

Everything You Need to Know about Training in the NSRI

1. Introduction

Probably the most important and largest part of a NSRI volunteer's job is to participate in training and as one becomes more senior, to provide training to newer crew and peers. We do this so that we can:

- Keep all our volunteer's as **safe** as possible.
- Be able to save lives in the most **effective** way possible.
- Be able to uphold our reputation and maintain our equipment and **standards** to the highest level possible.

The Motto of Training in NSRI is:

Train as you would respond to a rescue, and Respond as you were trained.

This tells the story of why we take training seriously.

It is also important that training is enjoyable, safe and worth people's while. To be enjoyable doesn't mean it is not challenging or difficult.

Always conduct a **risk evaluation** prior to undertaking any training (or rescue operation for that matter), by taking into account at least the following:

1. Level of experience, currency and fitness of members. (i.e. willingness & ability).
2. Weather and environmental factors (i.e. rain, cold, wind, sea conditions, heat, day, night, visibility).
3. Activity consequence consideration - both good and bad, as well as **prevention** before, **mitigation** during and **response** after (i.e. "what if" considerations). This includes having an emergency and evacuation plan.
4. Equipment and location factors (vessel type, distance from base / offshore, etc.)

MAN – METHOD – MACHINE

You can use the *Training Planning Guide*, as a tool to help with this.

2. Training Methodology

Training in NSRI is built on a three-way foundation:

- **Theory** - knowledge
- **Skill** – practical ability
- **Experience** – wisdom

Theory training is made available primarily via eLearning (volunteers own pace, time & convenience)– so that crews can spend more time on base reinforcing practical skills.

The foundation of theory, skill and experience is built upon and further reinforced by:

- **Drill** training – embedding skills via muscle memory. (i.e. repetition).

- **Scenario** training – applied judgement and decision making to the unknown.
- **Instructing** in-turn – mastery of an activity.

All of the above aspects are delivered using a hamburger approach:

- Briefing before
- Control during
- Debriefing afterwards

Case studies / stories / videos and debriefings also go a long way to embedding training and the need for it.

Regional training, as well as visiting other stations (cross pollinating ideas) are also a great way to learn other ideas and methods – be open to it!

How to Brief:

1. State **Objective** of Activity
2. State intended **Outcome** of Activity
3. State **Resources** available (time, people, equipment, location)
4. State **Guidelines** (tips, rules, suggestions, boundaries: more or less depending on level of experience of person)
5. State **Measurement** – how will it be assessed, when, by who?
6. State **Consequence** – good and bad. (Save a life / death)

How to Control:

- State Safety factors: PPE, Emergency procedures & essential equipment
- Ensure authority pecking order is established – assign responsibilities
- Keep correct span of control (8 pax max to a leader), assign buddy teams
- Respect the environment & tailor the activity accordingly
- Ensure crew know what to do / how to signal if in trouble or uncertain

How to Debrief:

- Start and end with Positive Reinforcement. Build esteem.
- It's about the activity, not the person – watch your language.
- Be forward looking, and corrective
- Make it short and to the point – no more than three take-outs.
- Ask open-ended questions, don't tell.
- Go through order of briefing as above to structure it.

Training means that **knowledge** and **skill** are gained. By being exposed to drill and scenario training, an **understanding** amongst the crew is realised, so that crews become able to adapt and improvise to any kind of rescue situation. *Rescues are never textbook.*

Lastly, training is about building the right **attitude** among your crew (influencing the way your crew think about Sea Rescue, feel about Sea Rescue and how they do what we do). A good attitude, results in a great **culture**, which makes a big difference to how we realise our **vision** and **mission**.

3. Accreditation, Reliability and Validity

These are gained by:

- Ensuring good planning & logistics
 - Course programme design. Making courses relevant for the needs of NSRI stations and candidates.
 - This also means getting the right person on the right course, at the right time, by conducting a baseline assessment, and ensuring candidates meet pre-requisites such as fitness, currency and minimal skills.
 - Logistically getting the candidates to the training location: feeding, accommodating, equipping transporting, paying for and caring.
- Good administration
 - Creation of course attendance registers.
 - Record keeping of candidates scores, performance, for later querying, auditing and reporting.
 - Formative and Summative Assessment. Independent and true. Can be via oral, practical or written (online) method.
 - Course certification and validation (querying of database by external people)
- Good feedback
 - Feedback to course candidates – positive, accurate and direction based.
 - Feedback from course candidates – enables data and trend identification on course success
 - Qualitative (story based) feedback for future course evolution.

