PUBLIC SAFETY & AQUATIC RESCUE TRAINING MANUAL

35th EDITION

Module 5: Rescue

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Rescue techniques

Rescue principles

Every lifesaving service follows four important principles.

1. Prevention—you will reduce risk and prevent injury in many ways, including the identification and control of hazards, effective surveillance and using appropriate signage to establish swimming and surfing areas.
2. Recognition—be alert for the signs of people at risk of aquatic injury or drowning; if in doubt, check it out!
3. Rescue—learn and practise the skills required to perform a rescue.
4. Recovery—the provision of further support and care to the victim and the return to 'rescue ready' status.

Performing a rescue when you are on duty involves:

- recognising the victim
- communication
- deciding on a course of action
- carrying out the rescue
- managing the victim once returned to shore
- post-rescue documentation and debriefing.

At all times you should ensure that any rescue is carried out as safely as possible, with maximum effectiveness and a minimum of delay.

Preparing for a rescue

Team preparedness

Prepared methods for minimising hazards and identifying roles in a rescue operation should be discussed and agreed by all team members. This discussion should include:

- a review of conditions to develop strategies for managing conditions
- a review of potential hazards that will be encountered when approaching the rescue scene and how risks can be minimised
- identifying what different levels of skill, experience and qualifications patrol members hold to determine what roles different patrol team members will perform during a rescue
- monitoring and reviewing preparedness as situations or conditions change
- reviewing and checking readiness of equipment
- reviewing the placement of equipment in high risk locations
- understanding common rescue operations and conditions at your beach.

Personal safety

Maintaining your own safety is a key skill of the lifesaver. It is the responsibility of all team members to check that they have the correct equipment and it is in good working condition. It is also your responsibility to assess and identify the hazards and risks associated with the prevailing conditions. Make sure you let your patrol captain know if you identify a concern.

Know your limitations

Respect and understand your own and other team members' limitations in varying conditions. Lifesavers should maintain a level of fitness appropriate to the duties they are performing and competency as well as adopt a culture of continuous improvement in relation to skill development. If at any time you feel unsure of your ability to complete a task you have been given, you should discuss this with your patrol captain. Attempting to do something you do not have the ability or confidence to do could put yourself and your team members and others at risk of harm.

Situational awareness

Our primary goal in lifesaving is to reduce drowning. One of the best means we have of reducing drowning is preventing it from happening in the first place. This requires vigilance and skill in identifying and managing situations before they become rescue operations.

Surveillance of the beach

From wherever you are positioned, whether in a lifeguard tower or walking along the water's edge, you should be able to see the surface area of the water in your surveillance zone (or 'section') and as much as possible of the sea floor (conditions permitting). Remember: if you can't see someone, you cannot save them.

In general, your surveillance priorities will be *primary* and *secondary* zones.

Primary zone

- Area 200 m either side of the flags
- Between the flags
- Determined by patrol service agreements or equivalent

Secondary zone

- Beyond the surf zone
- Designated training area
- Other activity areas

Binoculars are a useful tool for monitoring people over distance and should be available for water surveillance. The lifesaver should first visually scan an area—without binoculars, which limit peripheral vision—and then use binoculars to zoom in on potential problems.

Scanning

Scanning is the systematic watching of the water, beachgoers and their activities. The way in which you scan will be influenced by a number of factors, including:

- beach layout and any special geographical features
- the level of experience and training of the team members on patrol duty
- the number of beachgoers and their activities
- the number of team members and their location
- the shape and size of the surveillance area
- weather and surf conditions affecting visibility.

Note: You can adopt an elevated position and wear polarised sunglasses to improve your effective vision over a greater distance.

Key principles

When scanning, you should move your head, not just your eyes, because looking directly at an object improves vision. You should be able to:

- hear any unusual sounds that might alert you to any risks to swimmers
- hear noises that beachgoers are making
- hear what your colleagues might be saying to you
- identify where other team members are positioned
- notice any unfamiliar smells that might indicate an emergency or hazards to patrons
- notice changing weather conditions
- see the general movements of swimmers and the number of patrons.

Scanning as part of a team

If you have several qualified people available, it is a good idea to divide the beach up into sections or zones that you can each focus on scanning. When you do this, it is good practice to position yourself so that:

- your area overlaps slightly with the areas adjacent to you
- you can still see the person(s) supervising the adjacent area(s) to yours.

Scanning in this way means that in the event of an emergency:

- other people can signal to you if they need assistance
- you are able to maintain scanning of the water when incidents occur by creating more overlap between your respective areas
- you are available to help with crowd control during an incident.

Scanning techniques

Research indicates that drowning can occur in seconds. The less time it takes to scan an area effectively, the better. Lifesavers come to know their local beach's usual sights and sounds and patterns and rhythms of activity for any given period after patrolling for some time.

When scanning you will need to change your focus to suit your scanning strategy. The different focus types include:

- **fixed focus**—watch specific people to see what they are doing and listen for anything unusual
- **wide focus**—use your peripheral vision and side vision, to detect movement and notice activity
- **moving focus**—move your eyes at a moderate pace across the surveillance area, sweep back and forth to take in environmental conditions that might affect patrol behaviour and safety issues. Use moving focus for short periods only.

