

SOP 5.07 – Missing Persons

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 locating missing persons.

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 locating missing persons.

Policy Statement

LSV requires all members to adhere to the established policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure safe and effective practices relating to locating missing persons.

Responsibilities

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

Definitions

Name	Definition
LSV	Life Saving Victoria
Located Person	A 'located person' is when lifesaving personnel locate the missing person or are notified that the missing person has been located.
Missing Person	A 'missing person' is when lifesaving personnel are alerted to the fact that a person is missing, either on land or in the water.



Procedure

Once notified of a missing person, the police should be contacted without delay via LSVComms to ensure the best response to the situation.

Prioritising Information Gathering

Where possible, lifesavers should gather information on the incident before declaring the type of response required, and then follow a series of escalating procedures to handle lost and found persons. This process should be undertaken promptly and efficiently.

Consideration should be given to the following factors:

- whether the person was last seen in the water or on land, and
- how long the person has been missing for.

Information that should be gathered for all search incidents includes the following:

- Initial action - Commence log and ascertain details:
 - Time/Date/Place
 - Identity and location of informant or information sources
 - Name
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Clothing
 - General description (size, weight, race)
 - Location last seen
 - Nature of incident/Activity
 - Likelihood of being in the water
- Swimming ability
- Floatation devices
- Send lifesavers to site on the beach (where their clothes/possessions are) and/or to their car
- Friends/family and others with them
- Reassure parent/s or carer/s and, where possible, obtain additional details such as other possible search areas (e.g., location of car, residence)

Declaring an in-water search

Incidents where persons are missing in the surf or believed to be missing in the surf require an immediate, coordinated and methodical response by lifesaving personnel.

An in-water search should be declared by the person in charge (patrol captain) under the following circumstances:

- Lifesaving personnel witnessed submersion—while under surveillance or in the process of rescuing.
- Public communicated missing person—last seen in the water.
- Public communicated missing person—believed to be in the water.
- Public communicated missing infant/child (< 8)—last seen near the water.
- Personnel missing (dangerous conditions)—last seen in the water.

In-water search response:

- Details collected and log continued.
- Complainant retained.
- Lifesaving personnel dispatched.
- LSVComms informed.
- Radio communications.
- Observers from tower with binoculars (or elevated position).

- Shoreline search (foot and/or ATV/4WD).
- Water-based search with power craft.
- In-water swimmer positioned at last known location.
- Consider crowd control.
- Emergency services support requested.
- Additional lifesaving services requested (if required).

In-water search considerations:

- Consider current/drift direction.
- Activate on-scene resources ASAP.
- Remember to maintain management of flagged area or close flagged area if it cannot be adequately maintained.
- Ensure all responding units/services have radio communications (excluding swimmers/board).

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.

