

Safety in Surf Life Saving

Surf Life Saving is a unique organisation whose trained volunteers and paid lifeguards have kept our beaches safe for more than 100 years.

The nature of surf lifesaving activity requires the learning of new skills. Surf lifesavers are often involved in emergency situations where they encounter significant environmental challenges such as large seas, rips and other dangerous water conditions. They are also often required to use heavy gear and equipment to fulfil their duties. And of course, the majority of these activities take place under the harsh Australian sun, meaning they must reduce the likelihood of harmful sun exposure.

As part of Surf Life Saving Australia's (SLSA's) health and safety commitment, this brochure outlines some of the safety issues involved in surf lifesaving. It is therefore an important tool in preventing injury and illness to you, our members.

Our responsibilities to you

- Provide safety training and education
- Implement risk management procedures
- Investigate surf lifesaving incidents and accidents
- Implement and maintain the injury reporting system and strategies
- Implement systems for managing critical incidents and stress
- Implement rehabilitation and return-to-duty procedures for injured members
- Maintain a safe work environment with clear safety rules
- Provide any safety equipment necessary to perform specific activities
- Promote a culture of safety and wellbeing

Your responsibilities to us

- Act responsibly and with care
- Work safely by following all safety directions of team leaders or club officials
- Follow safe work practices and procedures
- Report any injury or illness as soon as possible to a club official
- Follow operational procedures
- Use all safety equipment correctly – and for the job it is intended for
- Understand your limitations – act accordingly
- Promote a culture of safety and wellbeing
- Report all faulty gear and equipment and remove it from use

Helpful resources

SLSA has a range of **health and safety** policies and **codes of conduct** for members involved in surf lifesaving activities.

'**Guidelines for Safer Clubs**' give all SLSA members detailed information on health and safety matters in surf life saving clubs ('clubs') around Australia. These guidelines cover procedures, forms and direction on health and safety issues.

The **Australian Coastal Public Safety Guidelines** provide a useful resource for club management on safety and wellbeing in a coastal and beach environment.

Both guidelines can be accessed via the SLSA website www.slsa.com.au along with SLSA policies and codes of conduct. You should also check with your state/ branch/club for additional policies relevant to your club.

Education and training

Whether you are an existing or new member of SLSA, a club induction should be provided at the start of each training course. Some training requires task-specific information before a course or session. These training sessions are an invaluable source of basic information on health and safety and should not be overlooked.

The club safety officer should be contacted if you have not received an induction.

Have you been taught the skill involved to safely perform your duty? If you are in doubt – ask! Also see your team leader for advice on safety issues.

What to look out for

Due to long periods of time spent outdoors exposed to the sun's UV radiation, you are at high risk of skin cancer if safety procedures are not followed. Simple precautions include:

- Take breaks and make use of shade
- Wear sun protective clothing (full patrol uniform, rashies etc)
- Wear a wide brimmed hat
- Apply SPF 30+ sunscreen every 2 hours
- Wear 100% UV resistant sunglasses
- Be aware of the daily UV alert
- Have regular skin checks for suspicious spots or anything unusual

Hot environments can also result in **dehydration** due to excessive sweating. You should drink at least 200 ml of water within half an hour of energetic activity.

You are also at risk of manual handling injuries, due to our unique operational environment and changeable settings. You should be provided with training to ensure correct use of equipment, safe lifting techniques, correct equipment storage, risk management process and maximum loads. See your club safety officer or club official for training if required, or for further information.

Performing surf lifesaving duties requires a high level of physical fitness. Take care in the operational environment! It is vital that you undertake regular physical activity, maintain a sensible diet, reduce alcohol intake and remember to warm up prior to exercise and patrols and cool down afterwards.

What do you do if you get injured?

1. Seek medical attention if required and notify the injury/incident to the activity leader and club safety officer as soon as possible
2. Record injury/incident in the SLSA incident logbook
3. Obtain a worker's compensation medical certificate if necessary
4. If worker's compensation is required, a claim form should be downloaded from your state/territory website and forwarded, with the medical certificate, to your state centre
5. If you require further information regarding our injury reporting process, please see your club safety officer or club official

Dealing with a critical incident

During the course of your duties, you may be exposed to, or involved in, a critical incident. A critical incident is a potentially stressful situation, such as a dangerous rescue or a resuscitation etc. In some instances, you may experience a stress reaction as a result of this exposure. Support systems are available if you have been exposed to such a situation, however you should contact your club safety officer, or a more senior branch/state/territory officer if support has not been activated or you require follow up advice/assistance.

Safety First!



Do you need to report a safety concern?

Identifying and reporting club hazards is vital in preventing an accident or incident occurring. It is the responsibility of **everyone** in the club to register any hazards that occur or become apparent during the course of normal club operations.

If you detect a hazard, which could include any of the following, then you should report it on your club **hazard register**.

- Inadequate controls
- Inadequate training
- Lack of procedures
- Insufficient supervision, or
- Insufficient information to deal with a hazard

What should you do if you see another member breaking a policy or safety procedure?

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure we maintain a safe environment for all members. Advise the person involved of your concern as they might not be aware that what they were doing was incorrect. If you feel that you can't handle the situation yourself, or have no success, speak to the club safety officer/club official.

Harrassment free

SLSA views any detrimental form of discrimination, harassment or bullying as serious and something that must be eliminated.

Discriminating against, or harassing any person is a direct breach of our Member Safety & Wellbeing Policy. All complaints will be dealt with promptly, impartially, and confidentially.

Steps to take if you are being harassed:

- Try to sort it out yourself – ask the person to stop
- Speak to a club official – ask them to mediate
- If the matter can't be sorted out, ask to speak to a grievance officer at your local level

For serious cases, such as sexual misconduct, contact your state CEO.

For further information, see our website www.slsa.com.au to view our policies and procedures on grievance handling and member safety and wellbeing.

Need further information?

For more information on health and safety issues in your club:

- See your club safety officer
- Contact your branch/state/territory safety officer
- Visit the SLSA website for information on policies and procedures
- Visit the WorkCover/WorkSafe website in your state/territory for workplace safety
- For further support for surf lifesaving members exposed to, or involved in critical incidents, call your relevant state centre officer
- This brochure is designed to complement the 'Guidelines for Safer Clubs' which can be found in your club and on the Surf Life Saving Australia website.

Your state or territory contacts

- **Surf Life Saving NSW** 02.9984.7188 or www.surflifesaving.com.au
- **Surf Life Saving NT** 08.8985.6588 or www.lifesavingnt.com.au
- **Surf Life Saving QLD** 07.3846.8000 or www.lifesaving.com.au
- **Surf Life Saving SA** 08.8354.6900 or www.surfrescue.com.au
- **Surf Life Saving TAS** 03.6223.5555 or www.slst.asn.au
- **Life Saving Victoria** 03.9676.6900 or www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au
- **Surf Life Saving WA** 08.9243.9444 or www.mybeach.com.au
- **Surf Life Saving Australia** 02.9300.4000 or www.slsa.com.au



Surf Life Saving Australia Ltd

Level 1, 1 Notts Ave, Bondi Beach NSW 2026 Australia
 Locked Bag 2, Bondi Beach NSW 2026 Australia
 Tel: (02) 9300 4000 · Fax: (02) 9130 8312
 Web: www.slsa.com.au

This brochure is a guide only. It provides you with general information on safety and wellbeing in the Surf Club. It is designed to complement the 'Guidelines for Safer Surf Clubs' and should not be relied on as definitive advice.



Member Safety

A guide to safety and wellbeing for all Surf Life Saving members

