



# Surf Education Activities Water Safety Guideline

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| <b>Guideline Name:</b>   | Surf Education Activities Water Safety Guideline |
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## INTRODUCTION

The following document provides guidelines for best practice for water safety for surf and aquatic education activities for the general public in the coastal environment. The guideline has been developed through many years of experience with the provision of water safety for aquatic activities.

## SUMMARY

This table provides a summary of the complete water safety guidelines for aquatic activities. For more information please refer to the full guideline later in the document.

| Activity  | Under 18 Years Old<br>Water Safety Supervision Ratio   | Above 18 Years Old<br>Water Safety Supervision Ratio   |
|---|--|--|
| Swimming<br>and wading  | <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 5<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 10<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br/>[Low-risk conditions — determined after a<br/>pre-activity risk assessment]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A minimum of 2 supervisors.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Where male and female participants partake<br/>in the program, it is recommended the head<br/>instructor attempt to have both a male and<br/>female adult accompany the group.</i></p>   | <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 5<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 10<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br/>[Low-risk conditions — determined<br/>after a pre-activity risk assessment]</p> |
| Board riding<br>(with a leg rope,<br>wrist strap and/or<br>handles) | <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 5<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 10<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants) [Low-<br/>risk conditions — determined after a pre-<br/>activity risk assessment]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A minimum of 2 supervisors.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Where male and female participants partake<br/>in the program, it is recommended the head<br/>instructor attempt to have both a male and<br/>female adult accompany the group.</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 5<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 : 10<br/>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br/>[Low-risk conditions — determined<br/>after a pre-activity risk assessment]</p> |

If a preliminary evaluation of participants' ability is necessary, a lower supervision ratio may be required.



## **CONTENTS**

|                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| <b>Definitions</b>              | p.3  |
| <b>Scope</b>                    | p.4  |
| <b>Guideline Description</b>    | p.5  |
| 1.0 General                     | p.5  |
| 2.0 Risk Management             | p.5  |
| 3.0 The Activity Area           | p.6  |
| 4.0 Water Safety                | p.6  |
| 5.0 Gear and Equipment          | p.7  |
| 6.0 Participant Outcomes        | p.8  |
| <b>Procedures</b>               | p.10 |
| <b>Risk Assessment Template</b> | p.11 |



## DEFINITIONS

Activity: All elements and tasks comprising the lessons/education session conducted in the surf environment.

Aquatic education: Instruction in water-based activities in the surf environment including surf awareness, ocean swimming and surf safety.

Instructor: The person/s or teacher/s leading the lesson/activity. All instructors must hold as a minimum a current Surf Rescue Certificate or equivalent.

Low-risk conditions: Following a pre-activity risk assessment indicating they are operating in an acceptably low-risk environment.\*

Participant: A student partaking in the educational activity/lesson.

Risk assessment: Standards Australia defines a risk assessment as the overall process of risk identification, risk analysis and risk evaluation (AS/NZS 31000:2009).

Surf education: Instruction in activities in the surf environment including surf awareness, ocean swimming, surf safety and surfboard riding.

Surf education providers: The organisation, company or sole trader providing the surf/aquatic education activities in a coastal environment.

Water safety: The use of human resources and rescue equipment in an aquatic environment to provide a level of safety to activity participants.

Water safety personnel (WSP): Qualified and proficient lifesavers or lifeguards (holding an aquatic rescue qualification of Surf Rescue Certificate or RLSSA Bronze Medallion or above\*\*) who provide water safety. NB: Where WSP are using rescue equipment that requires a specific competency and award, they must be a qualified and proficient operator of that equipment.

Water safety supervisor (WSS): The nominated leader for a team of water safety personnel. The WSS must be qualified and proficient in the Bronze Medallion /Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue) or above AND it is strongly recommended they hold their Silver Medallion Basic Beach Management certificate.

