

Civil Service

Striking SC City Lifeguards Seek Support Of Beachgoers

The city's 11 lifeguards will begin circulating petitions among beachgoers today seeking their support in the current salary dispute between guards and the city.

Alan Hilton, guard captain, said striking beach patrol members will present the petitions to city councilmen at their next meeting. In the meantime, the six guard towers along the mile stretch from Cowell Beach to the mouth of the San Lorenzo River will remain empty unless the city agrees to a pay hike or is able to hire other guards for the season.

Hilton said guards now start at \$2.50 per hour, and are asking \$3. Guards employed nearby Castle Beach State Park begin at \$4.40 per hour.

"A lot of parents kept their kids out of the water today," Hilton said Saturday afternoon. "And we suggested that they go to the State beaches where there are guards."

Hilton added that the city ordered the

locks changed on the beach towers and on the life guard headquarters on the Municipal Wharf so that striking guards could not get emergency equipment if they needed to.

Guards were on the beach today and Hilton said he and his staff would certainly have responded to calls for help even though they are on strike. "We'd work because we're under a moral commitment," he said.

No lives were evidently endangered Saturday, the first day of the strike, although one swimmer suffered a cut finger. Because the city locked up headquarters, Hilton said, he was not able to get first aid help to the beach goer.

Saturday morning, Dean Hovey, city aquatics director, ordered the guards to take their positions without their signs. Hilton told them to carry their placards, and Hovey said "You're dismissed."

The guards took Hovey to mean they were

fired, although Hovey said he was dismissing them for the day, with future events to determine whether the guards will be returned to their jobs.

Parks and Recreation Director Carl Bengston telephoned the State Parks and Recreation Director William Penn Mott in Sacramento Saturday morning, and Mott reportedly promised to provide personnel in the crisis.

Two guards from nearby Castle Beach State Park were to have come over to provide some protection, but no one showed up, Hilton said.

City Personnel Director John Donlevy said he did not know if the guards would be rehired. Several applicants were to have been tested today, but none appeared at the beach.

Hilton said he understands another guard is to be tested today.

"We're forced," said Hilton, "to take our

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The city's lifeguards pounded a familiar beat Saturday as they struck for higher wages. They carried placards such as "Life is invaluable — are lifeguards?" in their quest for a

raise to \$3 an hour starting salary as well as other benefits. The guards are to circulate petitions among beachgoers today asking their support.

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problems to the public. The taxpayers are being gyped by the city's failure to realize the importance of the lifeguard's service. That applies not just to the council, but also to the city staff and some administrators."

The guards would not physically restrain any replacement guards, the guard captain said, but merely explain "what the guards have been going through" for the past nine years in their efforts to secure pay raises.

"A lot of the applicants for the jobs are local and many of them are our friends," said Hilton, adding that he hoped they would join in the strike and not attempt to break it.

Guards wore their bathing suits under their clothes Saturday and carried their emergency kits on their backs in case a serious accident occurred.

"It's just a matter of time until a serious accident, too," Hilton said.

The Coast Guard has been asked to keep an eye on the

beach during the current strike.

As the strike began, guards handed out leaflets explaining their position. In addition to the \$3 starting hourly rate, guards seek:

—Worker benefits.

—The establishment of a separate Department of Beach and Water Safety.

—A voice in policy matters concerning lifeguards.

— Placement on the same wage level as any other city employee when wage increases are granted.

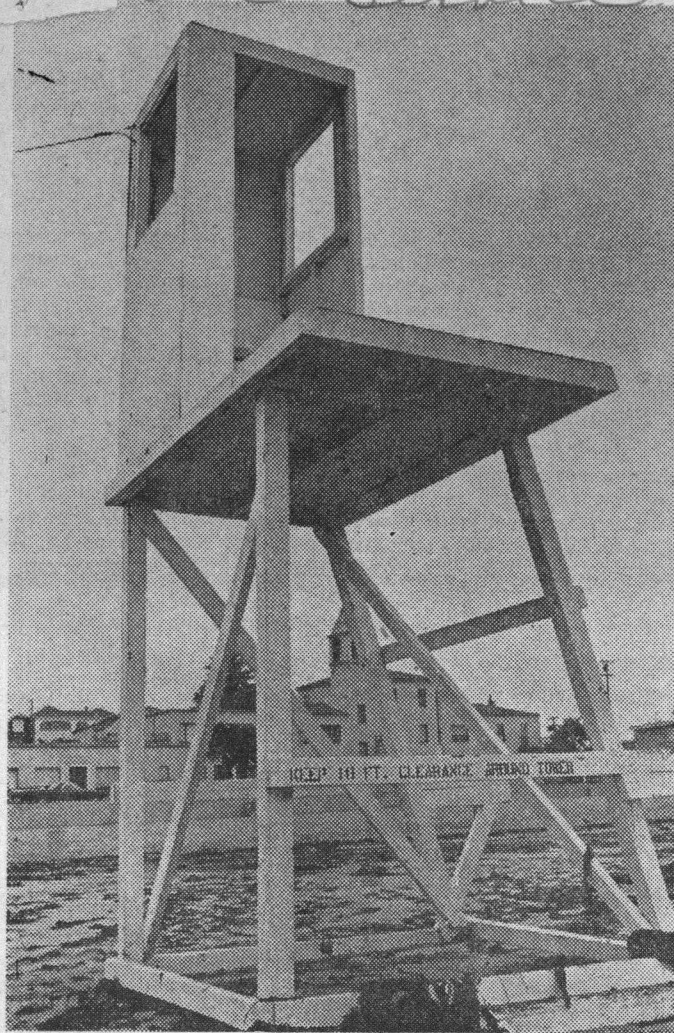
—A study of equipment and working conditions.

Hilton said the city continues to view guards as temporary personnel instead of emergency personnel so that wages and working conditions lag behind those of other city employees.

He also attacked what he termed the terrible condition of emergency equipment such as the beach patrol vehicle. When a San Jose youth broke his neck in a dive from San Lorenzo Point last week, the vehicle broke down as it raced to the

scene, and the oxygen bottle which Hilton said had an improper and unsafe valve, was empty after five minutes because the replacement for it had not arrived.

Guards were granted a 7.5 per cent hike on July 22, but they remain the lowest paid group of beach safety personnel in the state, the guards maintain. The raise to at least \$3 an hour would cost the city between \$2000 and \$3000 during the summer season, Hilton said, and about \$5000 over the current fiscal year.



Six of these wooden lifeguard stations are empty today as the strike of the city's guards goes into its second day. Eleven guards came

down from their towers to carry placards and hand out flyers explaining why they are on strike.