Avoiding scanning fatigue

Watching the water for long periods of time is difficult to do. Your effectiveness gradually decreases over time, and you will be less observant the longer you watch. You can avoid fatigue by:

- avoiding staring at the one spot without actually seeing what is happening
- changing your focus
- giving your eyes a rest by focusing momentarily on some distant object or on the horizon.
- moving your head and eyes, i.e., not just sweeping with your eyes
- rotating positions with your team members regularly.

Note: It is recommended that scanning from a fixed location is limited to a maximum period of 30 minutes before rotation of personnel or a change of position needs to occur.

Scanning strategies

The following are commonly used scanning strategies.

Pattern	Description	Diagram
Grouping	Group beachgoers in an area by their activity, such as swimming, non-swimmers, wading or surfing.	
Head counting	Count the number of heads in the area, e.g., surfers intermittently visible in large swells or surf.	
Hot spots	When scanning the water, be sure to always look at identified hazards including rip currents, headlands, shallow sandbanks, etc. A scan of the water should always consider above and below the surface.	

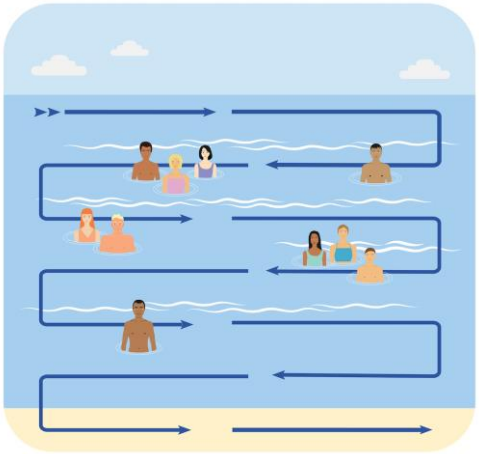
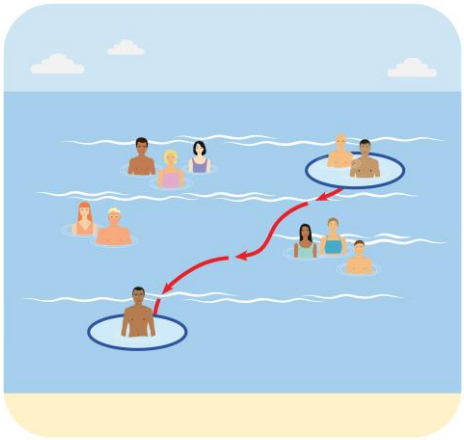
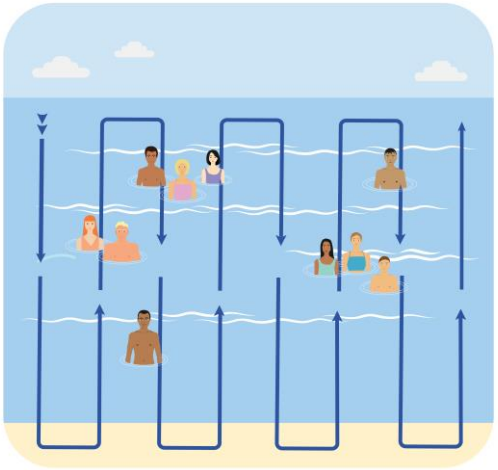
Horizontal scanning	Moving from left to right, starting on the horizon and working back towards your feet.	
Tracking	When relevant, focusing on a particular person in the water and tracking their movement, such as a surfer or bodysurfer. This is useful when monitoring high-risk groups.	
Vertical scanning	Moving left to right, starting at the limit of your peripheral vision and concluding at the opposite end of your peripheral vision.	

Table 3—Scanning strategies

Recognising the victim

Trained lifesavers should always position themselves with their eyes on the water to watch for people at risk. While scanning your area of responsibility, pay particular attention to the water conditions and their potential effects on swimmers and beachgoers.

A sense of anticipation and an understanding of people's behaviour can help prevent problems that lead to rescues. People in high-risk groups need to be watched with special attention.

- **Age extremities**—very young and very old people. Young children might need to be intercepted if they approach the water without adult supervision.
- **Beach/surf novices**—this applies to anyone who appears unfamiliar with the beach or surf environment, e.g., international and domestic tourists and people who have recently moved or immigrated to live along Australia's coast.
- **Float users**—swimmers wearing flotation devices are unlikely to have adequate swimming skills.
- **Overweight people**—these people may be in poor physical health condition.
- **People improperly dressed for beach conditions**—be wary of people who attempt to swim in clothing that is unsuitable for the surf, e.g., jeans.
- **Unstable or intoxicated people**—those who show a lack of coordination.

Characteristics of different types of victims

Most people are not buoyant without lungs full of air and the aid of supportive strokes of the arms and legs. For weak, exhausted or injured people, the loss of buoyancy in deep water is a life-threatening emergency.

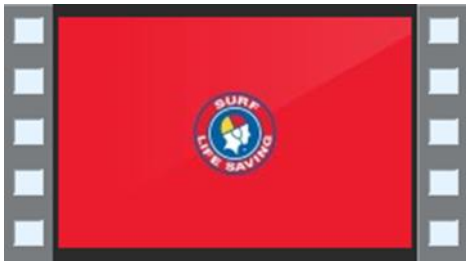
It is important that you can recognise the difference between a distressed and a drowning victim. It is noted that the signs of a distressed victim will be highly visible where a drowning victim will be much more subtle.

