

**National Sea Rescue Institute of South Africa “NPC”**

**Registration No 1967/013618/08**

**“The Institute”**

**Passenger & Public Open Day Policy**

**Approved: 2015**

**Reviewed: July 2018**



## **PUBLIC OPEN DAY POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this document is to regulate the use of NSRI Volunteers and Resources at events where Non-NSRI personnel undertake vessel trips, and / or visit the station on station functions. This should be read in conjunction with the NSRI Events Policy.

Rescue stations are frequently requested by members of the public to participate on boat rides. This occurs on Sea Rescue sanctioned events, as well as ad hoc events that come up from time to time. This policy intends to clarify the official stance, taking into account all the realities that have to be contended with.

### **POSSIBLE EVENTS / FUNCTIONS**

The NSRI is frequently requested to have non-NSRI personnel on their vessels or stations, often during events and open days, examples of which include;

- Film Shoots
- Ashes scattering
- Local water sport club days
- Reach for a Dream
- Scouting, Cadets & similar youth organisations
- Rescue base recruitment / open days
- Treating potential fund raisers / long term supporters

Non-NSRI members that are participating on a rescue operation may include specialist personnel (e.g. Advanced Life support / Fire fighters / SAPS). Ideally these personnel should have undertaken some form of pre-sea training and familiarisation before proceeding to sea. They must have signed an indemnity, and their personal particulars must be recorded prior to the trip.

Personnel and resources deployed to these events may benefit the organization by;

- Providing media and marketing exposure.
- Providing donations
- Providing experiential learning opportunities for coxswains and crew
- Providing opportunity for operational management development
- Providing for relationship building between organizations and individuals

### **OFFICIAL STANCE**

Station Commanders have the ultimate responsibility to decide whether or not members of the public (including minors) may go out for pleasure trips on rescue vessels. This policy however provides some guidelines as to the questions to be asked before allowing such an event or when giving permission.

## **CONSIDERATIONS: RISK, LIABILITY & INSURANCE**

Going on a rescue vessel on the water is not without risk. Rescue station boathouses can be potentially dangerous locations for the unaware and untrained. Consider the damage to our brand if a visitor had to be seriously hurt in an incident on the base, or in a boating incident.

Supervision: Are there enough qualified Sea Rescue personnel to accompany and supervise the number of visitors, taking into account the age, level of education & maturity of the visitors?

Consider the LGSC: The SAMSA certificate states a maximum number of people on board. Keeping in mind that for youngsters the maximum number of crew to passenger should be 1:1. On a 10m vessel the max number is 8 people generally – which means only 3 passengers at a time. In the event of a passenger falling overboard or getting hurt – will there be enough crew to supervise / react and still get essential vessel tasks done?

Location: Depending on the station location – certain launches are more difficult and risky than others. For example - a surf launch out to sea (open water), vs a harbour or river (sheltered water). Consider the consequences of this on untrained passengers in the event of something adverse happening.

Distance offshore or from base: Consider the risk & consequence of a rescue operation that begins while there are passengers on board, or in the event of stumbling upon a body out at sea. Learning to ask and being prepared for “What if” is necessary.

Relationships with external organisations: Once it is public knowledge that a boat trip / open day have been provided for one organisation (after a newspaper article, etc.) – it often happens that other organisations request to do the same thing in the weeks after. It then becomes difficult to say “no” to a certain organisation after this has been done for others – hurting relationships and harming potential donor relations. Our business is to Rescue, and train for Rescue – not to provide boat trips every weekend for the public.

## **INDEMNITY**

- Ensure that indemnity forms are filled in correctly and without error for adults. Make sure that a next of kin contact is provided – in the event of an incident.
- Guardian & Parental accompaniment on trips and signature on the indemnity is essential for minors & youth groups.

## **LIFEJACKETS & SAFETY BRIEFING**

Minors may only go to sea if they have an appropriately sized & legally approved lifejacket. They must be worn correctly & must fit correctly. The onus is on the Coxswain to give a full briefing on how to wear them. Inflatable lifejackets (manual or auto) may not be used on minors under the age of 16 years.

The responsibility also rests on the Coxswain to give a full & thorough pre-sea boat briefing to passengers to know what to expect and what to do in an emergency. It must be reminded that they are not trained crew – and know very little about anything to do with boats.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

It is strongly recommended that trips are taken with discretion – however the StatCom will make the final decision. If possible –try to convince the group that the following are also great options:

- A base tour, including vessels and station mobile.
- A WaterWise talk
- A Rip Current talk / video
- A CPR demonstration

## **CONCLUSION**

Donors give us support to conduct our function of saving lives on SA Waters, not necessarily to give pleasure trips to the public. It is also important to leave time for training of the rescue crew. Social events place time demands on the rescue crew & there are only so many weekends in a year – and if crew only go to social events and get no training – this is contrary to good practise. In the same token – long standing donors and station supporters should be treated every so often – and it is impossible to make a blanket ruling preventing all boat trips. Exercise judgement and balance in your decisions.

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