In order to get a **qualification** – the eLearning provides proof of **theory** training, the Task book provides proof of **practical** training, and the log book provides proof of practical **experience** and exposure.

4. Types of Training in NSRI:

Three kinds:

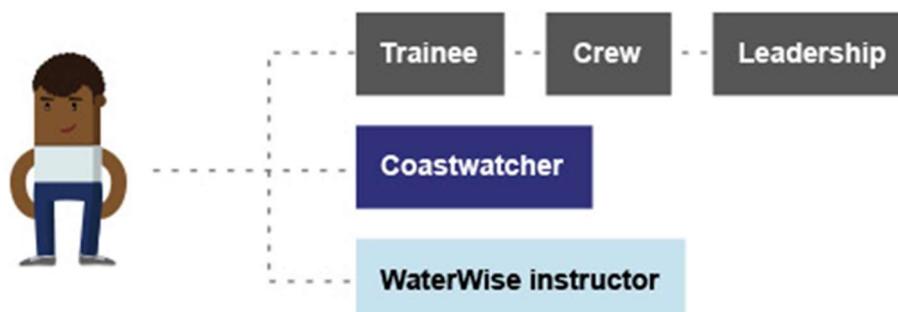
- Ad hoc (random training, conjured up on the spot). All other training is either a:
- Part time course (held over weeks, months or years), or a
- Full time course.

What is a course?

- It has a programme / schedule.
- It has a fixed number of candidates, meeting criteria.
- It has a manual / content source (i.e. online) for theory.
- It has a task book / sheet or method of assessment for skill development.
- It has an experiential component (i.e. a logbook for recording either real life actions), or scenario based assessment, demonstrating real world competence.
- It has a certification

5. Career Paths

All NSRI members have various skills and interests, and to become more impactful in our communities, we need to harness the skills of people with diverse capabilities. From the image below, we can see that a potential new recruit can be involved in other ways than the typical sea-going crew path, namely as a Coastwatcher, WaterWise Instructor and more recently as a NSRI lifeguard.



On the Trainee > Crew > Leadership path, there are also two streams – namely SEA-GOING, and SHORE- GOING.

SHORE GOING CREW can also be either **Active** (where they are in the control room during operations, operate rescue vehicles, or even assist with land based incidents such as medical or flood response); or **Administrative** (where they assist with crew and activity data capturing, fundraising / handling of base finances, etc.); or both.

To be of assistance to sea going crew, active shore crew must be able to understand the common language of sea rescue, and a training system and having a progression path from trainee to crew and on to leadership is a must.

By now, you will have realised that a lot goes on in an NSRI station, and the only way to get to it all, is by having a strong, diverse team with the right people doing the right tasks – according to their skill set and attitude (**ability** and **willingness**).

There is no obligation to accept everyone who offers to get involved, or who offers to give. You need to select the most suitable, not necessarily the most willing. You can say no to new candidates, and you can choose who you want to join.

Diversity of skill is what makes NSRI special, and a crew person with the technical ability to work a GPS or have skill with ropes, or to make coffee after a long night on an operation are all needed. Similarly – people who are gifted at speaking to visiting groups, or raising funds for a station are critical to the overall balance of a station – embrace them!

Good people are like gold. On a gold mine, a ton of rock ore is needed to yield an ounce of pure gold at the end of the process. This means that probably for every 10, or even 20 people that apply, you will end up with less than 1 top quality crew member at the end of the process, with some leaving quite quickly, and others over the next while. Training is a continuous process, and never ends.

Trainees

Trainees want to join, they want to contribute, gain experience, and they want to be part of a family. Most often, the leadership of the station is in a different age bracket to the younger crew.

Generation "x", or generation "y", "z" or whatever the next generation will be, are motivated by different things that may motivate you. That will be one of the leadership challenges you will have, and it is important that we are flexible and respond appropriately to what makes all our volunteers tick.

Prospective crew should understand that along with the exhilaration of going to sea on a fast rescue boat and the excitement of a rescue operation goes the regular routine of station, craft and mobile maintenance and cleaning. This includes exercises, drills and many hours that need to go into attending courses, receiving instruction and studying. The key words are "enthusiasm" and "self-motivation"

Administration of Career paths – Holding a yearly performance review.

