

SOP 8.3 – Water Safety Procedures



Section 8 – Obligations and Standards

Version Number – 3

Page 1 of 10

Effective Date – 1 September 2016

Review Date – 1 September 2017

Electronically Controlled Document

Purpose

To outline the procedure for the provision of water safety for all aquatic activities conducted by lifesaving clubs or services.

Scope

All areas of Life Saving Victoria.

Procedures

The following procedure is for the provision of water safety for Surf Life Saving (SLS) Junior activities, member training (lifesaving and sport) conducted by SLS and SLS sanctioned/special events. These procedures have been developed using risk management principles, WHS legislation and regulation and many years of experience with the provision of water safety for aquatic activities.

Summary

The following table provides a summary of the complete water safety requirements for SLS member aquatic activities. For more information please refer to the full procedure that follows.

**S
O
P**

SLS ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS WHO DO NOT HOLD A SRC OR ABOVE	ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS WHO DO HOLD A SRC OR ABOVE
Junior Activities (Nippers)	1:5 (WSP : participants)	Buddy procedure
	1:10 (WSP : participants) Low-risk conditions Determined after a pre-activity risk assessment	
Member Training (Lifesaving and Sport)	1:5 (WSP : participants)	Buddy procedure
	1:10 (WSP : participants) Low-risk conditions Determined after a pre-activity risk assessment	
Pool Activities	Where applicable, refer to local pool management requirements If no requirements 1:10 (WSP : participants) determined after a pre-activity risk assessment	
Surf Sport Competition	Refer to <i>SLSA Surf Sport Manual</i>	
Sanctioned/Special Events	Refer to <i>Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs</i>	
Lifesaving Patrols	Refer to SOP 1.1 – Volunteer Patrol Roles and Responsibilities.	

Note: ‘Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) or above’ includes SRC, Bronze Medallion/Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue), Silver Medallion Aquatic Rescue or Gold Medallion.

Definitions

Activity participant: An activity participant may be a member of the public or a SLS member.

Aquatic rescue qualification: Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC), Bronze Medallion (BM) /Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue), Silver Medallion Aquatic Rescue (SMAR) or Gold Medallion (GM).

Low-risk conditions: Following a pre-activity risk assessment indicating they are operating in an acceptably low-risk environment*.

*A nominal wave height of 1m is considered the maximum wave height threshold when the 1:10 ratio may be implemented. Wave height is only one consideration in assessing surf zone hazards (examples of others could include:

SOP 8.3 – Water Safety Procedures

a heavy shore break, wave period, wind strength and direction) therefore the Water Safety Supervisor will be required to complete a risk assessment in determining any decision to increase the ratio from 1 WSP : 5 activity participants to 1:10

Personal training: Personal training is considered a personal or leisure aquatic activity that is not supervised or endorsed by an SLS organisation. This activity may occur individually or in a group. All responsibility for such activity is taken on by the individual/s.

Qualified: An activity participant who holds a proficient aquatic rescue qualification.

Risk: Standards Australia defines risk as the effect of uncertainty on objects (AS/NZS 31000:2009 Risk management - Principles and guidelines).

Risk assessment: Standards Australia defines a risk assessment as the overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation (AS/NZS 31000:2009).

Risk management: Standards Australia defines risk management as coordinated activities to direct and control an organisation with regard to risk (AS/NZS 31000:2009 Risk management - Principles and guidelines).

SLS Member: For the purpose of these procedures, Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) separates SLS members into two different categories:

- An activity participant who does not hold an aquatic rescue qualification – Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) or above e.g. Activity participants in training for the SRC or BM and junior members under the age of 13.
- An activity participant who does hold a proficient aquatic rescue qualification.

Surf Sports Competition: Two or more clubs/entities hold an event consisting of activities defined within the SLSA Surf Sport Manual.

Stillwater activity: For the purposes of these procedures, SLS considers a stillwater activity to be one conducted in a man-made aquatic environment e.g. pool. Rivers and lakes are not considered a stillwater environment.

Water safety: The use of human resources and rescue equipment in an aquatic environment to provide a level of supervision to activity participants.

Water Safety Personnel (WSP): Qualified and proficient lifesavers (holding a SRC or above) who provide water safety. WSP act under the leadership of the WSS.

