

Memorandum

To: All Members
From: Hamish Jones, SLSNSW Lifesaving Operations Coordinator
Date: 23/09/2026
Pages: 18
Subject: Changes to Public Safety Standard Operating Procedures

1. Background & Process

Surf Life Saving NSW has reviewed our Public Safety Standard Operating Procedures (PSSOPs) ahead of the 2026/27 patrol season to ensure they remain clear, current and fit for purpose. The changes implemented are intended to support safer decision-making, clearer escalation and reporting, and more consistent coordination with relevant authorities and specialist organisations.

The review was undertaken in close collaboration with relevant external agencies, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in relation to PSS7.11 Whales, Dolphins, Seals, Turtles and Sea Snakes, and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) in relation to PSS8.5 Shark Incidents. This external expertise helped inform updated guidance and ensure the procedures are appropriately aligned with current requirements within their fields.

Please note you can find the updated live and PDF versions of the Public Safety Standard Operating Procedures [here](#).

2. Changes

Section	Key Changes
PSS1.1 Work Health and Safety	- Board statement broadened to include physical and psychological health, safe systems of work and shared safety responsibilities. - Added requirements for reporting hazards, near misses, injuries, illnesses, equipment failures and incidents. - Added SafeWork NSW and Transport for NSW reporting guidelines - Separated into 4 distinct sections; 1.2 Fitness for Duty, 1.3 Environmental Exposure, Hydration and Fatigue, and 1.4 Safe Use of Vehicles, Craft, Plant and Equipment
PSS1.2 Fitness for Duty – Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Medication	- Changed BAC requirements from 0.05 to 0.00 for patrols, emergency responses, SAR and equipment operation. - Added references to batteries, fuel and other flammable substances. - Added requirements for managing personnel suspected of being unfit for duty



Section	Key Changes
PSS1.3 Environmental Exposure, Hydration and Fatigue	• Created new section covering heat, cold, severe weather, dehydration, exertion and fatigue. • Added guidance on rest breaks, personnel rotation, weather monitoring and monitoring for heat illness, cold stress and fatigue.
PSS1.4 Safe Use of Vehicles, Craft, Plant and Equipment	• Added requirements for pre-operational inspections, safety checks and following manufacturer instructions • Added requirements to report faults and remove defective equipment from service • Added restrictions on modifying, misusing or interfering with equipment and safety devices.
PSS7.11- Whales, Dolphins, Seals, Turtles and Sea Snakes	• Expanded guidance for whale and dolphin entanglement incidents. • Updated approach distances and exclusion-zone requirements. • Clearer procedures for notifying SurfCom and coordinating with wildlife rescue organisations. • New guidance for whale and dolphin strandings and entanglements. • New guidance for seals, turtles, sea snakes and marine wildlife carcasses. • Clearer limits on SLS involvement in marine wildlife incidents. • Expanded advice on turtle nesting, wildlife disturbance and shark-risk management.
PSS8.5 Shark Incidents	• Wording changes • Added further definitions • Updated advice on suspected/unconfirmed shark sightings • Updated advice on reopening beaches after a shark attack

PSS 1.1 WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

BOARD STATEMENT

Health and safety is integral to every Surf Life Saving activity. SLSNSW is committed to providing, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe environments, equipment and systems of work that protect the physical and psychological health of members, workers, visitors and the community.

Everyone involved in Surf Life Saving must contribute to identifying and managing risks, reporting hazards and incidents, following safe work practices and promoting a culture where Safety comes first.

PURPOSE

To establish the health and safety responsibilities and minimum safety expectations applying to all authorised Surf Life Saving activities.

POLICY

SLSNSW, Branches, Clubs and all personnel must comply with applicable WHS legislation and SLSA and SLSNSW requirements.

All personnel must:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others.
- Follow reasonable safety instructions, policies, SOPs and codes of conduct.
- Only undertake activities for which they are qualified, proficient, inducted, authorised and fit.
- Use required PPE and safety equipment.
- Report hazards, near misses, injuries, illnesses, incidents and equipment failures.
- Participate in consultation, training, briefings and risk assessments.
- Stop or modify an activity where an unacceptable risk cannot be adequately controlled.

