



US reaches H-2B cap for seasonal workers

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If you spend much time "out and about" during tourist season in Myrtle Beach, then you've probably been served by a young person from overseas.

Businesses like hotels rely heavily on the season workers through the H-2B visa program.

But the U.S. government has put a limit on the total number of workers that can be hired and local businesses said that's creating a worker shortage on the strand.

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Department (USCIS) said businesses can only hire 66,000 overseas workers for temporary or seasonal work, each year.

And since they have accepted all the applications they are going to take, local businesses say the annual cap does not permit the necessary number of seasonal workers.

Renelle Wolff, training officer for Lack's Beach Service says without a sufficient supply of H-2B visa workers, dozens of experienced lifeguards will not be returning to the beach.

Wolff said, "It means that other people will have to step up in their place to be supervisors and which will require more training."

Wolff said that's because most of the H-2B visa workers are not students, but older, more mature, and better trained.

Wolff said, "They've been trained either in other countries such as Australia and they compete well in our competitions and they just are great workers and we don't have to worry about their English skills dealing with the kids from the UK as well as Australia."

Frans Mustert, President and CEO of Oceana Resorts said his biggest concern is that the hospitality industry, which is an industry that likes to exceed expectations, may only be able to meet expectations.

Mustert said, "It's going to be critical, we had over a hundred H-2B visa workers last year and we've got to provide the same services for the same amount of people."

Wolff said the lack of H-2B workers is going to force her to refocus her efforts when it comes to hiring and recruiting, but said the 8 1/2 miles of beach they protect will be safe.

Lack's Beach Service is currently looking for lifeguards, you can log on to their website at www.lacksbeachlifeguards.com to find out how to apply.