
HOUSE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING OPEN WATER LIFEGUARDS AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THE
STATE OF HAWAII.

1 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards perform an essential public
2 safety function by protecting countless lives from death or
3 serious injury among residents and visitors throughout the
4 State; and

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6 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards are professionals designated
7 as Ocean Safety Officers in the counties of Kaua'i and Maui, and
8 as Water Safety Officers in the City and County of Honolulu and
9 county of Hawai'i, reflecting their specialized training,
10 responsibilities, and scope of duty; and

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12 WHEREAS, in the performance of their duties, open water
13 lifeguards routinely place themselves at significant risk to
14 their own lives and physical safety in dynamic and hazardous
15 ocean and shoreline environments; and

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17 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards are frequently among the
18 first personnel to respond to emergencies on the State's beaches
19 or in state waters and operate alongside police officers and
20 firefighters to protect life, secure scenes, and preserve public
21 safety until additional responders arrive; and

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23 WHEREAS, the duties of open water lifeguards extend beyond
24 ocean rescues and include responding to emergencies such as
25 cardiac arrests, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle
26 collisions that occur on or near beaches, parks, and public
27 roadways; and

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29 WHEREAS, many open water lifeguards are cross-trained in
30 emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement
31 support, and water rescue craft operations; and
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1 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards undergo rigorous and
2 continuous training, including high-performance cardiopulmonary
3 resuscitation, automated external defibrillator use, advanced
4 rescue techniques, and emergency scene management; and
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6 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards respond to emergencies by
7 attending to, treating, assisting, and transporting victims,
8 which collectively constitute the four defined duties of an
9 emergency response employee; and
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11 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards not only protect human life
12 but also safeguard property, preserve evidence, and protect the
13 environment, which together represent the four core tenets
14 commonly used to define a first responder; and
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16 WHEREAS, the term "first responder" is commonly defined as
17 an individual with specialized training who is among the first
18 to arrive at and provide assistance at the scene of an
19 emergency; and
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21 WHEREAS, open water lifeguards differ fundamentally from
22 pool lifeguards due to the unpredictable and hazardous
23 environments in which they operate and the wide range of
24 emergency situations and locations to which they respond; and
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26 WHEREAS, many other countries formally recognize lifeguards
27 as emergency responders and grant them access to programs,
28 protections, and resources afforded to first responders; now,
29 therefore,
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31 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
32 Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
33 of 2026, that this body recognizes open water lifeguards as
34 first responders in the State of Hawaii; and
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36 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body acknowledges the
37 essential role open water lifeguards play in emergency response,
38 public safety, and community wellbeing throughout the State of
39 Hawaii; and
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41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body urges all relevant
42 state and county agencies, departments, and governing bodies to



1 adopt this recognition and ensure that open water lifeguards are
2 afforded the rights, resources, training support, and
3 professional respect accorded to first responders; and
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5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body encourages continued
6 collaboration among public safety agencies to strengthen
7 emergency response capabilities and enhance safety across the
8 State's ocean, shoreline, and public environments; and
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10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
11 Resolution be transmitted to the Mayors of the Counties of
12 Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii and the City and County of Honolulu;
13 Chief of the Ocean Safety Division of the Department of Fire and
14 Public Safety of the County of Maui; Chief of the Ocean Safety
15 Bureau of the Kauai Fire Department; Chief of the Ocean Safety
16 Department of the City and County of Honolulu; Chief of the
17 Ocean Safety Bureau of the Hawai'i Fire Department; Fire Chief of
18 the Hawai'i Fire Department; Fire Chief of the Kauai Fire
19 Department; Fire Chief of the Fire and Public Safety Department
20 of the County of Maui; and Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire
21 Department.