Water Safety Supervisor (WSS): The team leader for a group of WSP. The WSS must be qualified and proficient in the SLSA BM /Certificate II in Public Safety

SOP 8.3 – Water Safety Procedures

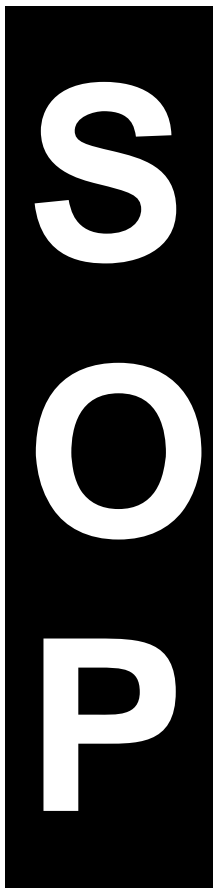
Version Number – 3

Effective Date – 1 September 2016

Electronically Controlled Document

Page 3 of 10

Review Date – 1 September 2017



(Aquatic Rescue) and it is strongly recommended they also hold the Silver Medallion Basic Beach Management certificate.

General Water Safety Procedures

The following procedures should be considered together with the activity specific water safety procedures outlined later in this SOP.

General

Lifesaving patrols

Water safety procedures for lifesaving patrols are covered by [SOP 1.1 – Volunteer Patrol Roles and Responsibilities](#).

Members of on-duty lifesaving patrols can only be reallocated as WSP when the minimum patrol requirements are met and at the discretion of the Patrol Captain.

The on-duty lifesaving Patrol Captain/Lifeguard must not act in the position of WSS. The lifesaving Patrol Captain/Lifeguard's primary duty is public beach safety.

Supervision

Where water safety supervision ratios are implemented, 75% of water safety personnel must be in the water during the activity and using SLSA approved rescue equipment.

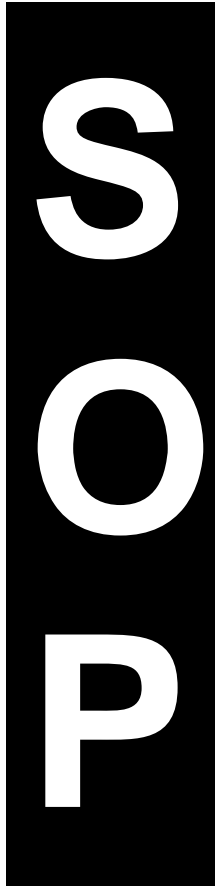
For activities where there is a mix of activity participants, the water safety ratio for 'activity participants who do not hold a SRC or above' should be applied.

Risk assessment, risk check and risk management tools

Clubs are encouraged to complete a pre-season/annual training plan together with a risk management plan for all aquatic activities. This plan should be completed by either the Club Captain/Director of Lifesaving/Director of Sport/Director of Junior Activities/Director of Education, together with their appointed coaches and trainers.

This risk management plan should be completed using the *Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs* and address at a minimum: regular training plans (time/day/duration), location/s, number of participants, qualification of those participants, possible risks and how they will be managed should they arise.

In addition, for all aquatic activities, a pre-activity risk check should be conducted by the WSS in conjunction with the Patrol Captain or Lifeguard, outline any risks managed and where applicable, be lodged with the relevant



SLS club/service officer. Risk assessments and risk checks should be retained for a minimum of 5 years.

Suitable risk assessment, risk check and risk management tools includes:

- SLS water safety risk mobile app (also available in paper form)
- SLS event risk mobile apps
- *Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs* (available on the SLS [Members Portal](#))

Note: If there has been no change to the risks identified in the risk management plan, the pre activity risk check can be a notation that a risk check has been conducted, there is no change to previously identified risks, and the risk mitigation strategies identified previously still stand.

Uniform

Uniform summary

EVENT TYPE	HIGH-VISIBILITY UNIFORM	SWIMMING CAP	SURF RESCUE UNIFORM
Surf Sports (Competition)	✓ Mandatory	N/A	N/A
Sanctioned Events	✓ Mandatory	Recommended	N/A
Ocean Swims	Recommended	✓ Mandatory	N/A
Junior Activities (Nippers)	✓ Mandatory	N/A	N/A
Member Training (Lifesaving)	✓ Mandatory	N/A	Recommended BM training and above
Member Training (Sport)	Recommended	N/A	N/A
Member Training (IRB Competition)	✓ Mandatory Approved Lifejacket	Approved Helmet	N/A
Water Safety	N/A	N/A	Cap ✓ Mandatory Rash Shirt ✓ Mandatory

S
O
P

Activity participants – SLS surf sport competition and SLS sanctioned/special events

All aquatic activity participants in SLS surf sport competition and SLS sanctioned/special events must be clearly identified with a standardised high-visibility vest or swimming cap (ocean swims only) for easy identification above the water surface. (See High-visibility garments)

Activity participants – All junior activities and member training

For junior activities and member training, it is recommended that aquatic activity participants be clearly identified with a standardised high-visibility Lycra vest or shirt for easy identification above the water surface.