Distressed victims

A victim who is in distress is struggling to maintain buoyancy and unable to return to safety without assistance.

Signs of a distressed victim include:

- a swim stroke that barely clears the water with no visible kick
- attempting to swim towards safety
- an awkward position in the water caused by grasping an injured limb or body part
- calling for help, raising or waving an arm
- clinging to an object
- flailing arms
- facing the shore
- holding their breath, cheeks puffed out, displaying a wide-eyed fearful look
- having hair in their eyes as they are more concerned about keeping their head above water
- making no attempt to duck under a wave
- two heads together as two people try to keep each other afloat.



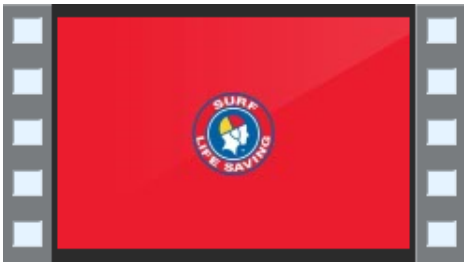
Video - Distressed victim identification

Drowning victims

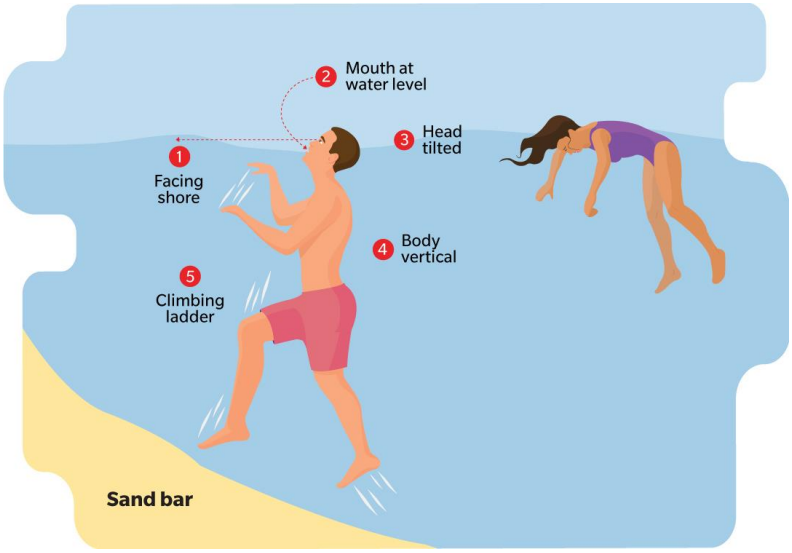
Drowning victims are unable to support themselves in a position that maintains their air supply. Drowning victims usually have little or no buoyancy.

Signs of a drowning victim include:

- bobbing up and down
- facing the shore
- floating face down at or below the surface
- ineffectively treading water with their head tilted back (‘climbing the ladder’)
- limited attempts to call for help, raise or wave an arm
- lying immobilised underwater
- mouth at water level
- non-supportive leg action
- vertical body position.



Video - Drowning victim identification



Drowning process

Drowning is defined as the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid. The drowning process may result in fatal drowning or non-fatal drowning.

Below are the main stages of the drowning process.

- **Airway compromised**—normal breathing is interrupted as the victim's face is immersed in water. The victim may initially hold their breath but will then cough and begin vigorous breathing efforts while both swallowing and inhaling water. The victim has difficulty maintaining buoyancy for a period of time.
- **Instinctive reflex**—the victim loses buoyancy and may be below the surface. After a period of time holding their breath, the urge to breathe becomes overwhelming and a victim will attempt to inhale despite being under water. This inhalation introduces water into the airway, preventing oxygen from reaching the alveoli and damaging the lungs. Swallowing water may also cause the victim to vomit or regurgitate.
- **Unconsciousness**—the victim becomes unconscious due to decreased oxygen delivery to the vital organs, including the brain and heart. Brain cells begin to suffer due to lack of oxygen and will quickly die if oxygen supply is not restored. The victim is usually below the surface.
- **Death**—the lack of oxygen leads to progressively worsening heart function, then finally the complete cessation of any heartbeat.

Fatal drowning

The victim experiences respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid, which leads to unconsciousness then death.

On average, there are 99 fatal drownings on Australia's coast each year [1]. For more information on coastal drowning, refer to the SLSA National Coastal Safety Report. This report is produced annually and is available on the SLSA website.

Always follow your local SOPs when assisting with body retrieval operations. You may also refer to *SLSA Emergency Management Guidelines* in the SLS Members Area Document Library for more information.

Non-fatal drowning

The victim experiences respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid. Water has entered their airways, which may cause them to become unconscious and/or suffer an ongoing illness from the event.

Victims may be rescued from underwater and be conscious or unconscious. Conscious victims may report swallowing water and experiencing coughing spasms. Other signs may include:

- disorientation
- persistent coughing
- vomiting
- water draining from the mouth and nose.

Any victim who has experienced a non-fatal drowning event must not be left unattended and should receive further medical treatment as water within a victim's lungs can lead to serious complications. Always follow DRSABCD protocols.

