



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 25-193

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*
DATE: October 3, 2025
SUBJECT: **2026 United States Lifeguard Association National Championships**

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to provide information on the 2026 United States Lifeguard Association National Championships (USLA).

Since 1980, the National Lifeguard Championships have showcased the athleticism, skill, and lifesaving techniques of professional lifeguards. These events emphasize speed, agility, and strategy, reflecting the ultimate mission of lifeguards: drowning prevention. The USLA has awarded City of Fort Lauderdale, via the Ocean Rescue Division, the honor of hosting the 2026 USLA National Lifeguard Championships, which coincides with Ocean Rescue's 100-year anniversary.

The USLA serves as the national governing body of lifesaving sport in the United States and is the country's official member of the International Life Saving Federation (ILS). Lifesaving sport is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), with the ILS serving as its global governing body.

The event will be held on Fort Lauderdale Beach on August 4-7, 2026. Approximately 1,000 lifeguards and junior lifeguards from across the nation will compete in various events including swimming, running, paddleboarding, surf skiing, rowing, and a combination of events. Junior lifeguards will compete on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, while professional and former lifeguards are scheduled to compete, Wednesday, August 5 through Friday, August 7, 2026.

The event typically brings approximately 1000 competitors from across America. It is estimated that at least 1,500 hotel room nights will be purchased, as well as thousands of meals and other spending in the local area. The host city is promoted on the USLA website for up to a year prior.

At the 2025 USLA National Lifeguard Championships, Fort Lauderdale Ocean Rescue's own Casey Francis and Sherry Griffith won awards. Lifeguard Casey Francis won the High Point Competitor for the female division, and Lifeguard Sherry Griffith won the Billy George Sportsmanship Award.

Staff is excited to host this prestigious event and compete on our home beach. Ocean Rescue competes in the B Division which consists of agencies with 51-200 lifeguards. For the past five (5) years, Fort Lauderdale has placed in the top five (5) for the B Division. In 2022 and 2024, Fort Lauderdale won the B Division. The last time this event visited Fort Lauderdale Beach was in 2009, and Ocean Rescue came in first in its division.

If any further information is needed, please contact Fire Chief Stephen Gollan at sgollan@fortlauderdale.gov.

c: D'Wayne M. Spence, Interim City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
City Manager's Office
Department Directors