Water Safety Supervisors and Personnel

For SLS junior activities, surf sport competition, member training and SLS sanctioned/special events, water safety supervisors and personnel must be wearing a clearly identified uniform.

WSP uniform must consist of a cap (secured under the chin) and rash shirt. This may be either:

Surf Rescue uniform

- SLS red and yellow quartered patrol cap secured under the chin;
- SLS Surf Rescue rash shirt;
- Where appropriate, SLS Surf Rescue wetsuits and stinger suits.

Or

High visibility (water safety) uniform:

- A high-visibility (fluorescent) orange cap secured under the chin;
- A high-visibility (fluorescent) orange rash shirt branded with 'WATER SAFETY' on the front and back of the shirt.

High-visibility garments

There are five high-visibility fluorescent colours endorsed by SLSA that SLS affiliated organisations can choose to use:

- Fluorescent Pink (PMS #16-2130 TN 'Knockout Pink')
- Fluorescent Yellow (PMS #13-0630 TN 'Safety Yellow')
- Fluorescent Green (PMS#13-0340 TN 'Green Gecko')
- Fluorescent Orange (PMS# 15-1360-TN 'Shocking orange')
- Fluorescent Red (PMS#485C)

The exact fluorescent colour will vary depending on the material used (e.g. nylon, Lycra/spandex, polyester). As a guide only, the above PMS (Pantone Matching System) codes should be provided to your vest/cap manufacturer.

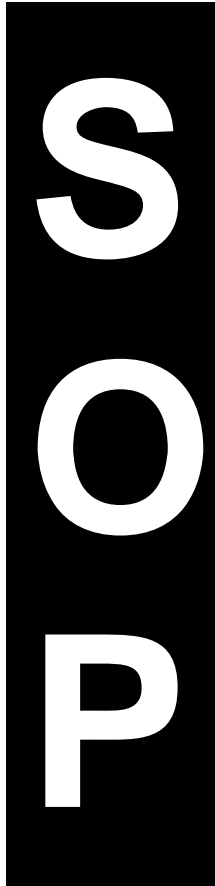
Note: Fluorescent colours degenerate with prolonged exposure to water and light. Garments should be maintained as per the manufacturer care and cleaning procedure and monitored to ensure continued colour brightness.

Rescue equipment

Rescue equipment used for the purposes of water safety must be SLSA approved and can include:

- Lifesaving rescue equipment listed in the [SLSA approved lifesaving gear and equipment manual](#)
- SLSA approved competition boards

It is highly recommended that an IRB or RWC be used for water safety (where safe and applicable).



Note: Where WSP are using rescue equipment that requires a specific competency and award e.g. powercraft, the operator must be qualified and proficient in the appropriate awards.

During the activity, rescue equipment must be on the water and in close proximity to the activity participants.

Equipment	Operator	Count towards Water Safety ratio
Rescue board	1 paddler	1
Rescue tube	1 swimmer	1
IRB	1 driver and 1 crew	2
RWC	1 driver	1
	1 driver and 1 crew	2

Roles and responsibilities

Water Safety Supervisor (WSS) - Team Leader

Must be qualified and proficient in the SLSA BM/Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue) and is strongly recommended to hold the Silver Medallion Basic Beach Management;

- Remain on the beach, except when required in an emergency;
- Be responsible for water safety and ensure it meets the prescribed and assessed requirements. E.g. the minimum supervision ratios or that the buddy procedure are applied;
- Conduct risk assessments using one of the tools available:
 - If the activity is to be conducted on the beach during patrol hours, the WSS must consult with the lifesaving Patrol Captain/Lifeguard on the most appropriate area of the beach to be used for the activity.
 - If the activity is to be conducted on the beach outside of patrol hours (or in unpatrolled locations), the WSS is to decide the most appropriate area of the beach to be used for the activity.

Note: The lifesaving Patrol Captain/Lifeguard is the ultimate authority on the beach

- Be aware at all times of the safety and welfare of those involved in the activity and act immediately if they have safety concerns;
- Supervise WSP
 - Ensure WSP are qualified and proficient.
 - Ensure that the most suitable rescue equipment is available.
 - Brief both WSP and activity participants on the conditions likely to be encountered during the activity.
 - Request that WSP advise the WSS of their competency levels in relation to the activity and conditions and if they have any pre-existing ailments that may impact on their participation. Any identified risks should be managed.

SOP 8.3 – Water Safety Procedures

Version Number – 3

Effective Date – 1 September 2016

Electronically Controlled Document

Page 7 of 10

Review Date – 1 September 2017

S
O
P

Water Safety Personnel (WSP)

Reports to Water Safety Supervisor:

- Must be qualified and proficient in a SLSA aquatic rescue qualification ;
- Carry out their duties under the leadership of the WSS;
- Be positioned on the beach and/or in the water as directed by the WSS;
- Be responsible for water safety in the appointed area;
- At all times be aware of the safety and welfare of those involved in the activity and immediately report any concerns to the WSS;
- Advise the WSS of any pre-existing ailments that may impact on their participation or if their competency does not meet the activity requirements or conditions.