*\*A nominal wave height of 1m is considered the maximum wave height threshold when the 1:10 ratio may be implemented. Wave height is only one consideration in assessing surf zone hazards (examples of others could include a heavy shore break, wave period, wind strength and direction). The Water Safety Supervisor will be required to complete a risk assessment in determining any decision to increase the ratio of WSP to participants from 1:5 to 1:10.*

*\*\* Note: 'Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) or above' includes SRC, Bronze Medallion/Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue), Silver Medallion Aquatic Rescue or Gold Medallion.*



## SCOPE

This guideline applies to coastal environments, including ocean coastline and waterways that open to the ocean.

This guideline applies to the following:

- Providers of 'water safety for education activities' in the coastal environment;
- Providers of 'surf and aquatic education' activities in the coastal environment; and
- Those organisations responsible for the provision of public safety services.

For example:

- Coastal/marine park authorities and managers;
- Surf education providers;
- Lifeguard and lifesaving services providing water safety activities for aquatic education; and
- Schools conducting aquatic education.

This guideline does not apply to the following:

- Aquatic activities including canoeing, kayaking, sailing, wave skiing, water skiing, diving and snorkelling; or
- Competitive open-water swimming or surfing.

If an activity is to be operated under a third party's guidelines or policy which deviate from this guideline (e.g. Department of Education), it is highly recommended that the agreement be formalised under a written agreement between the participants and the delivery organisation prior to commencement of the activity.



## **GUIDELINE DESCRIPTION**

### **1.0 General**

All organised activities on coastal areas, foreshore reserves and beach venues should hold required permits, licenses or permissions from the relevant land manager. These may be for varied periods of time, or built into service agreements with land managers. The provision of permits, licenses or permissions is necessary to:

- Minimise any potential conflicts between operators and other reserve users, adjoining residents, and/or local businesses; as well as
- Ensuring there is no environmental damage associated with such commercial operations.

### **2.0 Risk Management**

2.1 Risk management should be integral to an organisation's operation.

2.2 The aim of risk management is to minimise losses and maximise opportunities that are closely aligned to improving safety; not only from the physical risk perspective but including all risks associated with the use or operation of a particular area and activity.

2.3 Appropriate control measures for each area should be determined by the hazard control rating of the area (ABSAMP Hazard Rating) and may include local environmental conditions such as weather and water, and other local conditions such as geography and participant demographics.

2.4 A risk assessment should be conducted prior to the commencement of any activity to identify not only risks, but also current control measures and their appropriateness. This risk assessment should identify any foreseeable hazards, assess their risks and take action to eliminate or control them.

2.5 A record of all risk assessments should be kept by the organiser for five years. Organisers of practical surf education activities outside of schools are required to keep accurate records of participants including:

- a. Name
- b. Date of birth
- c. Source organisation (e.g. school or community group)
- d. Emergency contact number
- e. Medical conditions
- f. A copy of participants' signed informed consent form.

2.6 Organisers of classroom (theory) surf education activities are required to keep accurate records of session details including:

- a. Location of session
- b. Participant numbers
- c. Level of educational content
- d. Name of presenter

2.7 Conditions may change while activities are taking place. Ongoing risk assessments (formal or informal) should be undertaken at regular intervals by the lead instructor/water safety supervisor; activities should be halted for a further risk assessment to be undertaken by the lead instructor/water safety supervisor. Activities should then be amended as a result of this assessment, or cancelled if necessary.

2.8 Child Protection:

- a. Organisers of surf and aquatic education activities have a duty of care for participants to ensure their protection. Each state and territory has their own legislation regarding specific requirements for individuals and organisations involved in a range of activities including education, sport and recreation.



- b. The organisation must abide by all state or territory legislation with regard to child protection policies including, but not limited to, background, criminal and police checks.
- c. All persons assisting in the delivery of aquatic education programs (volunteer or paid) dealing with minors must obtain the relevant child protection clearances necessary under local law.