SLSNSW and relevant Surf Life Saving entities will provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe systems, equipment and facilities and appropriate information, training, supervision, consultation and reporting processes.

PROCEDURE

Risks must be assessed before and throughout an activity, particularly when conditions, personnel, equipment or operational circumstances change. Where a hazard is identified, personnel must make the area or activity safe where possible, warn those at risk, notify the person in charge and report the matter through the approved process.

Members must operate within their qualifications, experience and assigned role and advise the person in charge if they are not fit, competent or adequately equipped to undertake a task safely.

REPORTING

Physical and psychological hazards, including bullying, harassment, discrimination, violence, fatigue and exposure to traumatic incidents, must be reported and addressed. Members are encouraged to raise safety concerns and may cease an activity where they reasonably believe it presents a serious and immediate or imminent risk.

Prompt reporting allows hazards to be controlled, injured persons to be supported and SLSNSW to meet its legal and organisational obligations. Providing first aid, contacting emergency services and making the area safe must always take priority.

INTERNAL REPORTING

All hazards, near misses, injuries, illnesses, equipment failures and incidents arising from Surf Life Saving activities must be reported as soon as practicable to the Patrol Captain, Duty Officer, activity supervisor or other person in charge and recorded through the approved SLS incident-reporting process.

Serious or major operational incidents, including any incident that may require notification to SafeWork NSW or Transport for NSW, must be immediately escalated through to the SLSNSW State Operations Centre/State Duty Officer via SurfCom. If uncertain whether an incident is reportable, escalate it immediately and seek advice.

SAFework NSW

A work-related incident must be notified to SafeWork NSW immediately where it involves:

- The death of a person.
- A serious injury or illness.
- A dangerous incident that exposed a person to a serious risk, even where no injury occurred.

The relevant member, Club or Branch must ensure notification is made to SLSNSW State Operations Centre/State Duty Officer who will make the notification to SafeWork NSW. Responsibility for notification must be confirmed immediately and must not delay the report.

The incident site must, so far as reasonably practicable, be preserved until released by SafeWork NSW, except where disturbance is necessary to assist an injured person, remove a deceased person, make the site safe or comply with a direction from Police or a SafeWork NSW inspector.

TRANSPORT FOR NSW – MARITIME

Any incident involving a Surf Life Saving vessel or craft, including an IRB or RWC, must be immediately reported internally and escalated to SLSNSW State Operations Centre/State Duty Officer. They will then advise if the skipper must submit a Vessel Incident Report to Transport for NSW which must be completed within 24 hours where the incident results in:

- Death or injury.
- More than \$5,000 damage to a vessel or other property.
- Damage, or a risk of damage, to the environment.

The skipper must stop, provide assistance where required and provide relevant identification and vessel details to Police, authorised officers and other persons involved.

Different and potentially shorter reporting periods apply to vessels classified as domestic commercial vessels. Where there is any uncertainty about the vessel classification or reporting requirements, the SLSNSW State Operations Centre/State Duty Officer and Transport for NSW must be contacted immediately for advice.

PSS 1.2 FITNESS FOR DUTY – SMOKING, ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND MEDICATION

PURPOSE

To establish fitness-for-duty requirements and manage risks associated with smoking, vaping, alcohol, prohibited drugs and impairing medication.

POLICY

Personnel must present fit for duty and must not undertake Surf Life Saving activities while affected by alcohol, drugs, medication, fatigue, illness or any other condition that may impair safe performance.

PROCEDURE

Smoking and vaping are prohibited during operational duties, while wearing an operational uniform, and within Surf Life Saving buildings, vehicles, craft and designated smoke-free areas. Smoking or vaping must never occur near oxygen equipment, fuel, batteries or flammable substances.

Alcohol must not be consumed during operational duties or emergency responses. SLSNSW applies a blood alcohol concentration requirement of 0.00% to personnel undertaking patrols, emergency responses or search and rescue operations, or operating vehicles, craft, plant or equipment.

The possession, supply or use of prohibited drugs during Surf Life Saving activities is prohibited. Prescription and non-prescription medication may be used lawfully, but members must not undertake duties where medication may impair their ability to work safely.

Members must advise the person in charge of any relevant limitation affecting their fitness for duty but are not ordinarily required to disclose a diagnosis or specific medication.