Stations should have some method of controlling and viewing where crew are, as well as a clear process for each person's next steps and courses. If this is transparent and visible, it reduces issues of unfairness / perceptions of favouritism. An Excel sheet with a list of volunteers of a certain years' service on a specific tab, with the requisite planned courses should exist. For each person, a breakdown of training and well as operational hours will help to guide the discussion and assist with planning.

6. Qualifications & Roles

There is a difference between crew "**qualifications**" and crew "**roles**" (designations).

In NSRI we do not use the word "rank", however there are various roles that a person may serve in. In addition to this, there are also possible qualifications a volunteer may have, and there is a difference between them.

Qualifications are a result of a course, or of some achievement / certificate.

An example is: Trainee, Crew (shore or sea), Coxswain (class 4, 3, 2 or 1), or rescue swimming, navigation, first aid or radio operating. These "qualifications" usually come with a "**certificate**", and are the result of completing a "**course**" (full time, part time, etc.).

Generally, "qualifications" are permanent and stay with the person unless it expires, or they are not current anymore. For example:

- Rescue swimmer – not having completed recent fitness currency
- First aid course that has expired
- Medical being out of date.

A Coxswain certificate does not expire and a person may however retain the qualification of "Coxswain", even though they no longer serve in the role of a Coxswain.

To "serve" in the role of a Coxswain, however means that they must meet the medical, fitness & currency (hours) requirements.

Note that Station Commander is not a qualification – it is a role.

Roles are position that a person serves in. They are temporary and may last for a few hours, days, or even a few years. A person may need "qualifications" in order to fulfil a certain role.

As an example - If a volunteer with the "qualification" of Class 1 Coxswain, gets into the station vehicle – then their role will be "shore crew", or "Rescue vehicle operator" – (provided they have those specific qualifications of course).

Here are some more examples:

Qualification	What it means	Role	What it means
Trainee (sea / shore)	Qualification & currency	Trainee	Able to go to sea for training, not rescue operations
Crew (sea / shore)	Task book finished, hours achieved, committee sign off.	Crew	Able to serve as rescue crew for operations at sea / on land
Rescue Swimmer	Currency / fitness	Rescue Swimmer	Able to serve as an operational rescue swimmer, getting in water to rescue casualty / embark other vessels, etc.
ASR crew qualification	States pass of course	ASR Crew	Able to serve as rescue crew in an airborne craft. Requires Currency / fitness and qualification.
First Aid Certificate / Maritime Emergency Care	Course passed. Valid for 3 years.	First Responder	Able to provide first aid care to an injured or ill person.
Control room operator course	Course Attended: Navigation, Radio, MIS etc.	Control Room operator	Able to serve as control room operator during Rescue operations.
Driver's License / 4x4 certificate / vehicle orientation course / quad (ATV) course / tractor course	Course Attended & Passed. Required in order to fulfil role:	Rescue Vehicle Operator (Mobile / tractor / ATV)	Able to drive rescue vehicle during Rescue Operations.
		Deck Crew	
Navigation course. ENS course (if applicable)		Navigator	Able to competently navigate the vessel, during Rescue Operations
Helmsman's course certificate		Helmsman	Able to helm the specific class of rescue vessel – as per their training, during Rescue Operations (Not Lead the operation)
		Bosun	Serves as 2IC of vessel. Specialist in Navigation, Helming and all Engine and Vessel electronic systems.
Coxswain Development Course		Trainee Coxswain	Not yet SAMSA qualified, but identified as a future Coxswain
Coxswain Qualification	SAMSA Coxswain ticket (class 4, 3, 2 or 1). Passed Coxswain Assessment course	Coxswain	Qualified to serve as a Coxswain during Rescue operations, and to make launch decisions (with consultation of StatCom).
Station leadership course		Station / Senior Coxswain	Leads an operational crew
	Various qualifications and experience of roles above.	Deputy Station Commander	Assist the StatCom in leading the (Station, Leads the station in StatCom absence.)
	Various qualifications and experience of roles above.	Station Commander (deputy)	Leads the Rescue station – as per the Station commander KPA's.

Be careful of not creating more designations than the above – “senior trainee”, may create a bit of prestige, but it also creates a place for a volunteer to remain with some status and no real responsibility. It is important to hold people accountable to their roles, as often there is a feeling that upon becoming a Coxswain that “you have arrived”. Actually – it is the start of the hard work of leading and being responsible for the impact a station has.

7. Planning training

When we plan training, we should start with the big picture, which includes taking a career long view of each and every volunteer, where the training is about the volunteer and not the other way around. As part of this plan – the entire syllabus and all training aspects must be considered and weighed up – there will always be more to train than can be fitted into the available time. This means things must be prioritised. Rome wasn’t built in a day.

