

# LS13

## POST INCIDENT (RECOVERY PHASE)



# LS13.1 MEDIA – CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Section: LS13 Post Incident (Recovery Phase)

Page: 1 of 2



Date: December 2019

## PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for consideration when dealing with the media in relation to 'critical incidents'.

## POLICY

Positive interaction with media is important for the organisation. It is imperative however that those media enquiries are handled by the appropriate lifesaving personnel.

Generally critical incidents are defined by Surf Life Saving as either (or a combination) of the following:

- Incident resulting in death (including unsuccessful CPR, body recovery);
- Incident resulting in serious/major injury (shark attack/propeller strike);
- Incident whereby a member of SLS is seriously injured (requiring hospitalisation);
- Incident whereby a member of the public is injured by lifesaving personnel/equipment (requiring external medical treatment or hospitalisation).

## PROCEDURE

### Critical Incident Media - Procedure

1. For any 'critical incident' the SLSNSW Media Manager (or 13SURF) shall be notified as soon as practical.
2. Lifesaving personnel may disregard any media enquiries during the response phase of an incident.
3. The senior lifesaving member involved (Patrol Captain/Lifeguard Supervisor/Duty Officer) shall assume the role of media contact until advised otherwise. This person shall direct media enquiries to the State Media Manager.
4. The senior lifesaving personnel shall restrict media comment by any other lifesaving personnel.
5. The State Media Manager shall establish the facts, communicate with key personnel involved (including the Branch DOL) and establish a media plan.
6. The media plan may involve the identification and briefing of an appropriate local (club/branch) spokesperson or may delegate the role to the State Lifesaving Manager (or other State Officer).

### General Media Enquiries (non-critical)

General media enquiries (e.g. hours of operation, surf conditions, patrol activity, etc) should be treated as a positive opportunity to represent/promote the organisation.

The Patrol Captain/Lifeguard Supervisor may deal with this directly or refer the media to the Club Captain/Branch DOL or Lifeguard Supervisor.

**Note:** If the enquiry is more serious or potentially negative, the matter should be referred to the Branch DOL or State Media Manager.

### Presentation/Public Image

Members should ensure that they are presenting themselves in correct, full uniform at all times if staging photos or doing video interviews for the media.

Equipment and patrol setup should always be as per SOPs.

Do not be influenced to stage a photo or video which is against SOPs or might bring the organisation into disrepute.

# LS13.1 MEDIA – CRITICAL INCIDENTS

**Section:** LS13 Post Incident (Recovery Phase)

**Page:** 2 of 2



**NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

**Date:** December 2019

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## **Rules of Thumb:**

- If you are unsure as to whether or not you should answer a question or make comment to the media, always refer it to the next level.
- Stick to the facts
  - this is what happened,
  - this is what we did,
  - this was the outcome,
  - these are the key safety messages.
- Never engage in hearsay/rumour/innuendo.
- Never appoint blame.
- There is no such thing as 'off the record.'
- You have control of what you say and how you look – don't be 'dictated to' by reporters.
- If you can't, don't want to or don't think you should answer a question – DON'T.  
State: "I am not the appropriate person to comment on that, please contact the State Media Manager."

## **REFERENCE**

SLSNSW Media Kit.

Duty Officer Media Check Sheet.

## LS13.2 CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING

Section: LS13 Post Incident (Recovery Phase)