On average, there are 38 non-fatal drownings on Australia's coast each year [2]. For more information on non-fatal drowning, refer to the *SLSA National Coastal Safety Report*. This report is produced annually and is available on the SLSA website.

Signalling team members

It is not always possible to clearly talk with, or radio, another member of your patrol team when undertaking patrol and rescue operations. Under these circumstances a lifesaver can communicate using signals, which are an essential part of surf lifesaving communications. Lack of knowledge of these may result in tragedy.

Signals can be given using your arm, or by holding a tube or flags to increase your visibility. Your patrol equipment will include tubes as well as two signal flags (orange with a blue diagonal stripe 100 mm wide) that can be used.

All signals should be made distinctly and repeated until they are acknowledged or until it is certain they have been understood. In all cases, acknowledgment of each signal should be given as soon as it is understood.
When in the water, including on craft and boats, lifesavers should look often to the beach for signals being communicated, e.g., message understood, return to shore.

Signals

Beach to water signals

1. Attract attention

2. Pick up swimmers

3. Proceed further out to sea

4. Go the right or to the left

5. Remain stationary

6. Message understood, all clear

7. Pick up or adjust buoys

8. Return to shore

Water to beach signals

9. Assistance required

10. Shore signal received and understood

11. Emergency evacuation alarm

12. Submerged victim missing

13. All clear/ok

14. Powercraft wishes to return to shore

To view more SLS training resources, refer to the SLS Members Area Document Library. June 2019.

Beach to water signals

1. Attract attention

Two flags, tubes or arms waved to and fro, crossing above the head.

2. Pick up swimmers

One flag, tube or arm waved in a circular manner around the head and a second flag, tube or arm held parallel to the water's edge and horizontal to the ground. After acknowledgement by the craft ('message understood' signal), direct it to swimmers in trouble as required, e.g., further out to sea.

3. Proceed further out to sea

Two flags, tubes or arms held vertically above the head.

4. Go to the right or to the left

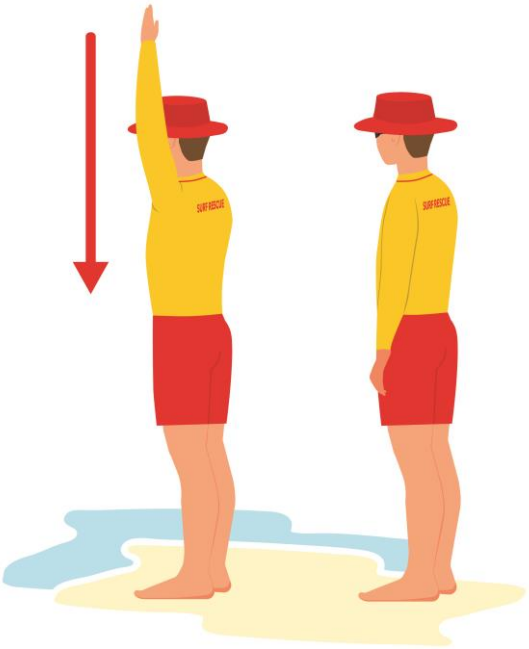
One flag, tube or arm held at arm's length, parallel to the ground and pointed in the required direction.

5. Remain stationary

Two flags, tubes or arms held at arm's length, parallel to the ground.

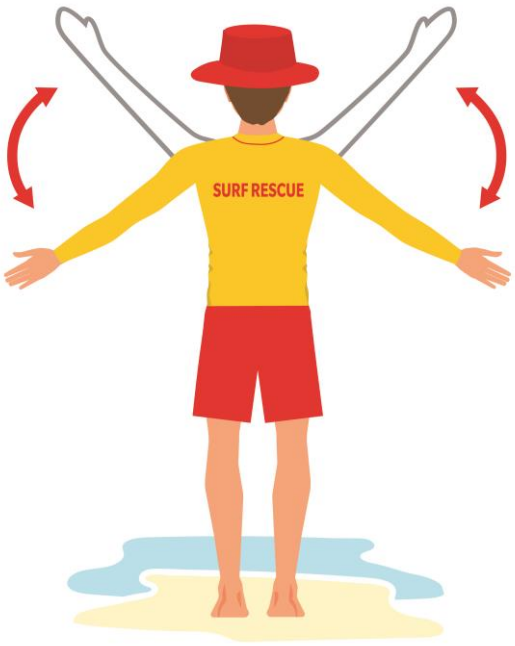
6. Message understood, all clear

One flag, tube or arm held stationary above the head and cut away quickly to the side.



7. Pick up or adjust buoys

Two flags, tubes or arms raised up and down from 45 degrees below horizontal to 45 degrees above horizontal. After acknowledgment by a craft ('message understood' signal), direct it to the buoys as required.



8. Return to shore

One flag, tube or arm held vertically above the head.