However, **20 days is the magic number**. This is the number of days in a year the average volunteer can give to training in a year. (Taking into account PR, festive seasons, Rescue operations, etc. over and above). Make sure they count!

Once the above has been considered – we need to boil the career plan down to a year-long view, and schedule it with the *annual training calendar*, with various aspects of the training delegated to people on station, or to external training providers (head office / training institutions).

An important part of this process is to include and get buy-in from the various other station leaders, which is best done as part of the station annual strategy session. The reason that the training plan is drawn up at the annual station planning meeting – is that it can take into account the other factors of what the station needs to do – such as maintenance days, PR events, fundraising days. Also, aspects like crew structure affect the training plan, as to whether training is run:

- Crew by crew
- Whole station
- Trainees only, or trainees per crew

Always remember the Goldilocks Principle...

“Too little; too many; just right”

This relates to the ideal numbers for effective training. We can have too many people at a training session, as well as too few, where the return of effort and spend is not ideal.

Training should always be planned to be flexible – things change – the weather, a call-out, a broken boat. Plan B is essential.

Always remember that different people learn differently – vary the training style to suit everybody!

It is also important to keep the main task of Sea Rescue - the main thing. It is very easy to get side-tracked and get offered all sorts of “peripheral courses” semi-related to what we do (e.g. Urban search and rescue, dog handling courses, etc.). To be good at something – we need to keep our focus.

Lastly – an important consideration for all of us who have given many years – is that every year – new trainees come in with exactly the same skill level. Every year your skill level improves with experience and more training. If you get the perception that trainees are getting “worse” – look carefully at your own attitude and the benchmark of what is the acceptable standard for promotion. The same goes when promoting new crew to Cox’s – we were all trainee Cox’s once, and making mistakes was part of what made us what we are today.

Where to train: Classroom or sea? It is “easy” to arrive at base and spend time doing theory. Going to sea, and coming up with a scenario to test your crew and challenge them is hard, but far more worthwhile. **It will cause crew to want to come down to training.**

Ideally, a station should train in all the major rescue areas in its area of operation – at least once per year. Over a 10-month training period, each month should be a different location – so that local knowledge is gained, and safer rescue operations take place. The extra cost of fuel for this is lower than writing off a gearbox or prop on an unknown rock during a rescue in an unknown area.

Train at all levels: Lead your training with your Coxswains being challenged. Too often, bases train for the trainees only, meaning that the Crew and Coxswains get bored, and move on. An important aspect to consider is Coxswain currency – even the most skilled Coxswain on Earth gets rusty with little practise. A method of doing this is to run scenario training:

8. Scenario based Training

Scenario sessions are generally run with only the Coxswain being “tested”. The crew are there, but the only things they get out are the experience of the situation. You as the scenario planner are technically invisible on the boat / scene.

It starts off by simply giving the Coxswain a routine typical rescue operation (e.g. tow a vessel from X to Y, or any other activity). On route – there is “another call” for something slightly more urgent – which creates the need for the Coxswain to make a decision regarding time / resource and possibly choose to sacrifice one casualty over another... This process essentially repeats itself throughout – and you can throw in medical complication, engine / boat complications, and other scenarios (repeat typical calls the station has had in the past).

When the Cox makes a good decision, this is rewarded with merely continuing the exercise. When they make a bad one, more stringent variables evolve.

The idea is that the Cox should delegate responsibility, and have sufficient skill to give him / her the space to make judgement calls (if they are battling with coming alongside – it is immediately apparent to them and everyone else that the decision is not happening at the right speed or necessary thought).

The beauty of this – is it shows a person where they need to improve and gives them the motivation to do it (far better than being told). The crew and trainees have fun too – as it is a real-life simulation – and not just a boring drill. And it is the best way for preparing for real life. It is very important to keep the scenarios serious, but not destroy the character of the candidate. Always ensure success often, but make sure it is a challenge.

Plan it and communicate it upfront, so that each person gains knowledge & skill, every time.

How to do it:

Brief: Look at chart – every time, before you go to sea. Use the briefing steps as above.

Formula:

- Do main training exercise.
- First aid simulation every time.
- Rescue drill every time.
- Emergency drill every time.
- Local knowledge every time
- Try incorporate fitness.
- Use shore controllers.

Consider control steps as above.

Debrief: Look a chart after. Use the tracking systems.