A person reasonably suspected of being unfit must not commence or continue duties. The person in charge must manage the immediate risk, arrange assistance or safe transport where required, notify the appropriate officer and record or escalate the matter in accordance with SLSNSW procedures.

PSS 1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURE, HYDRATION AND FATIGUE

PURPOSE

To manage risks arising from sun and UV exposure, heat, cold, severe weather, dehydration, prolonged exertion and fatigue.

POLICY

Environmental and fatigue risks must be considered when planning and conducting Surf Life Saving activities. Activities must be modified, postponed or ceased where an unacceptable risk cannot be adequately controlled.

PROCEDURE

Appropriate controls include:

- Monitoring weather, temperature, UV levels and changing conditions.
- Providing access to shade, drinking water and rest breaks.
- Rotating personnel during prolonged or physically demanding activities.
- Wearing appropriate clothing, hats, sunglasses, sunscreen and other required PPE.
- Carrying adequate water during powercraft, mobile, remote or prolonged operations.
- Monitoring members for signs of dehydration, heat illness, cold stress and fatigue.

Personnel must report symptoms or concerns affecting their ability to work safely. Anyone affected must stop the activity, receive appropriate first aid and be referred for medical assistance where required.

PSS 1.4 SAFE USE OF VEHICLES, CRAFT, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

PURPOSE

To ensure Surf Life Saving vehicles, craft, plant and equipment are safe, fit for purpose and operated by competent and authorised personnel.

POLICY

Vehicles, SSVs, e-bikes, IRBs, RWCs, UAVs, vessels, plant and other equipment may only be operated by personnel who are qualified, proficient, inducted, authorised and fit for duty.

PROCEDURE

Personnel must:

- Complete required pre-operational inspections and safety checks.
- Operate equipment in accordance with legislation, manufacturer instructions and Surf Life Saving procedures.
- Use required PPE and safety equipment.
- Operate within the limits of their competency, the equipment and prevailing conditions.
- Report faults, damage or missing safety equipment immediately.
- Remove defective equipment from service until inspected and cleared by an authorised person.
- Not modify, misuse or interfere with equipment or safety devices without approval.
- Prevent unauthorised persons from operating equipment.

REFERENCES

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*
- *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2025 (NSW)*
- Relevant NSW approved Codes of Practice
- *Smoke-free Environment Act 2000 (NSW)*
- *Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 (NSW)*
- *SLSA Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs*
- Relevant SLSA and SLSNSW policies, SOPs and codes of conduct
- SafeWork NSW guidance
- Cancer Council SunSmart, Bureau of Meteorology and SLSA Beachsafe guidance

Last modified: 24/09/25

PSS 7.11 – Whales, Dolphins, Seals, Turtles and Sea Snakes

PURPOSE

To assist SLS personnel by providing guidelines for operating close to Whales, Dolphins, Seals, Turtles and Sea Snakes (collectively referred to here as 'marine wildlife').

POLICY

This policy outlines the management framework for wildlife approach distance compliance, responses to healthy animals engaged in natural behaviours, whale and dolphin strandings, shore-based seal resting behaviour, turtle nesting events, entanglements, sick or injured animals, carcass management, and other public safety matters relating to these species.

The first and highest priority for SLSNSW in any marine wildlife event or interaction, is human safety.

SLS personnel may provide support to trained staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and/or licensed rescue organisations (e.g. ORRCA), where that support is consistent with this policy, appropriate risk controls are in place, and SurfCom has been advised.

RISK FACTORS

Marine wildlife incidents can present significant risks to responders and the public. These events often attract public attention and may lead to interference or disputes from untrained bystanders.

SLS personnel should notify the appropriate authorities (i.e. NPWS or a licensed partner organisations) through SurfCom in the first instance, provide public safety messaging where appropriate, and withdraw if situations become hostile.

Stranded, injured or deceased marine wildlife may also increase shark activity, requiring risk-mitigating actions such as surveillance or beach closures.

Physical risks from marine wildlife include bites, being struck by tail or flippers, crush injuries if larger animals are moving unrestrained, entanglement in ropes or nets tangled on the animal, and drowning if a rescuer is injured in the water (particularly in surf conditions), and envenomation from sea snakes. Marine wildlife may also carry parasites or diseases, so health and safety precautions should always be followed.

