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‘Absolute betrayal’: Lifeguards speak out against California parks official accused of secretly filming them



A surfer heads in as a lone sailboat cruises offshore at Bolsa Chica State Beach on Jan. 16, 2026 (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)



By [Summer Lin](#), Staff Writer

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- A former California State Parks superintendent faces felony and misdemeanor charges after allegedly secretly recording nearly two dozen male lifeguards, including minors, in a staff locker room at Bolsa Chica State Beach.
- Kevin Pearsall, 59, appeared in an Orange County courtroom for the first time, but his arraignment was postponed until Sept. 21; he remains free while facing up to 18 years in jail.
- Attorneys say the hidden cameras may date back to 2019 and captured teens as young as 15.

A former California state parks officer accused of [secretly recording nearly two dozen men](#), some of whom were minors at the time, inside an employee locker room made his first court appearance Thursday morning.

Kevin Pearsall, 59, of Long Beach, faces five felony counts of eavesdropping, 23 misdemeanor counts of secretly filming another and three misdemeanor counts of unlawful dissemination of private recordings. He faces a maximum sentence of 18 years and eight months in jail.

Pearsall appeared Thursday at the Westminster courthouse and was scheduled to be arraigned, but his arraignment was continued until Sept. 21. He remains free until his arraignment.

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Two of Pearsall's alleged victims attended the hearing and, afterward, expressed feeling hurt.

The secret recordings took place at the Bolsa Chica State Beach Lifeguard Headquarters and continued for 11 months beginning August 2024, according to the Orange County district attorney's office.

The cameras may have been installed as far back as 2019, and captured images of seasonal lifeguards, including teens as young as 15, according to the lawsuit. Pearsall also is accused of distributing the images to his friends.

The locker room is accessible only to full-time personnel, seasonal lifeguards, office staff, maintenance personnel and park aides, according to prosecutors.

Attorney Mark Peacock, who represents seven of the lifeguards who were allegedly abused, four of whom are still minors, said he and his clients were disappointed that Pearsall wasn't arraigned Thursday.

“Naturally there is an avalanche of emotions, not only for them but for their families,” Peacock said. “They’re young men who were just starting their lives out. To put on a suit and tie and expect quick and easy justice, when that guy walks out, it just rebirths emotions of ‘I’m pissed and I can’t believe he did that.’”

Peacock said it was still unknown how long Pearsall allegedly had been recording the lifeguards.

“It may have gone all the way back to 2019. It’s not confirmed yet,” he said. “If it went that far back, then there’s a good chance there will be more lifeguards popping up.”

Attorney Gloria Allred also [filed a complaint](#) in Orange County Superior Court on behalf of three alleged victims, two of whom spoke out about what they described as the “ultimate betrayal of trust.”

Matthew Dawson and Richard Corey are senior park aides who worked as lifeguards under Pearsall.

“The best word to describe it is ‘absolute betrayal,’” Corey told KTLA outside the courtroom Monday. “He’s a sworn peace officer. Your boss is a peace officer. That’s like the highest level of trust, so to find this out, it hurts. It’s painful.”

Dawson, a former lifeguard at Bolsa Chica State Beach, also spoke outside the courthouse Monday.

“It was just a safe place for us to change. And he betrayed our trust,” he added.