Minimum supervision ratios

Supervision ratios apply to Junior Activities and member training where participants do not hold a SRC or above. These ratios also apply to groups with a mix of aquatic rescue qualification holders and non-award holder.

For junior preliminary evaluations (JPE) a maximum supervision ratio of 1:5 (Water Safety Personnel : Activity Participants) applies.

For Junior Activities and member training where participants do not hold an SRC or above, the maximum supervision ratio is 1:5 (Water Safety Personnel : Activity Participants).

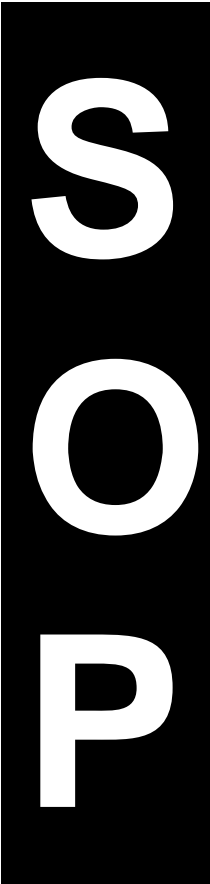
For stillwater/pool activities or low-risk conditions (ascertained after a formal risk assessment) the ratio maybe expanded to 1:10 (Water Safety Personnel : Activity Participants). Risk assessments should be conducted using one of the tools provided.

Buddy procedure

The buddy procedure is where qualified activity participants of similar experience and ability participate together in the same aquatic activity. They continuously monitor each other throughout the activity, and able to offer immediate assistance to their 'buddy' if required.

The buddy procedure for water safety can be applied to SLS member training of 2 or more activity participants.

All activity participants must hold a proficient aquatic rescue qualification. In larger groups, the training plan and measures in an emergency may be the same for all participants. Participants should still however identify a buddy.



Prior to the commencement of the activity or training session, qualified members should identify a 'buddy'. In a group situation where there is an uneven number, a buddy group of three can be formed.

The WSS or buddy pair should form an agreed training plan. This plan includes:

- Specific activities to be completed
- Duration of the activity (start and finish time)
- Location (and destination if applicable)
- Outline measures in case of an emergency. For example: carrying a mobile phone, notifying family/a friend of your training intentions.

During the activity, each buddy pair should be in a position to:

- Be able to offer immediate assistance to each other if required
- Maintain communication – advise each other should training plans or conditions change
- If you lose sight of or contact with your buddy, alert the WSS and/or other participants and commence searching immediately
- In the case of emergency, assist their buddy to remove him/her from danger (where it is safe to do so)

Surf sport

Water safety procedures for surf sport competition (excluding surf sports training), as defined by the *SLSA Surf Sports Manual*, are to be conducted as per the *SLSA Surf Sports Manual*.

The water safety for club swims and club championships should be conducted as per Junior Activities and Member Training.

Please refer to the SLSA website to download a copy of the current *SLSA Surf Sports Manual*.

Stillwater/pool activities

For those activities conducted in a public pool, the safety procedures as laid down by the local pool management must be adhered to. These safety procedures may be applied under the pool or SLS management.

Aquatic activities conducted in rivers and lakes are not considered a still water activity, in which case the above water safety procedure should apply for the relevant activity.

S
O
P

Personal training

Where a group or individual undertakes ‘personal training’, all responsibility is taken on by the individual/s and/or their parents/guardians. Please be aware of the possible insurance and litigation issues resulting from an incident.

It is recommended that individuals undertake their own risk management process, including considering the increased risk of training alone, prior to any personal training being conducted.

Sanctioned/special events

Any aquatic activity conducted by SLS outside the SLS framework of lifesaving, sport or junior activities must receive SLS State/Territory approval. These activities may include (but are not limited to) ocean swims and triathlon/aquathon events.

The specific water safety procedures for these activities are covered by the *Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs*.

Please refer to the SLS [Members Portal](#) to download a copy of the current *Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs*.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The table below outlines requirements for PPE during water-based award and IRB Competition training activities:

Award	PPE		
	Hi-Vis	Lif jackets	Helmets
IRBC	✓ Recommended	✓ Mandatory	✓ Recommended
IRBD	✓ Recommended	✓ Mandatory	✓ Recommended

Note: All participants undertaking water-based activities during training and/or assessment are highly recommended to wear a high visibility vest underneath the lifejacket.

S
O
P