

SOP 2.03 – Marine Wildlife

Section 2 – Powercraft Operations

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Effective Date – 10 December 2020

Review Date – 10 December 2022

Electronically Controlled Document

Purpose

To provide guidance on the regulations when operating powercraft near marine mammals.

Scope

This standard operating procedure (SOP) applies to all Life Saving Victoria (LSV) personnel (i.e., paid staff, officers and volunteer members) where engaged in powercraft operations.

Policy Statement

LSV requires all patrolling members to adhere to the established policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure safe and effective practices relating to powercraft operations.

Definitions

Name	Definition
LSV	Life Saving Victoria
Marine Mammal	Dolphins, whales, seals
Shark	Any of numerous mostly marine cartilaginous fishes of medium-to-large size which have a fusiform body, lateral branchial clefts, and a tough, usually dull grey skin roughened by minute tubercles. They are typically active predators and sometimes dangerous to humans.
Southern Right Whale	Southern Right Whales are large and stocky whales. Their body colour is usually black, with white patches on the belly. They have a narrow head with a strongly arched mouth. Southern Right Whales do not have a dorsal fin. Their pectoral fins are broad and rectangular in shape.



Procedure

Introduction

The Wildlife (Marine Mammal) Regulations 2019 are a set of laws to protect seals, dolphins and whales in Victoria. These help to ensure that whales, dolphins and seals are not disturbed by people.

Currently, there are no restrictions on approaching sharks in Victoria; however, there must always be a consideration for the risks in doing so.

Lifesaving members should follow the below requirements when operating near marine wildlife.

Requirements

The following requirements only apply to marine mammals and help to ensure member safety whilst minimising impact. Wherever possible, leave encounters to chance and comply with the distancing requirements. If a whale, dolphin or seal makes attempts to interact with you, slow down, don't change course or speed up suddenly.

Marine Mammal	Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB)	Rescue Water Craft (RWC)	Aircraft*
Whale	200m	300m	500m
Dolphin	150m	300m	500m
Seal	50m	50m	500m

*Including Helicopter/Drones.

All powercraft should

- avoid sudden changes in direction;
- maintain a constant speed not exceeding 5 knots (8kph);
- leave the caution zone if a marine mammal shows any sign of distress;
- not approach whales, dolphins or seals from directly in front;
- not approach whales, dolphins or seals from directly behind the animal;
- not be in the known path of a whale, dolphin or seal;
- not form a barrier between a marine mammal and its group;
- not come between a mother and her young;

All Aircraft should

- not approach whales, dolphins or seals from head on;
- not fly directly over or pass the shadow of the aircraft over the marine mammal;
- not land on water or taxi on the water near a marine mammal; and
- not hover above a marine mammal.

All others should

- keep a safe distance, and
- you must not swim or surf within 30 metres of a dolphin or 50 metres of a whale.

These distances are sufficient to allow the animals to move away from you and to give you a chance to get out of their way.

Southern Right Whales

Between 1 June and 31 October every year, vessels are prohibited from parts of Logan’s Beach near Warrnambool, where Southern Right whales are in residence to rear their calves. There are protected seal colonies along the coastline and vessels are prohibited within 100m of a seal during breeding season (1 November to end February) and 50m of a seal outside of breeding season.

Safety

To report a whale, dolphin or seal entanglement or stranding contact LSVComms.

Review	
Date of Issue	10 December 2020
Date Effective	26 December 2020
Date to be Reviewed	1 July 2022
Date to Cease	10 December 2022

Authority
The Life Saving Operations Council Executive has approved this SOP under section 8.3.6(e) of the Life Saving Victoria By-laws, 2019.

