
- An agency can be nominated for only one award category per year unless you are also applying for the *Distinguished Safety Service* or the *Excellence in Lifesaving* (must submit a separate application for those awards).
- An agency is eligible to receive the same award or a different award multiple times as it chooses to re-apply annually but it must demonstrate new achievements.
- Only an official chapter representative can nominate an agency as they have insight to the agency's achievements.
- The chapter/agency must submit annual statistics as outlined by the USLA National Statistics Coordinator by the deadline.
- The chapter/agency must be in good standing and not be in conflict of the USLA Bylaws or Polices and Procedures.

Procedures

Applications and instructions for the National Awards Program will be made available on the USLA website for download. Chapter representatives will have the responsibility to initiate the application process and submit the appropriate paperwork to the USLA Heroic Acts- Recognition, Awards, and Presentations Committee. The committee will then review the applications for accuracy and completeness at the USLA Spring Meetings. The committee will then discuss and vote on the application like it does with other awards.

If the application is passed, the USLA Board of Directors must approve the application by a majority vote. If approved, the Heroic Acts Committee will present any National Award Agency Recipient with a prestigious plaque bearing the USLA logo, award name and details of the achievement by the USLA Fall Meetings. There are no appeals and the USLA Board of Directors will make the final decision. The USLA will make every effort to publicize the agency award recipients as appropriate.

For more information about the National Awards Program or clarification for items in this application, please contact the USLA Heroic Acts Committee Chair by email at heroicacts@usla.org.