Page: 1 of 3

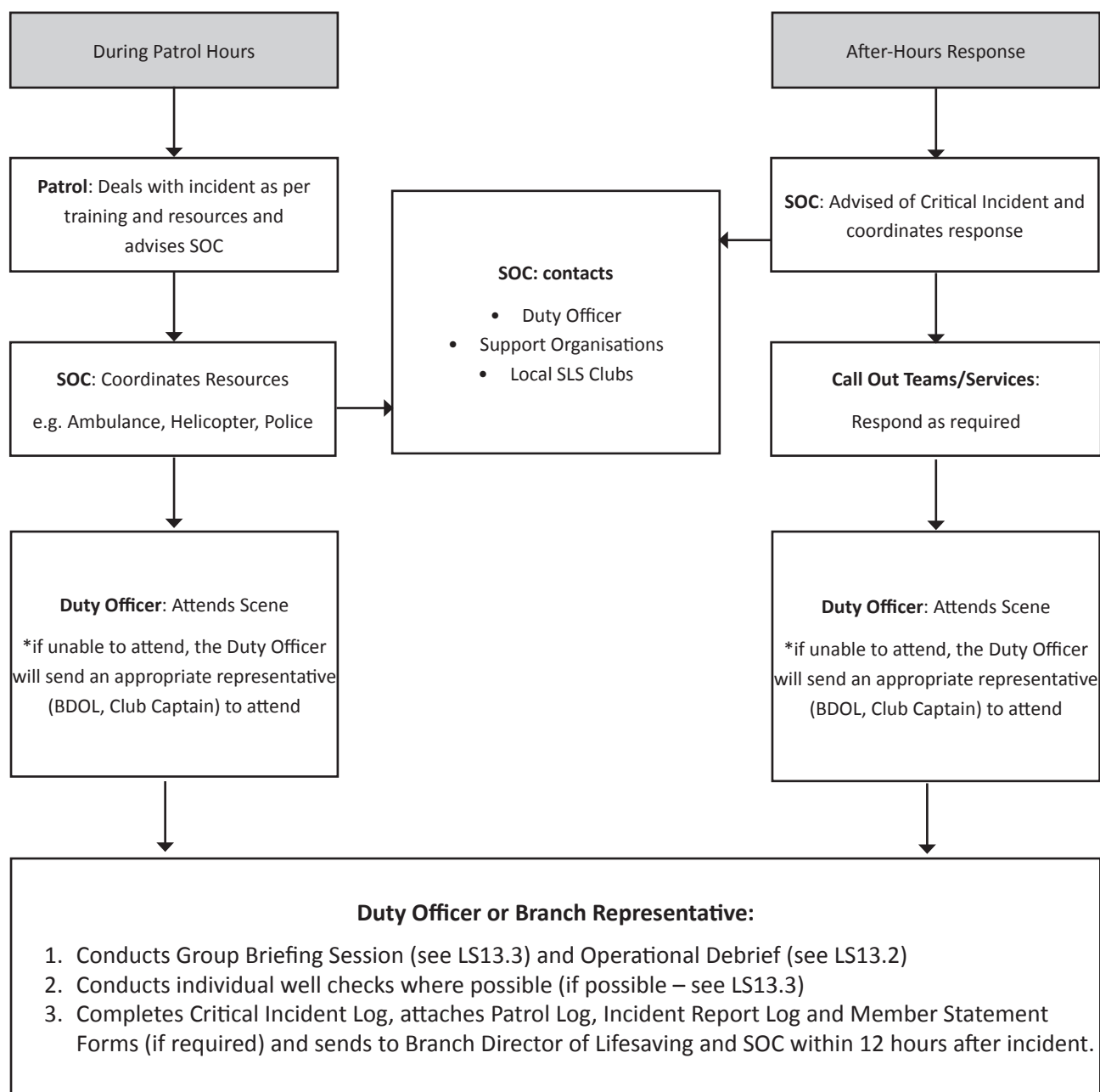


NEW SOUTH  
WALES

Date: December 2019

### PURPOSE

To outline relevant procedures/processes to enable consistent and structured delivery of an operational debrief following a critical incident.



# LS13.2 CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING

Section: LS13 Post Incident (Recovery Phase)

Page: 2 of 3



NEW SOUTH  
WALES

Date: December 2019

## PROCEDURE

### Why should an operational debrief be undertaken following a critical incident?

An operational debrief is undertaken to ensure that:

1. Environmental conditions are noted, and the nature of the incident is agreed.
2. What went well during the incident is highlighted and reinforced.
3. What could have been done better is discussed and noted for suggested changes to local beach tactics or patrol operations generally.
4. As a precursor to discussions on support options available to the members involved (see *LS13.3 Member Welfare – Critical Incidents*).

### What incidents require an operational debrief?

Duty Officers' attendance to the scene and operational debriefs are compulsory in the following incidents:

- Incidents involving death of a patient
- CPR (successful or unsuccessful)
- Drowning
- Failure to save a life
- Shark attacks
- A member of SLS is seriously injured
- Major injury with hospitalisation
- Major rescues
- Severe trauma
- Abuse
- Aggressive Behaviour
- Heart Attack
- Severe asthma attacks

### When/where should the operational debrief be undertaken?

Best practice states that the operational debrief takes place in the week/s following the critical incident, yet for many Surf Life Saving incidents this is not achievable. The debrief often takes place directly after the incident has been finalised, often in conjunction with the group debrief session.

It should be conducted in a private and secure location isolated from any media or public interference with no thoroughfare. Ideally the location will have access to a whiteboard or notepaper for collection of feedback and have access to chairs, tables and water for participants – the Surf Life Saving Club is often ideal.

