

# SOP 5.03 – Rescue Procedures

Section 5 – Emergency Procedures

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Electronically Controlled Document

## Purpose

To outline the procedures that have been developed over the years for rescuing people in aquatic related situations.

## Scope

All levels of Life Saving Victoria.

## Procedures

### Introduction

To achieve any rescue safely and successfully, a lifesaver must assess the situation before responding.

The attributes that will help ensure that any rescue, no matter how different or difficult, can be carried out with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of delay are:

- Knowledge of the procedures and facilities available.
- Skill - ability to perform the rescue techniques chosen.
- Fitness - the stamina and strength needed to carry out the rescue.
- Judgement - this is necessary if the knowledge, skills and fitness are to be applied effectively.
- Discipline - self-control and prompt response to any commands given by the person in charge are essential.
- Resourcefulness - the ability to be able to adapt available equipment and/or techniques in respect to changing circumstances.

As even the most simple "assist" can develop into a serious rescue situation, only in exceptional circumstances should a rescue be performed without a rescue aid.

### Essential Parts of a Rescue

- Recognising the patient.
- Calling for backup.
- Deciding on a course of action
- Retrieving and securing the patient.
- Returning the patient to the beach or signalling for back-up craft as soon as possible.

Throughout the rescue, lifesavers must remain calm, make sound judgements and, above all, not expose themselves or their patients to unnecessary risk.

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## The Rescue

To evaluate the risk and method to use in a rescue, the lifesaver needs to assess:

- The water conditions.
- The patient's condition.
- The equipment available.
- The human resources available.
- The lifesavers own skills and capabilities

## Patient Recognition

In scanning the area of responsibility, the lifesaver should pay particular attention to parts where crowds are concentrated. Look over these areas carefully, watching and predicting the water conditions and their potential effects on swimmers.

A sense of anticipation and an understanding of people's characteristic behaviour patterns help prevent problems that lead to rescues.

People in high-risk groups need to be watched with special attention.

- Age extremities: very young and very old people on the beach should always be observed carefully. Young children should be intercepted if they approach the water without adult supervision.
- Overweight people. These people are often in poor physical condition
- Tourists and immigrants from countries where water conditions may not be as rough should be kept under careful observation.
- Unstable or intoxicated people. Those whose behaviour patterns show lack of co-ordination should be viewed as possible candidates for rescue.
- Float users. These should be observed until the lifesaver is sure they are competent without floats. Floats include body boards or other inflatable toys
- People improperly dressed for beach conditions. Be wary of people who attempt to swim in clothing that is unsuitable for the aquatic environment e.g. jeans.

## Signs of Drowning

An immediate response is essential when a person in the water shows any of the following characteristic signs of imminent drowning:

- Flailing of the arms simultaneously in an attempt to keep the head above water.
- A stroke that barely clears the water, with the head very low in the water and no visible kick.
- A "climbing the ladder" motion with the head tilted back.
- Hair in the eyes, facing toward the shore with waves breaking over the head.
- Bobbing up and down, in water above the head, making an obvious attempt to get air.

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