

BE A LIFEGUARD – PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY

American Red Cross Lifeguard Certification & Montana Municipal Requirements

What Is an ARC Lifeguard?

An American Red Cross (ARC) certified lifeguard is a trained safety professional who:

- Monitors swimmers and enforces pool safety rules
- Responds quickly to emergencies and performs water rescues
- Administers CPR, AED, and First Aid
- Maintains safety equipment and assists with minor injuries

Prerequisite Swim Test

Must be completed before enrolling in the lifeguard course

- **Continuous Swim:** 300 yards using front crawl, breaststroke, or a combination
- **Tread Water:** 2 minutes without using hands
- **Timed Rescue:**
 1. Swim 20 yards
 2. Surface dive to 7–12 feet to retrieve a 10 lb object
 3. Return 20 yards carrying the object
 4. Exit the water without using stairs or ladder
 5. Complete in **1 minute 40 seconds or less**

Training & Certification

- **Minimum Age:** 15 years old by last day of course
- **Format:** Blended learning (online + in-person) or full in-person
- **Certification Includes:** Lifeguarding, CPR/AED for the Professional Rescuer, First Aid
- **Valid For:** 2 years
- **Final Assessment:**
 - 3 practical skills tests (surveillance rotation, timed CPR, multi-rescue scenario)
 - Written exam – 80% or higher required to pass

Ongoing Training

- Recertification required every 2 years
- In-service sessions recommended: CPR/AED refreshers, First Aid practice, rescue drills, and emergency scenarios

Montana Municipal Pool Requirements (Government-owned or operated facilities)

- Lifeguards must be on duty during all public swim hours (except splash decks)
- At least **two trained staff members** on site—lifeguards may never be alone
- Lifeguards must be clearly identifiable and equipped with a rescue tube
- A **spinal injury board with immobilizer straps** must be accessible at all times

Why Lifeguard Staffing Can Be Challenging

We understand that sometimes lifeguard coverage may seem limited, but please know:

- Becoming an ARC lifeguard requires **extensive training and certification**—including physical swim tests, lifesaving skills, CPR, AED, and First Aid, plus ongoing renewal every two years.
- **Montana law requires certified lifeguards on duty at municipal pools** to ensure everyone's safety, with backup staff also needed during operating hours.
- There is currently a **national and local shortage of certified lifeguards**, which can make filling all shifts challenging.
- We are committed to hiring and training qualified lifeguards to meet these standards and keep your community safe.

How We're Working to Combat the Lifeguard Shortage

We recognize the challenges caused by the current shortage of certified lifeguards and want you to know we're actively addressing it through multiple efforts:

- **Year-Round Trainings:** We offer lifeguard certification classes throughout the year. However, classes require a minimum of 5 participants to run, and with fewer people signing up, scheduling can be delayed.
- **Active Recruitment & Community Outreach:** We partner with the University of Providence and Great Falls Public Schools, collaborate with the Great Falls Swim Team, and use social media and local flyers to raise awareness and encourage sign-ups.
- **Instructor Development:** We have recently certified existing lifeguards as official lifeguard instructors to increase our capacity to train new candidates locally.
- **Youth Educational Programs:** We are developing programming to teach youth about the lifeguard role, safety skills, and inspire future lifeguards within our community.

Your support and participation are vital! The more people who train, the safer our community becomes.