

# SOP 1.11 – Shark Sightings

Section 1 – Volunteer Patrol Operations

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Effective Date – 1 September 2018

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Electronically Controlled Document

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## Purpose

To outline the procedure for when a shark sighting has taken place.

## Scope

All levels of Life Saving Victoria.

## Procedures

On receiving information of a suspected shark sighting at or near to a patrolled beach, the Patrol Captain/Lifeguard Team Leader must assess the validity of the sighting and the severity of the risk.

All sightings reported directly to patrol members or lifeguards must be passed onto LSVComms, whether the sighting is confirmed or otherwise.

A confirmed shark sighting is when it has been sighted with certainty directly by a lifesaver or lifeguard or confirmed by Victoria Police or Fisheries Victoria.

A sighting may also be reported to LSV by Fisheries Victoria or Victoria Police. In this instance, LSVComms will notify relevant LSV Services where appropriate.

If the location of a reported sighting is near the patrolled area, where safe, the IRB should be launched and sent to the location to assist in the assessment and to attempt to confirm the sighting.

The following information should be obtained where possible and must be communicated to LSVComms:

- Species (if known)
- Length (approx.)
- Number of animals
- Distance from shore
- Direction of travel (if known)
- If swimmers/divers/surfers were in vicinity and were they directed out of the water

If the shark sighting has been **confirmed** and meets the following criteria:

- Within 500 metres of shore AND
- Within one kilometre of a patrolled area

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Then the following actions should be taken:

- Sound the evacuation (shark) alarm continuously and encourage people to calmly and quickly remove themselves from the water. The alarm should be sounded continuously until all people are out of the water. Consider the use of loud hailers to assist in water evacuation.
- Contact LSVComms as soon as practical to advise of the beach closure
- Display the red and white quartered flag and close the beach
- Have the IRB continue to investigate the situation (if available) as well as maintaining observation from a lookout.
- Advise the public and beach visitors to remain clear of the water
- Make effort to patrol the beach one kilometre either side of the shark location to advise swimmers and beachgoers to remain out of the water, use signage if available
- Do not attempt to kill, capture or injure the animal
- Record as much detail regarding the sighting as possible
- When a search by the IRB is complete and nothing has been sighted the IRB crew advise the Patrol Captain/Lifeguard Team Leader.

The Patrol Captain/Lifeguard Team Leader should consider the impact the shark may have on other beach users in other areas and take appropriate action. LSVComms **must** be notified of all shark sightings regardless of whether they occur in a patrolled area or not.

Following the confirmed sighting of a shark, the beach and the area one kilometre either side of the shark location should be closed for a period of two hours, before reassessing.

If a shark sighting occurs at 1700 hours or later, then the beach should be closed for the remainder of the day given the heightened risk of shark activity at dusk.

For patrol locations which have a history of shark sightings or if a shark sighting has recently occurred, IRB surveillance should be used frequently in patrolling the water where possible.

### **Further Information**

Aerial surveillance and AMSAR services may be used by Life Saving Victoria in response to Shark Sightings and other hazards, and can be used to assist in assessing the safety of beaches.

All requests for Aerial /AMSAR services should be done through LSVComms or through the Duty Officer on 13SURF (137873) after hours.

Life Saving Victoria work with Fisheries Victoria and Victoria Police as the respective control agencies for shark sightings to manage these risks.

This SOP has been compiled in conjunction with advice provided by Fisheries Victoria and the CSIRO.

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