In all cases, personal safety must be prioritised, exclusion zones for observers not authorized for rescue activities maintained, and expert advice followed.

PROCEDURES

The first and highest priority for SLS in any marine wildlife event or interaction is human safety, including for both SLS personnel and members of the public.

If during SLS duties, personnel are required to operate close to a whale, dolphin, seal, (in water or on shore), or a turtle or sea snake washed up on shore, or in distress in the water, SLS personnel should advise SurfCom as soon as practical and ask SurfCom to contact the NPWS and/or a licensed rescue organisation who can advise on precautions for particular species or situations, and can arrange assessment, address animal welfare, undertake capture/rescue, or other response actions.

The most immediate way for SLS personnel to protect human safety in any marine wildlife event or interaction, is to establish an 'exclusion zone' around the animal, until trained staff from NPWS and/or a licensed rescue organisation (see references below) arrives, who will conduct an assessment and determine appropriate actions.

NPWS and/or a licensed rescue organisation may seek practical direct support from SLS personnel, however this would be subject to consultation and approval from SurfCom.

1. Approach Distances and Public Safety Exclusion Zones

Interfering with or harming marine wildlife and reptiles is prohibited under NSW law. This includes compliance with approach distances particularly for free swimming whales, dolphins, and seals.

If during SLS duties personnel are required to operate close to a whale, dolphin, seal (in water or on shore), or a turtle or sea snake washed up on shore, SLS personnel should:

- notify Surf Com who will alert NPWS asap,

then

- establish a public safety exclusion zone (based on the table below), and
- note the following approach distances and public safety exclusion zones, which can be applied (unless advised otherwise by NPWS):

Public Safety Exclusion Zone	Any stranded Whale or Dolphin on shore	Any Seal on shore	Any Turtle or Sea Snake on shore
All public other than rescuers or personnel under specific authorized instruction.	Not within 10 metres	Not within 40 metres	Not within 10 metres

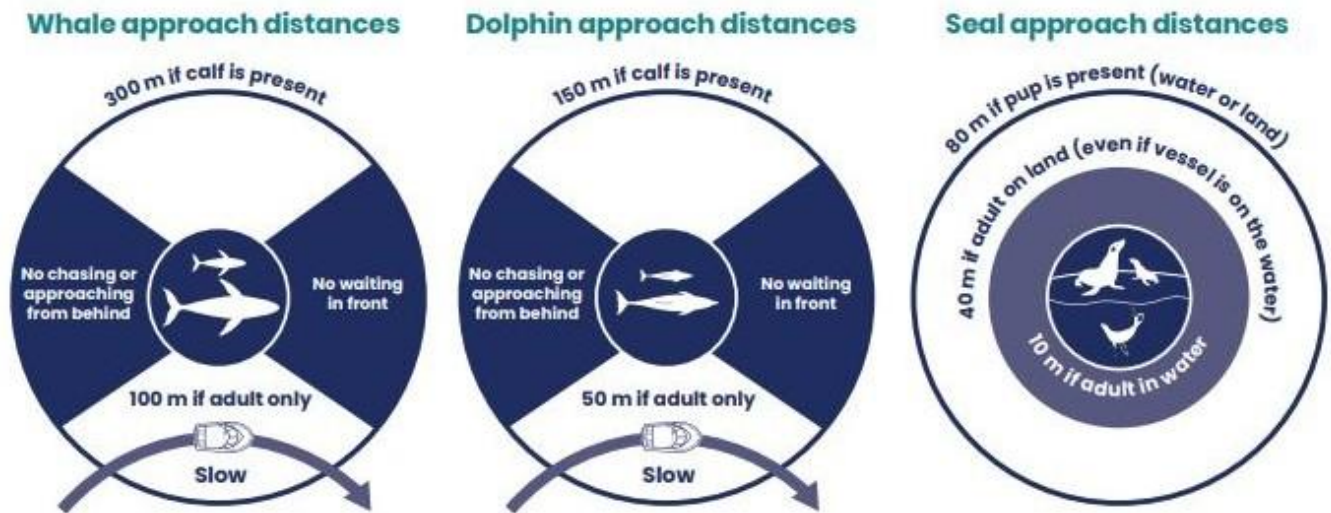
Table 1: Species Public Safety Exclusion Zones