### **3.0 The Activity Area**

#### **3.1 Where activities take place in a rock pool or enclosed body of water:**

- a. The activity area should be determined in consultation with the lifeguard or facility manager, if applicable.
- b. Where possible, physical barriers should be in place to mark out activity area boundaries.

#### **3.2 Where activities take place on a beach:**

- a. Signage and/or markers should be in place to indicate the activity area to both participants and the public.
- b. On-duty lifesavers or lifeguards already have designated duties and obligations and are not to be included in the water safety ratio.

#### **3.3 Authority**

- a. For activities taking place at a patrolled location, the head instructor/water safety supervisor will liaise with the patrol captain/head lifeguard regarding the activity area and water safety provision.
- b. For activities taking place at a patrolled location, the patrol captain/head lifeguard has the authority to cease all water activities, if in his/her opinion the conditions are deemed to be unsafe.
- c. The head instructor/water safety supervisor shall cease all water activities if the conditions are deemed unsafe following a formal risk assessment; the conditions have changed since the risk assessment was conducted and are in his/her opinion unsafe; and/or if minimum water safety requirements cannot be met.

### **4.0 Water Safety**

4.1 Minimum water safety requirements must be provided before any in-water instructional activities take place. Where possible, programs should be conducted at a patrolled location.

4.2 Water safety should be a core component of every aquatic education program.

4.3 For practical surf and aquatic education activities the following standards apply:

- a. All water safety officers and instructors must hold as a minimum a current Surf Rescue Certificate or equivalent.

4.4 It is highly recommended that all water safety officers and instructors hold a current first aid certificate including knowledge of CPR.

4.5 Supervision ratio:

- a. A water-safety personnel to participant ratio of 1:5 or better should be applied for surf conditions.
- b. A water-safety personnel to participant ratio of 1:10 or better should be applied for low-risk, still-water conditions (determined after a pre-activity risk assessment). The risk assessment should be conducted using the template provided.
- c. For minors under the age of 18 years, there should be a minimum of two instructors/supervisors. Where male and female participants participate, it is recommended that the head instructor attempt to have both a male and female adult accompany the group.

- d. If a preliminary evaluation of participants' ability is necessary, a lower supervision ratio may be required.

4.6 Supervision guidelines:

- a. Keep within a reasonable distance (clearly visible and within earshot) of all participants.
- b. Make eye contact with participants (checking for emotional state, signs of distress etc).
- c. Conduct regular head counts.
- d. Establish distinct locations for participants to meet in case of emergency.
- e. Establish clear signals for distress, assistance required, and for exiting the water with participants.
- f. Have emergency protocol/water safety procedures in place for emergencies.
- g. The head instructor/water safety supervisor should take into account such factors as age, experience and maturity of participants when arranging the activity and supervision.

4.7 Prerequisites for safety:

It is recommended each participant have the following prerequisites for entry:

- a. Adequate sun protection including sunscreen (an SPF15+, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen); and
- b. Highly visible rash vests (preferably long-sleeved).

4.8 Water safety induction:

Each participant should receive a safety induction at the commencement of the program. The following are the minimum contents of the induction:

- a. Water temperature safety
- b. Sun safety
- c. Safety of self
- d. Safety of other participants
- e. Area of activity
- f. Code of behaviour
- g. Equipment safety
- h. Providers of water safety and services offered (e.g. Surf Life Saving)

## 5.0 Gear and Equipment

5.1 Instructors **must** wear highly visible **long-sleeved** rash shirts identifying them as instructor (**it is strongly recommended** they wear **red and yellow coloured rash shirts**) throughout activities.

5.2 Instructors should carry a whistle at all times.

5.3 It is strongly recommended that the following equipment be worn by the participants:

- a. Highly visible rash vests, shirts or swimming caps; and
- b. Wetsuits in cold water (less than 18°C).