Water to beach signals

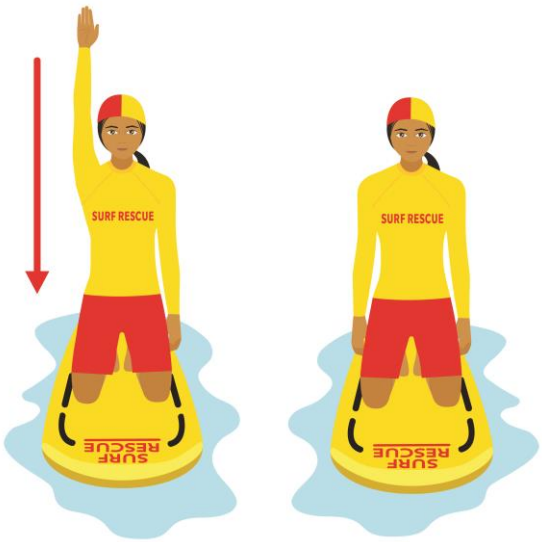
When you are on duty in or on the water, you should regularly check the shore to see if you are being signalled. All signals should be clearly demonstrated, and the message understood before proceeding.

9. Assistance required

One arm waved to and fro above the head. Used at any point in time to indicate that assistance is required while performing a rescue, e.g., when unsafe to return to shore, to lift a heavy victim.

10. Shore signal received and understood

One arm held vertically above the head, then cut away sharply to the side.



11. Emergency evacuation alarm

Both arms held vertically above the head.

12. Submerged victim missing

Both arms raised to form a cross above the head. Used to indicate that a swimmer is missing and presumed submerged. This signal may mark the last known location of missing swimmers.

13. All clear/OK

Touch the middle of the head with the fingertips of one hand. Used to indicate that no help is required in performing the rescue.

14. Powercraft wishes to return to shore

One arm raised up and down from horizontal to 45 degrees above the horizontal, in a waving motion. You must acknowledge the signal, clear a path for the return to shore and signal to show the path to be taken by the powercraft. This should be the path that leads to your position on the beach. Whenever a powercraft is returning to shore with a victim, it is important that you are waiting at the water's edge to receive the victim.

Tower signals

15. Mass rescue

A series of three blasts of the siren is given. On this alarm, all available qualified persons are to assist and report to the patrol captain on duty.

16. Emergency evacuation alarm

The emergency evacuation flag (red and white, quartered) is waved or held out of the tower, and the alarm bell or siren is sounded continuously until everyone is out of the water.

17. All clear/beach open

A public announcement is made over the loudhailer/PA system.

Planning the rescue

If you need to go to the assistance of someone in danger, always immediately inform your patrol captain or a team member of the situation by:

- speaking directly to them
- using a radio
- using hand or flag signals.

Pause and plan

You will need to pause and plan to collect as much relevant information about the emergency as you can to help inform your rescue method. You should quickly ask yourself:

1. What is your emergency action plan (DRSABCD)?
   - what dangers exist at the scene to yourself, others and the victim(s)?
2. Whom do you need to contact?
   - have you sent for help?
   - what do your local SOPs require?
3. Do you need assistance?
   - how will you arrange assistance?
   - is assistance nearby?
4. Can you perform a rescue immediately?
   - what are your limitations?
   - what are you trained to do?
   - what equipment is available?

Use the '4 Ps' to pass on information quickly and effectively when requesting assistance—position, people, problem and progress. Your patrol captain can use this information to:

- inform your surf lifesaving communication centre and/or support operations, e.g., rescue watercraft, offshore rescue boats, helicopters
- issue instructions to you or other members of your team
- send for help—ambulance, police, etc.

Check your local SOPs for calling other emergency services.

Rescue method

Being able to use the most effective method of rescue in the prevailing conditions comes from experience and training. The rescue methods described in this module are the preferred options, but flexibility is also necessary.

Additionally, when you make contact with a victim, consider whether it is safer to return to shore immediately or to signal for assistance and wait for support.

Deciding on a course of action

All rescues involve some risk to the rescuer's safety. Unfortunately, every year in Australia some people drown trying to save others, though this is rare with trained lifesavers.

SLSA does not recommend performing rescues without equipment as they pose a significant risk to both yourself and the victim. The benefits of rescue equipment include:

- faster access to your victim
- protection from a distressed victim
- support for you and/or your victim(s)
- a faster return to shore.

However, a lifesaver may find themselves in a situation that calls for a rescue without a flotation device, such as when off-duty or at an unpatrolled beach. Understanding the advantages and disadvantages associated with each rescue method, and the available equipment, helps you to reduce the level of risk associated with rescues and select the most effective rescue method.

Rescue method	Advantages	Disadvantages
 **Without flotation device**	• Immediate assistance if nearby when no flotation device is available	• Highest risk to lifesaver • Longer timeframe to reach victim and return to shore • No flotation device for support
 **Tube rescue with swim fins**	• Equipment is attached to lifesaver • May be easier to negotiate larger waves • Two tubes can be attached together • Useful if near rocks or between the flags	• Can support only one to two victims • Swim fins may slow down progress through shallow water • Takes longer to get victim to shore
 **Board rescue**	• Can provide flotation for up to five people • Faster response time to victim and return to shore than tube	• Hazardous if board lost among swimmers in surf zone • Hazardous near rocks • Lifesaver not attached to equipment and can lose equipment • Requires a higher skill level
 **Inflatable rescue boat (IRB) or rescue water craft (RWC)**	• Can cover large distances • Faster response time to victim and return to shore than board rescue	• Hazardous between the flags • May capsize • May not be nearby
 **Jet rescue boat (JRB), rigid inflatable boat (RIB) or offshore rescue boat (ORB)**	• Ability to respond to unpatrolled and/or remote locations • Can handle large surf conditions	• Hazardous between the flags • May capsize • May not be nearby
 **Helicopter**	• Can convey victim directly to hospital • Can reach difficult locations such as cliff ledges • May carry paramedics	• May not be able to land in immediate vicinity • Needs to be deployed by external agency to SLS in many locations • Time to deploy and arrive at your location

Table 4—Advantages and disadvantages of different rescue methods

Key factors influencing rescue decisions

There are four key factors that may influence your course of action in a rescue situation.

