

# SAFE WATER SPORT EVENT MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Water sport events in South Africa currently do not fall under a direct piece of legislation prescribing safety measures. There are different levels of understanding as to what constitutes a safe water sport event. The NSRI is often approached by organisers asking for guidance on their responsibilities on the water.

In response to this need, NSRI commissioned a **Safe Water Sport Event Management Guide** and **Safety Planning Template** to assist water sport event organisers to address risk and safety at their event.

Both these documents are free for download and use. The Guide is XX pages in length and goes into detail about the various phases of planning, identifying risks, risk mitigation and emergency response etc. This short summary provides an overview and must be read in conjunction with the **Principles and Guidelines** document.



### LEGAL STUFF FIRST

Chapter 5 of the Guide gives you details on the legal issues that might affect your event. There may be subsequent legislation promulgated after the writing of this document (2018) that is additional to the legal documents referenced.

Ensure you meet all the legal requirements; national, provincial and municipal. This could be SAMSA and Authorised Agencies, Safety at Sports and Recreational Events Act, Signage Standards, Municipal Bylaws etc. For example, if you are using drones, CAA regs apply.



### WHERE DOES NSRI FIT IN?

Remember, NSRI is a resource used by the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) under the directive of the Department of Transport. Their mandate is to save lives on South African waters, and they are one of several resources you can consider using at your event. Having NSRI at your event does not constitute a "Safety Plan". Likewise having SA Livesaving at your event, does not constitute a "Safety Plan". Together these resources can be PART of your safety plan, but you must consider things holistically.



### WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

This is a living and breathing document that provides guidelines for your event planning. It is not something to compile for permit purposes and then put in the drawer and forget about. In a nutshell, it covers the What, Where, When, How and Why part of your planning. This should start more than 6 months ahead of your event date.

The Guide gives you a detailed breakdown of each of these aspects and how to tackle them.

Remember, a swim event on a dam in Gauteng, an ocean surf ski race in Kwa-Zulu Natal, a long distance river paddle like the Dusi Canoe Marathon or Red Bull King of the air kiteboarding event in the Western Cape are all VERY different events that will have vastly different safety plans.

Having said that, at the end of the day, the plan is about SAFETY.

Budget constraints, the cost of safety resources, lack of appreciation of safety etc. will be something you will have to balance. Remember, you must have adequate safety measures in place and you must have documentation and evidence to show you have considered and mitigated risks.

## DOWNLOADS

### Safe Water Sport Event Management Guide



Principles and Guidelines



Safety Planning Template



**THE SAFETY PLANNING TEMPLATE**

Download the template from the NSRI website. It gives you the guidance you need to compile a comprehensive and defensible safety plan for your event. There are protocols that guide you as to how many lifeguards you may need, how many boats you may need and what equipment must be on the boats. Protocols will differ across different sporting disciplines and for organised sporting bodies, and international events these protocols are already documented and enforced.



**WHO'S IN CHARGE?**

This is a critical issue to answer right at the beginning. NSRI recommends the establishment of a Venue Operation Centre (VOC). This is a group of responsible people who understand the risks, what mitigation must be undertaken, how to manage the risk and what to do when water conditions become unsafe. This takes away the pressure placed on one event manager or safety officer who may have to call off an event or take other unpopular decisions.

The guide gives you details on the various roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and partners who may be involved, as well as how to establish a VOC.



**KNOW YOUR PARTICIPANTS**

Everyone has a level of responsibility for ensuring their own safety, but some sports are higher risk than others. Remember children's risk perception is not fully developed and certain people do over estimate their abilities. Keep everyone informed every step of the way and make sure information is correct and clear.



**UNDERSTANDING RISK**

You cannot take a "thumb suck" about the risks associated with your event and what mitigation measures you will put in place. This needs to be a logical and documented process where you develop a matrix and populate it. (There are two examples in the Safety Management Plan Template that you can use as a guide).

You will need to identify the risks and score them. Bear in mind that cumulative risks are also an issue. As with many accidents on the water, it is hardly ever one thing that caused the accident.



### **SAFETY RESOURCES**

Everyone you use on your safety team must have the necessary knowledge and experience to undertake their tasks. As an event organiser you need to make sure that everyone is prepared, they have the right equipment and they can recognise a potential problem and act accordingly. This is covered in Chapter 10 of the Guide.

Your medical resources must be registered with the Department of Health and all the medical people used at the event must fall under the registered entity. They will need an independent medical plan for the event and ensure you have a copy.

How quickly can your safety team get to a casualty? This is affected by the size of your event and will decide how many people you need.

Can the team communicate effectively? All boats on the water must have communication with the organisers.



### **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

Your emergency plan is different to your safety plan. Checklists and flowcharts are useful to consolidate information and outline decision making. Page 8 of the Waters Sport Event Safety Management Plan template gives a useful example of a flowchart.

Do your safety team know what to do when they get to a casualty? How to respond to a panicking person, how to recover someone from below the surface of the water, how to release someone from their equipment, what to do if they are conscious/unconscious, how to get them to safety and administer first aid or resuscitation? People must be trained and prepared for all these scenarios. Give training if necessary and run trial scenarios. "Safety is a consequence of Education".

You must have step-by-step procedures and a clear chain of command from your VOC with clear logged communication from everyone.



### **MONITOR AND REVIEW**

During a water sport event, you need to manage everything dynamically. Weather and water conditions change and this will impact your planning and response on the day. The more events you manage, the more accurate your safety plan will become as you predict incidents and mitigate them in your planning.

A full debrief and getting quality information from everyone on what worked and what didn't work is vital. Use the inputs of people passionate about their particular water sport to improve your planning.

Lastly, make sure all your equipment is reconciled, replaced and ready to be used again.

There is a useful checklist in the Appendix to the Safe Water Sport Event Management Guide and this can be used in conjunction with the planning template.



### **CONCLUSION**

There is no compulsion to follow the guidelines and there is no single 'best practice' approach. The use of words such as 'should, could, good, or best practice' are the opinions of the authors of the document and do not carry any legal compulsion.

We hope you find the guide useful and it assists you in organising a safe water sport event.