

Additional Clarifications for SLSA Policy Statement – 1.1 Water Safety

No: 23/2011-12

To: SLS Clubs and Services
SLS Branches
SLS States/Territory

From: Surf Life Saving Australia

Date: 09/09/2011

Subject: Additional Clarifications - SLSA Policy Statement - Water Safety

Overview:

Further to the release of **Circular 12/2010-11 'SLSA Policy Statement – 1.1 Water Safety'** on the 25th July 2011, additional 'Questions & Answers' have been developed to assist in implementing this policy. If you have any further enquiries, please contact your state/territory office in the first instance.

Further Questions & Answers:

1. Q: Does this Policy Apply to Surf Carnivals or Pool Rescue Competitions conducted by SLSA, States, Branches and/or Clubs”?

A: The organisation and conduct of all competitions conducted by SLSA, States, Branches and Clubs for its members is as prescribed in the current edition “Surf Life Saving Surf Sports Manual”. Particular attention is drawn to Section 1 (Competition), Section 2 (General Competitive Conditions) and Section 12 (Competition Administration) of this Manual. The safe conduct of competition is paramount and is not to be compromised. Prior to and at any stage during competition appropriate assessments are to be completed and, if there is any doubt as to safety, competition should be relocated, postponed or cancelled.
2. Q: Does this Policy Apply to “Special Events” conducted by conducted by SLSA, States, Branches and/or Clubs”?

A: The organisation and conduct of all “Special Events” competitions conducted by SLSA, States, Branches and Clubs is as prescribed in the current edition “Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs Volume 4 – Event Sanctioning and Management”. Particular attention is drawn to Sections detailing water events. It is expected that an SLS service will complete and submit to their state/territory/branch office for approval an event management plan including water safety. Prior to and at any stage during the event appropriate assessments are to be completed and, if there is any doubt as to safety, the event should be relocated, postponed or cancelled.

3. Q: Do I need to complete the “Aquatic Activity Risk Assessment and Management Form” ?

A: This form is designed to assist a designated activity/water safety supervisor complete a risk assessment process prior to authorising the commencement or continuation of an activity. However, the use of the form is not compulsory and other forms of recording a risk assessment may be satisfactory dependent on the activity being undertaken, e.g. patrol log, IRB log, surf sport events safety guide work sheet, competition committee minute, coaching log, or state or branch supplied form etc.

It is noted that the supervisor needs to ensure that they follow a standard risk assessment process, record the result of that process and comply with water safety ratios in the policy. This is to enhance the level of safety for activity participants and to ensure those responsible for supervising water safety activities have followed policy guidelines.

Further, where an activity is undertaken consistently at a single location, a thorough risk assessment may be undertaken at a point in time, and then re-used and adjusted according to the risks presenting at the actual time of training.

4. Q: Does a risk assessment need to be conducted for all junior activity training?

A: Yes, as per the above response.

5. Q: If a swim/board/surf ski (incl. Ironperson) training group or surfboat or IRB is in competition training, does separate water safety need to accompany the session?

A: If the participants are qualified and proficient, the “buddy”(1:1) system may be adopted and a separate water safety supervisor and personnel are not required as the ratio requirements are met by the participants themselves. This provision is on the basis that the participant acting as the water safety supervisor is qualified to a minimum of the SLSA Bronze Medallion – Certificate II in Public Safety and Aquatic Rescue standard and any other participants acting as water safety personnel are qualified to a minimum of SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate standard. Some examples include:

- i. A rower or sweep of a surfboat or a crew member in an IRB can be nominated as the water safety supervisor;
- ii. A water safety supervisor and a water safety personnel can be nominated from a squad of 20 training ski and/or board paddlers;
- iii. A swimmer from a squad of 10 pool rescue training in a pool (unsupervised) or training in the ocean can be nominated as the water safety supervisor.

Note: In such circumstances the water safety supervisor and any other personnel are not required to wear a designated water safety uniform and if any equipment used may be either lifesaving or competition equipment including a surf boat, racing board or racing ski.

6. Q: Where can Water Safety be located?

A: As part of the risk assessment process the Water Safety Supervisor should consider where to locate all water safety personnel. All water safety personnel must be “rescue ready” (i.e. wearing swimming costumes, etc.) and in the water or be ready to do so. In some instances it may be appropriate to place some water safety personnel on the shore line, or at vantage point (e.g. on the side of a pool etc.) where they can have a good overview of the training area.

7. Q: How would a Sunday Club Surf Swim be managed?

A: A Sunday Club Surf Swim can only be conducted if the beach is patrolled and is open for swimming. This would indicate that the environment is appropriate for the swim to take place and that watersafety provisions can be provided per the policy by the patrol or additional watersafety as required.

If the Sunday Club Surf Swim is being run as a competition for qualified members only, the SLSA Surf Sports Manual may also be used as an alternative to the water safety policy.

8. Q: Does the watersafety policy apply if a training session is being run by a paid coach?

A: If the session is being run by a paid coach, the session will be run according to the risk management process and assessment conducted by that coach. In absence of this, the watersafety policy should be applied by the paid coach.

9. Q: If I am going for a social paddle with friends, does the watersafety policy apply?

A: No, the policy only applies to activities which are undertaken for lifesaving or competition training purposes.

10. Q: Does the watersafety policy apply to patrols?

A: No, patrols are subject to state/territory Standard Operating Procedures and the completion of relevant logs to carry out required risk assessments for lifesaving operations.

11. Q: Who is going to monitor the compliance of this policy?

A: The club/branch would primarily be responsible for compliance of this policy. The state centre may have an additional compliance process to be used or could also serve as a means of appeal/review if disciplinary action arises as a result of non-compliance. National office would also provide an appeal mechanism.

12. Q: How long do the forms need to be kept for?

A: If a paper form is used, the form should be kept for up to 7 years (statute of limitations) unless it is recorded in an electronic system in which case it doesn't necessarily need to be kept unless stipulated in club/branch/state admin procedures. E.g. if the patrol log was used to record the result/outcome of the water safety supervisors risk assessment, from a national perspective if the log is then put into surfguard then the paper log doesn't need to be kept.

13. Q: I've heard about an iPhone app that can assist in the completion of risk assessment. Where do I find it?

A: SLS is currently developing an easy to use iPhone application to carry out a pre-activity risk assessment that complies with the watersafety policy.

For members with advanced understanding of risk management, you may also apply for the event risk management iPhone app through SLS IT using Form 49 'IT Systems Access Form' found at <http://www.slsa.com.au/default.aspx?s=adminresources&id=614>.