EXCLUSION ZONE	Free swimming Whale	Free swimming Dolphin	Free swimming Seal
• Vessels and Surf Craft	Not within 100 metres	Not within 50 metres	Not within 10 metres
• Swimmers	Not within 30 metres	Not within 30 metres	Not within 10 metres
• UAVs	Not lower than 100m above animal		

Table 2: General Species Exclusion Zones

CAUTION ZONE	Free swimming Whale	Free swimming Dolphin	Distance to Seal
Vessels - slow speed only, no waiting in front or follow behind	Within 300 metres	Within 150 metres	N/A

Table 3: Caution Zones



2. Whale or Dolphin Events

Strandings

If during SLS duties, personnel become involved in assisting with a whale or dolphin stranding, SLS personnel should:

- notify SurfCom who will alert NPWS asap,

then

- attempt to establish a public safety exclusion zone (based on the table in 1 above), and
- only when specifically authorised and briefed by NPWS or a licensed rescue organisation, AND approved by SurfCom, should any SLS personnel attempt to provide marine wildlife with situation-specific assistance until trained responders arrive to take charge

Any assistance is subject to SurfCom approval.

Entanglements

In the event of a dolphin or whale entanglement, SLS personnel should:

- notify SurfCom who will alert NPWS asap,

then

- attempt to establish a public safety exclusion zone (based on the table in 1 above), and
- only when specifically authorised and briefed by NPWS or a licensed rescue organisation, AND approved by SurfCom, should any SLS personnel attempt to provide marine wildlife with situation-specific assistance until trained responders arrive to take charge

SLS personnel, vessels and/or equipment shall not directly undertake marine wildlife disentangling operations, or remove any tangled marine wildlife carcasses from shark nets, drumlines or fishery equipment entanglements.

SLS personnel may still be asked for assistance with specific tasks. SLS personnel may assist NPWS officers and/or personnel of a licensed rescue organisation with:

- ongoing public safety for beach users, SLS personnel, and marine wildlife rescuers,
- UAV support to gather situation information and monitoring of any response (especially shark risk/presence),
- advice on options for beach access, boat ramps and/or beach launching locations,
- using SLS vehicles (e.g. SSV) to assist with access and on-beach transport

Any assistance is subject to SurfCom approval.

3. Seals, Turtles, and Sea Snakes

If during SLS duties personnel become aware of a sea snake, seal (in water or on shore), or turtle (including turtle tracks or nests), SLS personnel should:

- notify Surf Com who will alert NPWS asap,

then

- attempt to establish a public exclusion zone (based on the table in 1 above),

Other Considerations

- Do not attempt to handle or move a turtle or sea snake (dead or alive)
- Do not walk on or obscure the turtles tracks or the nest excavation site
- If the turtle is still there and/or still laying eggs;
 - Do not approach the turtle (minimum 10m)
 - Do not use any flash photography
 - Stay behind the turtle's head (out of line of sight) and stay low to the ground

4. Marine Wildlife Carcasses

If during SLS duties personnel become aware of a marine wildlife carcass (particularly on the beach or in close proximity to popular swimming areas, SLS personnel should:

- follow procedures consistent with detection of elevated shark risk to swimmers, including increased UAV, IRB and/or jetski surveillance (and follow PSS 8.1 Emergency Beach Closure and Evacuation and 8.5 Shark Incidents if appropriate)
- notify Surf Com who will alert NPWS asap,

then

- attempt to establish a public exclusion zone (based on table 1 above)

REFERENCES

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service - Marine Wildlife Management Manual (policy - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/marine-wildlife-management-manual-2021-policies-procedures-marine-wildlife-management.pdf>)

Find a licensed wildlife rehabilitation provider in New South Wales - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/rehabilitating-native-animals/licensed-wildlife-rehabilitation-providers-in-nsw>

See also:

PSS 7.10 Shark Meshing Program

PSS 8.1 Emergency Beach Closure and Evacuation

PSS 8.5 Shark Incidents

PSS 8.5 SHARK SIGHTINGS AND INCIDENTS

PURPOSE

This guideline is an aid to recognising and reducing risks associated with sharks. It recognises the role of lifesaving services in managing an environment that sharks inhabit and incorporates shark detections made by lifesaving personnel, members of the public and approved surveillance technologies, including Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).

