

SOP 5.03 – Rescue Procedures

Section 5 – Emergency Operations

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Effective Date – 10 December 2020

Review Date – 10 December 2022

Electronically Controlled Document

Purpose

To describe the procedure to be followed by applicable agency personnel involved in aquatic rescues.

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 aquatic rescues.

Policy Statement

LSV requires all members to adhere to the established policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure safe and effective practices relating to aquatic rescues.

Responsibilities

Lifesaving volunteers, lifeguards, local operations officers, duty officers (among others).

Definitions

Name	Definition
LSV	Life Saving Victoria



Procedure

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 maximum efficiency and minimum delay are

- knowledge of the procedures and facilities available
- skill (i.e., ability to perform the rescue techniques chosen)
- fitness (i.e., the stamina and strength needed to carry out the rescue)
- judgement (i.e., this is necessary if the knowledge, skills and fitness are to be applied effectively)

- discipline (i.e., self-control and prompt response to any commands given by the person in charge are essential)
- resourcefulness (i.e., the ability to be able to adapt available equipment and/or techniques with respect to changing circumstances)

As even the simplest '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.

The Rescue

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

- water conditions,
- patient's condition,
- equipment available,
- human resources available, and
- lifesaver's 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, as follows.

- *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 individuals 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).

Safety

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; and
- bobbing up and down, in water above the head, making an obvious attempt to get air.

Reference

Related Documents	PSAR35 Training Manual
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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.