### Who should deliver/lead the operational debrief?

The Duty Officer should lead every operational debrief following a critical incident as part of the incident Recovery Phase. If a Duty Officer is not available an appropriate Branch Representative should be tasked to deliver the debrief.

### Who should attend?

All Surf Life Saving personnel who were involved in the incident should attend, regardless of the level of involvement. Any personnel not in attendance should be recorded in the debrief form and followed up by the Duty Officer or Branch Representative.

## LS13.2 CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING

Section: LS13 Post Incident (Recovery Phase)

Page: 3 of 3



**NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

Date: December 2019

### What information needs to be recorded and retained?

- The Critical incident Log (detailed in LS13.3, Member Welfare – Critical Incidents) must be completed and provided to the SOC.
- If the incident occurred on patrol, a copy of the Patrol Log and Incident Report Log must be completed in full by the patrol, copied and handed to the Duty Officer. Photographs of these logs is recommended.
- In certain circumstances, the completion of Member Statement Forms may be requested by the SOC.
- In the case of member injury during a critical incident, WorkCover forms can be obtained from the SOC for on-forwarding to members.

NOTE: ALL paperwork must be sent to the Branch Director of Lifesaving and SOC within 12 hours after incident.

### REFERENCE

LS13.3 Member Welfare – Critical Incidents

# LS13.3 MEMBER WELFARE - CRITICAL INCIDENTS



NEW SOUTH  
WALES

Section: LS13 Post Incident (Recovery Phase)

Page: 1 of 2

Date: December 2019

## PURPOSE

To outline SLSNSW's approach to member welfare following a critical incident.

## POLICY

The environment in which surf lifesaving operates has the potential for members to be involved in incidents of a traumatic nature. Such incidents could include the loss of life, the provision of emergency care, search and rescue operations, or a serious incident involving fellow members. SLSNSW has implemented a strong framework of support to ensure that members are cared for and receive appropriate support.

Members are affected differently by incidents, and it is the **reaction** of the individual which makes the incident **critical** for that person, not necessarily the size or nature of the incident. SLSNSW is committed to lessening the impact of critical incident stress on members, staff and their families by providing best practice support following an incident.

## PROCEDURE:

The following procedure should be read in conjunction with the *SLSNSW Critical Incident Management Support Procedures* which provides further background, context and support for its implementation (including details of what a **Group Briefing Session** and **well check** entails).

1. Duty Officer and Lifesaving Officer determine the support required for member welfare.
2. When the situation has stabilised, Duty Officer (or appropriately trained Branch Representative) delivers the **Group Briefing Session** and conducts a **well check** where possible. The Operational Debrief often takes place at this time.
3. As part of the Group Briefing Session, members involved in the critical incident are advised that they will be contacted for a well check as part of standard procedures.
4. Within 12 hours, Duty Officer completes **Critical Incident Log**, compiling a list of members directly and indirectly involved in the incident.
5. Within 24 hours, Lifesaving Officer:
  - a) Sends members' details to SLSNSW's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.
  - b) Conducts well check (is possible) if this was not completed by the Duty Officer or Appointed Branch Representative.
  - c) Forwards the members' details to the SLSNSW Member Welfare Officer.
6. Within 48 hours, SLSNSW Member Welfare Officer:
  - a) Sends each member post-incident support information via email.
  - b) Conducts a well check if this was not completed by either the Duty Officer or Lifesaving Officer.
7. Two further well checks will be conducted – one at approximately one week post-incident and one at approximately one month post-incident. These will be conducted by either SLSNSW Member Welfare Officer or a branch-based State Welfare Officer, depending on local arrangements.

# LS13.3 MEMBER WELFARE - CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Section: LS13 Post Incident (Recovery Phase)

Page: 2 of 2



NEW SOUTH  
WALES

Date: December 2019



*\* This action may be undertaken by an appropriately trained Branch Representative.*

## Referrals

Referrals can be made to professional psychological support at any stage of the process. Referrals can be made via SLSNSW Employee Assistance Program, or via the individual member's GP.

## Major Incident Support

Throughout the season, major critical incidents may occur which require swift professional support over and above the process outlined above. In these instances, a member of the SLSNSW Senior Leadership Team will work directly with the Club or Branch to activate additional support.

## Additional Support

Some clubs and branches have additional support people or networks in place who can be contacted for support outside of the SLSNSW Critical Incident Support process. These include chaplains and peer support networks.

## REFERENCE:

SLSNSW Critical Incident Management Support Protocols

SLSNSW Critical Incident Log

Member Welfare Guide: A support guide for SLSNSW members involved in critical incidents