This guideline:

- Assists in identifying existing and potential health and safety issues;
- Raises the overall awareness of hazard identification and risk reduction
- Assists in establishing risk management procedures for shark sightings and incidents at patrolled and unpatrolled locations.
- Provides a consistent risk-based response while recognising the different controls available at patrolled and unpatrolled locations.

POLICY

SLSNSW requires lifesaving services and approved UAV surveillance services to follow these guidelines regarding shark sightings and shark incidents.

PROCEDURE

For the purposes of this document the word shark is used in the broad sense to include all sharks. SLSNSW acknowledges that not all sharks are dangerous, with nearly all shark bites in NSW coastal waters being attributed to just three shark types. These include whaler sharks (including bull sharks), tiger sharks and white sharks.

The procedure applies a dynamic risk assessment based on the reliability of the sighting, size and species where known, shark behaviour, proximity to water users, environmental conditions and the controls available at the location.

DEFINITIONS

Shark Alarm	Where a civilian or lifesaving person has seen an object in the water that they believe to be a shark. Action is taken to protect the public through a water evacuation and confirm the identity of the object.
Shark Sighting	The presence of a shark has been confirmed, commonly following detection by an approved surveillance asset.
Shark Incident/ Shark Bite	Death or injury caused by a marine animal, presumed to be a shark, or property damage where it is apparent that the damage was caused by the same.

Shark Net	A 150-metre net set by contractors as part of the Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program managed by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.
Lower Risk Sighting	A sighting assessed as presenting a lower immediate risk based on shark size, behaviour, location, direction and speed of travel, proximity to water users and the environmental context.
Higher Risk Sighting	A sighting assessed as presenting an elevated or immediate risk due to shark size, species where known, behaviour, swimming speed, feeding activity, location or proximity to water users.
UAV Surveillance Asset	An approved UAV operated by trained personnel for shark detection, monitoring, tracking, recording and, where fitted, public warning.
SOC / SurfCom	The statewide communications centre responsible for receiving reports, coordinating notifications and recording operational information.
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (NSW DPIRD)	The NSW Government agency responsible for overseeing the NSW Shark Management Program (https://www.sharksmart.nsw.gov.au)

RISK FACTORS

Lifesaving and UAV surveillance services should maintain heightened alertness and apply an appropriate level of response when relevant risk factors are present. Sharks may be present at any time. Factors that may increase the risk of an encounter include:

- Twilight hours, including dawn and dusk, overcast conditions and other low-light periods including night.
- Locations where saltwater meets fresh water, including river mouths, estuaries and harbours, particularly where the water is dirty, silt-laden or contains debris, especially after heavy rainfall.
- Large schools of fish in the vicinity, including seabirds diving as an indicator of baitfish.
- A recent shark incident in the area.
- Swimming near steep drop-offs and between sandbars.
- Presence of a whale carcass in the water or on the beach

PERSONAL SAFETY AND PUBLIC ADVICE

The following advice should be promoted to the public to reduce the risk of incidents involving sharks and humans:

- Swim at a patrolled beach and between the red and yellow flags.
- Leave the water immediately and calmly if a shark is sighted.
- Leave the water when a siren or public address warning is issued and do not enter the water when the patrolled area is closed.
- Do not swim or surf alone.
- Avoid swimming in low light conditions including night or during dawn and dusk.
- Avoid dirty or murky water.
- Do not swim or surf near schools of fish.
- Avoid canals, channels, river or creek mouths, drainage outlets and locations where fish are being cleaned.

- Exercise caution when swimming in rivers and harbours near steep drop-offs and between sandbars.

SUSPECTED/UNCONFIRMED SHARK SIGHTING

Receive the report: A report may be received from a lifeguard, lifesaver, UAV Operator, SOC / SurfCom, member of the public, or another authorised source.

Record essential information: Obtain the location, time, source, approximate size, number of sharks, species if confidently identifiable, behaviour, direction of travel, proximity to shore and water users, and prevailing conditions.