Examples of high-visibility garments:





**NOTE:** that fluorescent colours degenerate with prolonged exposure to water and **light**. Garments **should be maintained as per the manufacturer's care and cleaning procedure and monitored to ensure continued colour brightness.**

- 5.4 Surfboard-riding participants must use a leg rope (unless using a paddle board with handles).
- 5.5 Body-board riding participants must use a wrist leash and correctly fitted flippers with a flipper-saver or another flipper securing device.
- 5.6 Surf helmets are optional surfing accessories, and participants should be encouraged to obtain this personal safety equipment.
- 5.7 Appropriate sun safety measures should be provided for participants and instructors including, but not limited to, hats, rash vests, shade shelters, sunscreen and water.
- 5.8 Appropriate emergency care equipment (including a first aid kit and a rescue board or a rescue tube and flippers) should be readily available to the activity instructors/water safety personnel. For deep-water activities (above chest height of the participants), a floatation device must be in the water with the instructor/water safety personnel.
- 5.9 All activity equipment should be considered to be appropriate by the lead instructor/water safety supervisor.
- 5.10 All activity equipment should be in full working order and undamaged for use in a program.
- 5.11 Communications equipment: the instructors should have appropriate electronic equipment that is operational in the area of use. That is, a mobile phone should have a strong signal and/or a two-way radio should be able to transmit and receive messages to and from the area in which the activity is taking place.

## **6.0 Participant Outcomes**

- 6.1 Participants should be exposed to and participate in activities that appropriately address the water safety concepts and skills appropriate for the participants' age and skill level as below:
  - a. Water safety
  - b. Surf and beach conditions (understanding surf conditions; identifying rip currents; hazards; beach safety signs and flags; personal safety; signalling for help)
  - c. Swimming
  - d. Entering and exiting the water safely (wading; dolphin diving)
  - e. Manouvering in open water (floating; sculling; forward roll; treading water; survival stroke; swimming; body surfing)
  - f. Surfing
  - g. Equipment for surfing (parts of a surfboard/body board; carrying a board; leg rope; wrist leash; flipper; fitting and release);
  - h. Surfing safety (entering and exiting the surf zone; wave zone negotiation; wiping out safely; who has right of way and other etiquette; signage)
  - i. Fitness
  - j. Rescue techniques
- 6.2 Programs may address some or all outcomes; and/or work in partnership with other programs depending on environmental conditions and time constraints.
- 6.3 Water safety knowledge for surf education programs should include (but not be limited to) information appropriate for the participants' age and skill level under the following key learning areas:
  - a. Beach awareness
  - b. Surf/water safety





- c. Personal safety
- d. Sun safety
- e. Fitness
- f. Equipment safety



## PROCEDURES

### 1.0 Emergency Action Plan

- 1.1 All activities should have an emergency action plan that:
  - a. Contains the elements outlined below; and
  - b. Is approved by the coastal management authority.

### 2.0 Emergency Plan

- 2.1 This is a situation where the participant needs rescuing, first aid, or may need support or assistance.
- 2.2 The instructor recognising the problem alerts other instructors (if present) by hand signals and/or verbally.
- 2.3 The instructor closest to the participant will react and move quickly to the participant.
- 2.4 Instructor makes contact with participant and makes initial assessment. Based on this assessment, the decision is made to have the participant exit the water or not. The other instructor is informed of the decision.
- 2.5 If the participant needs to exit the water, the instructor must accompany them to shore, at which time the instructor will reassess whether or not the participant can remain on shore alone, or in the care of a parent, guardian or teacher who can assume the duty of care.
- 2.6 In the event of any actual treatment of an injury, the most qualified instructor will administer or supervise the treatment, no matter how minor. The instructors may need to reassess the activity and modify accordingly.
- 2.7 Should the participant require rescuing or first aid or the participant's condition is deteriorating, complex or severe in nature, follow the steps below:
  - a. The second instructor will alert other participants and have them exit the water immediately. If there is only one instructor present, he/she will alert the other participants to exit the water.
  - b. The instructor to respond will make verbal contact with the participant, and if safe, make physical contact using a flotation or rescue aid or body to assist the person.
  - c. Once the participant is on the shore, the secondary assessment will be made to determine how to proceed.
  - d. If medical attention is needed, the instructor (second instructor if present) will get all appropriate medical and first aid supplies and call triple zero (000) emergency for assistance. One instructor will remain with the participant and continue to administer first aid until emergency services arrive and take over.
- 2.8 The incident and all treatments will be recorded in an incident report form.



## RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

### AQUATIC ACTIVITY RISK CHECK AND MANAGEMENT FORM

| Activity  | Under 18 years<br>Water Safety Supervision Ratio  | Above 18 Years<br>Water Safety Supervision Ratio   |
|---|---|--|
| Swimming and wading   | <b>1 : 5</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br><b>1 : 10</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br>[Low-risk conditions]<br><b>A minimum of 2 supervisors</b> | <b>1 : 5</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br><b>1 : 10</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br>[Low-risk conditions] |
| Board riding<br>(with a leg rope, wrist strap and/or handles) | <b>1 : 5</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br><b>1 : 10</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br>[Low-risk conditions]<br><b>A minimum of 2 supervisors</b> | <b>1 : 5</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br><b>1 : 10</b><br>(Water Safety Personnel : participants)<br>[Low-risk conditions] |

| ACTIVITY INFORMATION    |         |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Activity type/name:     |         |
| Venue/Beach:            |         |
| Date:                   | / /     |
| Time:                   | AM / PM |
| Number of participants: |         |

| RISK ASSESSMENT   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| As a minimum, the following factors must be assessed when determining water safety: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surf conditions</li> <li>Weather conditions</li> <li>Skill level of participants</li> <li>Number of participants</li> <li>Other location specific hazards</li> </ul> |   |  |
| Potential Risk:<br>(Please tick if risk has been identified)  | Specific Details:   | Comments:<br>(Include comments for all identified risks) |
| Dangerous surf  | ✓ / ✗<br>Wave height <input type="checkbox"/><br>Wave type <input type="checkbox"/><br>Water depth <input type="checkbox"/><br>Tide and current <input type="checkbox"/>  |  |
| Bad weather   | ✓ / ✗<br>Wind <input type="checkbox"/><br>Temperature <input type="checkbox"/><br>Storms <input type="checkbox"/>   |  |
| Skill level   | ✓ / ✗<br>No level of skill <input type="checkbox"/><br>Limited level of skill <input type="checkbox"/><br>Mixed level of skill <input type="checkbox"/>   |  |
| Many participants   | ✓ / ✗<br>40-59 <input type="checkbox"/><br>60-99 <input type="checkbox"/><br>100+ <input type="checkbox"/>  |  |
| Other hazards   | ✓ / ✗<br>Stingers <input type="checkbox"/><br>Sharks/crocodiles <input type="checkbox"/><br>Exposed rocks <input type="checkbox"/><br>Jetty/wharf <input type="checkbox"/><br>Debris/pollution <input type="checkbox"/> |  |



**RISK MANAGEMENT**

| Please tick the action undertaken to minimise risk         |       | Comments:<br>(Include comments for all items ticked) |
|--|-------|--|
| Modify activity  | ✓ / ✗ |  |
| Move activity  | ✓ / ✗ |  |
| Delay activity   | ✓ / ✗ |  |
| Cancel activity  | ✓ / ✗ |  |
| Increasing the number of water safety and rescue equipment | ✓ / ✗ |  |
| Personal protective equipment                              | ✓ / ✗ |  |
| Helmet   | ✓ / ✗ |  |
| Other<br>(Please state)                                    | ✓ / ✗ |  |

**WATER SAFETY SUPERVISOR INFORMATION**

|   |  |              |
|---|--|--------------|
| <b>Water Safety Supervisor Name:</b>      |  |              |
| <b>Water Safety Supervisor Signature:</b> |  | <b>Date:</b> |