1. Victims

The number and condition of victims defines the number of lifesavers and the equipment required for an effective rescue. Selection of equipment should get you to the victim(s) in the fastest time.

When selecting your equipment, you need to consider the following questions:

- what are your personal safety limitations?
- what is the size of the victim(s)?
- what is the condition of the victim, e.g., conscious or unconscious?
- what equipment can support multiple victims?

2. Distances

- Consideration should be given to the following questions:
- how far away is the victim(s) from the lifesaving service?
- how far away is the victim(s) from the shoreline?
- what is the closest access point?
- where is the best place to return to shore safely?

3. Conditions

Use the surf conditions to your advantage. Try to time your entry into the water to swim through the surf zone during a lull and use favourable rips and currents to reach victim(s). As surf conditions become more hazardous, so do the risk factors associated with each piece of equipment. If the conditions are too dangerous for the equipment available, support operations with helicopters and rescue water craft (RWC) may be the best choice.

4. Resources

Consideration should be given to the following questions:

- what are your abilities and the skills of fellow lifesavers?
- what equipment is available?
- what is your level of physical fitness?
- what is your size in comparison to victim(s)?
- what number of lifesavers are available?

Always try to match equipment with your and fellow lifesavers' skills.

The scenario risk matrix in Table 5 provides a guide to the resources needed for rescue operations; however, its application will vary with local surf conditions, the victim's condition, and the availability of local resources. For example, if the victim is close to shore in a rip, it may be faster to use a board than a tube and rescue them before they are swept out beyond the surf zone. Always review your situation and choose the type and number of resources accordingly. It is recommended that this scenario matrix be discussed by members of every lifesaving service.

	Distance from shore	1 to 2 victims	3 to 5 victims	6 to 10 victims	11+ victims
Low risk to high risk	Close to shore (0–50 m)	rescue tubes	rescue tubes and rescue boards	IRB and rescue tubes/rescue boards	all patrol resources available and support operations
	From shore to beyond surf zone (30–150 m)	rescue boards and rescue tubes	IRB and rescue boards/rescue tubes	IRB, rescue tubes/rescue boards and support operations	all patrol resources available and support operations
	Beyond surf zone (100–300 m)	IRB and rescue boards	IRB and rescue boards	IRB, rescue boards and support operations	IRB, rescue boards and support operations
	Well beyond the surf zone (250–500 m)	IRB and support operations	IRB and support operations	IRB and support operations	IRB and support operations
	Out to sea (450 m +)	Support operations	Support operations	Support operations	Support operations
	Low risk to high risk				

Table 5—Scenario risk matrix

Undertaking the rescue

Once a course of action has been decided on, reaching your victim(s) in the shortest amount of time is crucial.

Taking a few seconds to review the position of your victim in relation to the surf, wind direction, currents and the position of rip currents can save you precious time in a rescue situation.

For all lifesavers, below are the major considerations.

Victim approach

Follow the steps below when approaching a victim.

1. Plan your approach.
2. Continue scanning to monitor their location and condition.
3. Consider if there will be any language or cultural sensitivities when communicating with the victim.
4. Reassure them as soon as possible and at a safe distance—introduce yourself, ask questions, remind them to breathe normally.
5. Position available rescue equipment between you and the victim and/or take a defensive position (See *Defensive position*).
6. Continue to assess and control the risks.

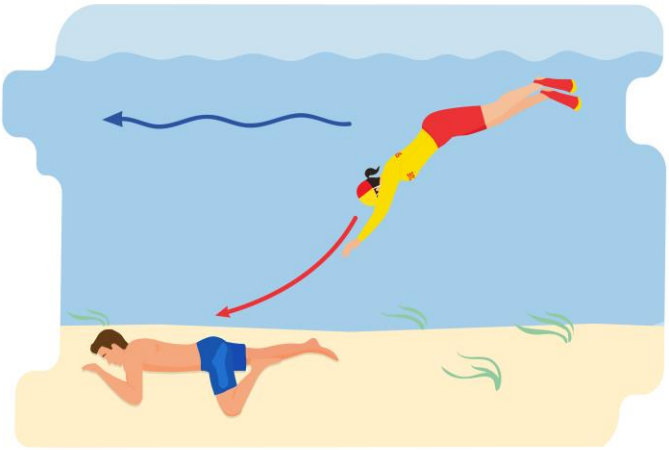
Follow the steps below if you see a victim go underwater.

1. Note the approximate location, with reference points if possible, and consider the effect of rips and currents
2. Signal for assistance.
3. Perform a surface dive:
   - head-first surface dive when the victim can be seen under the water
   - feet-first surface dive when in unfamiliar murky water.
4. Give the Code X signal if you cannot find a submerged victim.