Establish surveillance: Use available elevated observation, UAV, other aerial assets or watercraft (IRB/RWC) to confirm and monitor the sighting without placing personnel at unnecessary risk.

Treat an unconfirmed report as a shark sighting: Take reasonable public safety precautions while attempting to confirm the object and its location. If those precautions include evacuating the water, then also advise SOC/SurfCom to post an alert to the SharkSmart app, and again if a shark has not been sighted after 30 minutes.

LOWER RISK CONFIRMED SHARK SIGHTING – PATROLLED & UNPATROLLED BEACH

A lower risk response may be appropriate when the available information indicates no immediate threat. Indicators include:

- No water users are immediately present in the vicinity.
- A single shark is less than 2 metres in length.
- Multiple or schooling sharks are less than 1.5 metres in length.
- The shark is moving away from the area or holding position away from water users, including off a headland.
- No feeding, aggressive or unusual behaviour is observed.

Response actions in a lower risk response may include:

Monitor: Continue to observe the shark, its behaviour and direction of travel.

Report and update: Provide the sighting and relevant updates to SOC / SurfCom and the responsible patrol or lifeguard personnel. SOC/SurfCom are not required to update the NSW DPIRD SharkSmart App unless the risk assessment changes.

Where the beach is unpatrolled the same process is undertaken with SOC/SurfCom only.

Maintain heightened surveillance: Continue UAV and/or visual surveillance and reassess the risk if the shark changes direction, behaviour or proximity to water users.

Apply proportionate controls: Water evacuation, alarm activation, patrol closure and signage are not normally required unless the risk assessment changes.

Record: Record the sighting in accordance with operational reporting requirements (patrol log/operations app).

HIGHER RISK CONFIRMED SHARK SIGHTING – PATROLLED BEACH

A higher risk response is required where the sighting presents an elevated or immediate risk. Indicators include:

- The shark is confidently identified as a White, Tiger or Bull shark and greater than 2 metres in length.

- The shark species is unable to be identified but is greater than 2 metres in length.
- The shark is within or approaching a patrolled swimming area.
- A target or unknown species of shark greater than 2 metres in length and is within 300 metres of water users.
- A feeding shark/s are within 500 m of water users.
- Aggressive or unusual behaviour is observed.

Immediate response actions include:

Warn water users to evacuate the water: Use the available emergency evacuation alarm, public address system, UAV siren and/or UAV loudspeaker. Clearly direct people to leave the water quickly and calmly. Deploy lifesaving personnel to reinforce the evacuation where available and safe.

Close the patrolled area where required: The Patrol Captain or Lifeguard determines whether to close the patrolled area. Lower and remove the red and yellow patrol flags and any other patrol flags in use.

Install signage: Post Swimming Not Advised and Shark Hazard signs at identified beach access points within the vicinity of the patrolled area.

Notify: Report the sighting and current risk status to SOC / SurfCom and the responsible Patrol Captain, Lifeguard.

Track and update: Continue tracking the shark and provide regular updates on location, behaviour and direction of travel.

Apply location-specific controls: Implement the applicable controls to support the water evacuation through watercraft (IRB/RWC), ATV and ongoing Aerial Surveillance.

Do not interfere with the shark: Do not attempt to kill, capture, harass or injure the animal.

Consider adjoining beaches: Notify or apply controls to adjoining and neighbouring beaches where the shark movement or risk assessment indicates this is necessary.

Maintain public information: Provide clear, factual and consistent safety information to beach users.

Reopening of patrolled area: When the water is clear and the risk has abated beach/water users in the vicinity should be informed via public address system/loudhailer with the red and yellow patrol flags and any other patrol flags in use being once again erected. The SOC/SurfCom should be informed once the flags have been erected. An alert should be posted to the NSW DPIRD SharkSmart app advising that the beach has been reopened/that a shark has not been sighted for the last 30-minutes

Record the event: Complete the required shark sighting in operational records (patrol log/operations app). SOC/SurfCom will update the NSW DPIRD SharkSmart App to inform broader public of the shark presence.