See the *Training planning guide*. Please also share good training ideas and experiences with the training department, so this can be shared at other stations.

9. Online Training

NSRI has invested in an online training system for the crew as well as public use.

The benefits of eLearning are:

- A single location for all training documents.
- Always available, always with you – accessible via PC, tablet, Smart phone.
- Easy to update and change content.
- Theory assessment is done instantly, and can be redone until mastery of subject is reached.
- Learners can access it and do modules when it is convenient for them, at their own pace (fast learners can go quickly, slow learners can go slowly).
- It saves time on station – so that more focus can be on practical training out on the water, and not in the classroom.
- A report is generated of crew participation, and scores – highlighting areas of weakness.
- No printing costs. Printed manuals don't get out of date. No need for a shelf at home for the many training books and guides needed.

10. Task Books

In order to supplement the eLearning and ensure the practical side of training is achieved and met – there are various task books that provide the details of specific **practical** requirements for qualification. These are evidence documents for training quality control and must be kept neat and legible.

The task books are structured in line with the online courses. Each task needs to be “trained” and after an acceptable period of time (> 1month), it should be independently signed off by a separate assessor if competent. A register of training and assessing persons should be filled in on the front page.

11. Crew logbooks

The crew logbook serves to keep a record of sea-time served. It is a very valuable document for those aspiring to coxswain certification as it provides proof of practical experience. It should be kept in a secure place, and a copy made of it if it needs to be sent anywhere.

SAMSA will accept this photocopy, but they reserve the right to request the original document. These are evaluated by SAMSA during the application process, so it is important to ensure the entries are neat, legible and correct. Each page must have the candidate's name and the Station Commander signature.

As coxswain qualifications are vessel class specific, the class of vessel must be indicated against each entry – not the vessel's name, length, or station ID. Refer to the *Sea Hours and Service Requirements Policy* for specific guidelines on how to use the logbook.

12. Centralised Courses

Two of the major courses that are run by head office are the **Coxswain Development Course** (class 1/2/3) as well as the **Coxswain Assessment Course** (class 1 /2 /3):

On the **Coxswain Assessment Course** – the following are assessed: Judgement & decision making, communication, situational awareness, temperament, leadership and “presence”. The idea is to deliberately take the candidates to a

situation which is impossible. It is not necessarily about success, but about the Coxswain keeping their head and maintaining presence throughout the situation. The reason for this course is to ensure that all Coxswains are independently assessed to a uniform minimum standard for becoming a NSRI Coxswain. This course is done prior to Coxswain applications being submitted to SAMSA, and ensures the validity of all tickets in the institute, and upholds standards. It is always held at a different station from the candidate.

The **Coxswain Development course** was created to prepare recently designated Trainee Coxswains for their role, future learning, and to prepare them for the future Coxswain Assessment Course.

In addition to these two main courses, NSRI head office also offers:

- **ENS Course:** Electronic Navigation Systems - A SAMSA accredited course, providing the necessary qualification for class 1 and 2 Coxswains to submit towards their SAMSA Certificate of Competence.
- **VHF SRC Course & Exam:** This qualifies operators of Marine VHF radios, as per the ICASA licensing regime. A SAMSA and ICASA accredited course.
- **Maritime Extrication level 1 and 2 Course:** (Mex) – For stations conducting casualty evacuations off ships and vessels, using the NSRI standardised gear. Level 1 is an orientation course, while level 2 is an advanced course.
- **Swift Water level 1 and 2 Course:** For stations responding to swift water related emergencies and flood response, using the NSRI standardised gear.
- **Shore Controllers Course:**
- **Station Leadership Course:**
- **Outboard Engine Course:**
- **Diesel Engine Course:**
- **Wilderness Surf (or Equivalent)**
- **Life raft Course:**
- **Fire Fighting Course:**
- **ASR Rescue Swimmer Course:**

13. On station courses

- **PreSea Course**
- **Trainee Crew Course**
- **Maritime Emergency Care Course**
- **Navigation Course**
- **Colregs Course**
- **Seamanship Course:** (launch and recovery, anchoring, meteorology, ropework, pyrotechnics, emergency procedures, etc.)
- **Rescue techniques Course:** (towing, recovery, pacing, extrication, rafting, pumping)
- **Rescue Swimmer Course:**
- **Helmsman Course**
- **LSA Lifeguard Award**
- **Rescue Vehicle Orientation**
- **Tractor Course**
- **ATV course**
- **4x4 course**