Follow the steps below when you reach a submerged victim.

1. Grasp the victim under the armpits from behind.
2. Bring the victim to the surface. Push off the bottom if possible.
3. Signal 'assistance required'.

Note: Remove any diving weights if the victim is a diver.

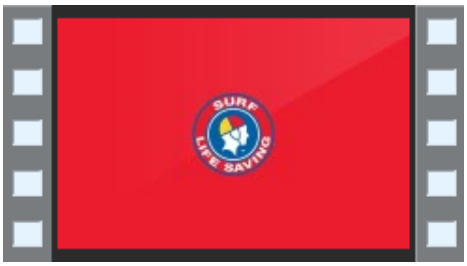


Defensive position

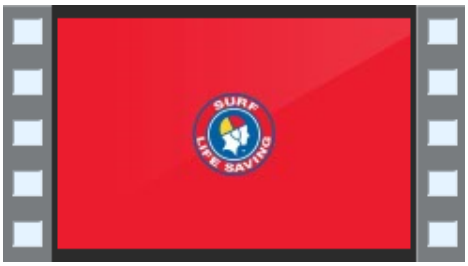
Drowning people are scared and often irrational. They may put you in danger when you go to their aid. To prevent being harmed by a drowning victim, you should approach:

- by floating on your back and sculling with your arm while you communicate with the victim to keep them calm
- with one foot extended towards them while providing reassurance that you are there to assist.

Releases and escapes



Video – Front release and escape



Video – Rear release and escape

In the water a distressed victim might grab hold of you; this presents a serious danger to any lifesaver. It is essential that you are able to release yourself and escape from a victim if this situation occurs.

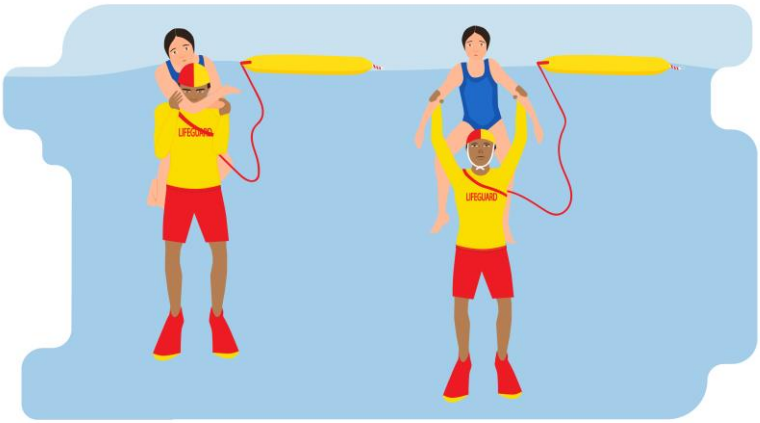
Note: You are not attempting to lift the victim out of the water. Your aim is to push yourself below the surface and away from the victim.

Front release and escape

1. Tuck your chin to your chest.
2. Put your hands against the body of the victim; under the rib cage is recommended.
3. Push yourself down and swim away from the victim.
4. Surface at a safe distance from the victim.
5. Push your rescue equipment towards the victim.
6. Reassure the victim.

Rear release and escape

1. Tuck your chin to your chest.
2. Place your hands on the victim's elbows.
3. Push yourself down and away from the victim.
4. Surface at a safe distance from the victim.
5. Push your rescue equipment towards the victim.
6. Reassure the victim.



Rescues without equipment

Rescues can occur at any time. You may need to perform a rescue without equipment. SLS does not recommend performing rescues without equipment as they significantly increase the risk to you and the victim. Use the following techniques if you must perform a rescue without equipment.

Hip carry

The hip carry method can be used for taking a conscious or unconscious victim back to shallow water.

1. Approach the victim while monitoring their position and progress.
2. Reassure the victim.
3. Adopt a defensive position at a safe distance.
4. Explain to the victim how you will proceed with the rescue.
5. Move behind the victim and put your preferred arm over the victim's corresponding shoulder, across the chest and under the armpit, clamping the victim to your body.
6. Proceed towards the shore using a sidestroke, with your hip close to the small of the victim's back.

Note:

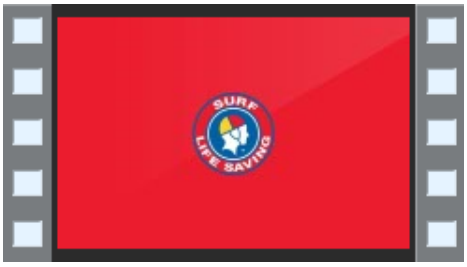
- If the victim starts to struggle, obtain a firmer hold by using your arm to clamp their shoulder against your chest, and reassure them.
- Use release and escape techniques if you feel you are in danger at any point during the rescue.

Wrist tow

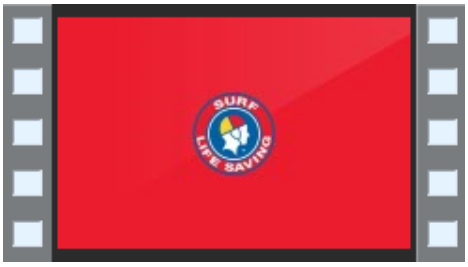
The wrist tow method can be used when a conscious victim is able to maintain buoyancy.