HIGHER RISK CONFIRMED SHARK SIGHTING – UNPATROLLED BEACH

A higher risk response is required where the sighting presents an elevated or immediate risk. Indicators include:

- The shark is confidently identified as a White, Tiger or Bull shark and greater than 2 metres in length.
- The shark species is unable to be identified but is greater than 2 metres in length.
- A target or unknown species of shark greater than 2 metres in length and is within 300 metres of water users.
- A feeding shark/s are within 500 m of water users.
- Aggressive or unusual behaviour is observed.

Immediate response actions include:

Warn water users to evacuate the water: Use the available emergency evacuation alarm, public address system, UAV siren and/or UAV loudspeaker. Clearly direct people to leave the water quickly and calmly.

Notify: Report the sighting and current risk status to SOC / SurfCom. Consider requesting additional support, through the SOC/SurfCom, from Duty Officers and/or Lifeguard Supervisors if water users fail to heed emergency evacuation.

Install signage: Post Shark Hazard signs at identified beach access points within the vicinity of the Surf Club, UAV site etc.

Track and update: Continue tracking the shark and provide regular updates on location, behaviour and direction of travel.

Consider adjoining beaches: Notify adjoining and neighbouring beaches where the shark movement or risk assessment indicates this is necessary via radio and/or SOC/SurfCom.

Maintain public information: Provide clear, factual and consistent safety information to beach/water users in the vicinity.

Safe to Return: When the water is clear and the risk has abated inform the SOC/SurfCom via radio and beach/water users in the vicinity should be informed via public address system/loudhailer.

Record the event: SOC/SurfCom will update the NSW DPIRD SharkSmart App to inform broader public of the shark presence. An alert should be posted to the NSW DPIRD SharkSmart app advising that the beach has been reopened/that a shark has not been sighted for the last 30-minutes

ACTIONS IN THE EVENT OF A SHARK INCIDENT / BITE

In the event of an apparent shark incident or bite, the following procedure must be undertaken:

Recover and treat the patient: Undertake rescue, casualty recovery, first aid and resuscitation in accordance with normal emergency procedures that do not expose rescuers to unreasonable risk.

Notify SOC/SurfCom: Immediately notify SOC/SurfCom. The State Duty Officer coordinates advice to the appropriate authorities to support activation of the NSW Shark Incident Response arrangements.

Close the affected area and adjacent beaches: Immediately evacuate the water, close beach and implement warnings/closures for adjoining beaches.

Preserve and record information: Record as much detail as possible, including times, locations, witness information, patient details where authorised, shark description and last known location.

Mark relevant locations: Where operationally appropriate, consider deploying marker buoys at the incident site and the last-seen locations of the patient and shark.

Support personnel: Implement critical incident debriefing and peer support processes.

Complete reporting: Complete all required incident, patient and shark reporting documentation.

STATE DUTY OFFICER'S ROLE (SDO)

- Contacts NSW Shark Incident Response agencies and relevant land manager to advise of the incident.
- Contacts relevant lifesaving personnel through a SurfCom incident notification.
- Ensure the Rescue Coordinator at the relevant police radio communications centre (VKG) has been advised.

- Coordinates SLSNSW notifications and support interagency liaison.

MEDIA LIAISON

The State Duty Officer will notify the SLSNSW Media Team. All media queries, releases and statements relating to shark attacks must be referred to SLSNSW Media Team or an authorised SLSNSW spokesperson.

RE-OPENING AFTER A SHARK ATTACK

The decision to reopen beaches after a shark incident should be made through the relevant joint agency working arrangements involving NSW DPIRD, SLSNSW, NSW Police and relevant land manager. Steps to consider as part of the reopening process include:

- The beach where the incident occurred should remain closed for at least 24 hours following the incident.
- A documented risk assessment should be completed before reopening and/or aerial surveillance undertaken to ensure relevant risks have decreased from the time of the incident.
- If risk factors remain high, the beach should remain closed for a further agreed period (normally an additional 24 hours) and an appropriate beach safety warning should be issued.
- The reopening decision, notification and public messaging must be recorded.

REFERENCE

PSS8.1 Emergency Beach Closure & Evacuation

PSS13.1 Media – Critical Incidents

PSS13.2 Critical Incident Debriefing

NSW Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development (<https://www.sharksmart.nsw.gov.au>)

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