1. Approach the victim while monitoring their position and progress.
2. Reassure the victim.
3. Adopt a defensive position at a safe distance.
4. Explain to the victim how you will proceed with the rescue.
5. Instruct the victim to float on their back with one arm extended straight towards you.
6. Grip the victim's extended arm at the back of the hand/wrist and use a sidestroke.
7. Ask the victim to grip your arm the same way.
8. Ask the victim to assist by kicking.

Tube rescues



Video – Tube rescue – conscious victim



Video – Tube rescue – unconscious victim

The rescue tube is a widely used, cost-effective piece of rescue equipment.

Swim fins ('flippers') should be used for tube rescues as they greatly increase the speed and efficiency of a tube rescue (See *Effective use of swim fins*) [3].

Entering the water

1. Pull the end of the belt and allow the rescue tube to unwind.
2. Place the belt over your head and under one arm, like a sash.
3. Hold the tube under your arm (or in one hand) with your swim fins in the other while running on the sand towards the water.
4. Throw the tube to the side when at the water's edge.
5. Commence wading through the surf.
6. Put swim fins on when reaching waist-deep water.
7. Monitor the victim's position and progress while swimming by raising your head every few strokes.

Conscious victim

1. Stop at a safe distance from the victim.
2. Reach back for the rescue tube and push it towards the victim.
3. Reassure the victim and encourage them to remain calm and follow instructions.
4. Ask the victim to put their arms over the tube and hold it to their chest.
5. Clip the rescue tube securely around the victim under both arms while continuing to reassure the victim.
6. Determine whether you can return to shore safely with the victim:
   - safe—instruct the victim to lie on their back and kick their legs if possible
   - unsafe—reassure the victim and signal ‘assistance required’ or move to a safer position to wait for further assistance.

Unconscious victim

1. Determine if the victim is unresponsive as you approach the victim
2. Remove their face from the water by turning the victim onto their back.
3. Clip the tube under both arms and around the victim's chest.
4. Determine whether you can return to shore safely with the victim:
   - safe—swim to shore while towing the victim. Turn every few strokes to check that the victim remains upright with their face out of the water
   - unsafe—signal 'assistance required' or move to a safer position to wait for further assistance.

Note: In some surf conditions you may need to sidestroke while holding the victim to maintain control.



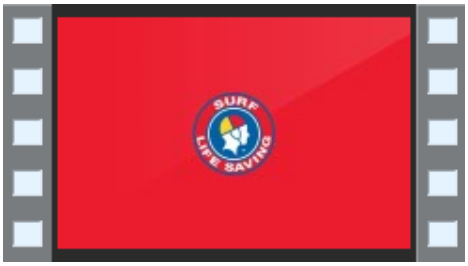

Moving back through break zone

1. Turn every few strokes to watch behind you for breaking waves as you tow the victim to shore.
2. Pull the victim towards you when a wave approaches and place yourself between the victim and the wave:
   - large wave—reassure the victim and ask them to take a deep breath
   - small wave—lift the victim over the wave if the wave is small enough and you are on a sandbar.
3. Help your victim stand and stabilise them in a standing position once in shallow water and as you both move towards the shore.
4. Carry the victim to the shoreline using the most appropriate carry and support technique outlined in this manual.
5. Assess the victim's condition once at the shoreline and treat as required (See *Primary assessment—DRSABCD*).

Note:

- If the victim is weak or unconscious and you can stand, place your arms under their armpits and lift them into a standing position. Stabilise them and signal 'assistance required' to carry them to the shoreline.
- If you lose contact with the victim, regain control and continue to shore. Consider signalling 'assistance required' again.
- You may need to place your hand over the victim's mouth and nose and hold on to them when a large wave approaches. If using this method, ensure your arm is fed under their armpit first and then place your hand over their mouth. This method is done to refer any impact from the wave to their armpit, not their neck.
- Where there is a 'shore break', you may need to reassure your victim and wait for a lull before proceeding.

Double tube tow



Video – Double tube tow

A second lifesaver, equipped with a rescue tube and swim fins, can assist in returning a victim to shore using a double tube tow. This is very effective for heavy victims or in difficult surf conditions such as strong winds, choppy surf or strong currents. Great care must be exercised in the surf zone due to the risk of the ropes becoming tangled.

1. Lifesaver 1 clips their rescue tube under both arms and around the victim's chest.
2. Lifesaver 2 clips the end of their secondary rescue tube onto the ring of the tube already around the victim.
3. Both lifesavers tow the victim to shore while swimming about 1 m apart. Lifesaver 2 will be about a body length in front and to the side of Lifesaver 1.
4. Both lifesavers wait for a lull to start swimming safely towards the shore.
5. Lifesaver 1 keeps watch on the victim and the surf when in the surf zone.

Note:

- If a large wave approaches, Lifesaver 1 should secure the victim while Lifesaver 2 moves to the side. This minimises the chances of getting entangled in the ropes.
- If either lifesaver feels it is not safe to proceed through the surf zone together, Lifesaver 2 will unclip their tube and swim freely alongside Lifesaver 1 and the victim.
- Both lifesavers need to swim at the same pace.

Board rescues

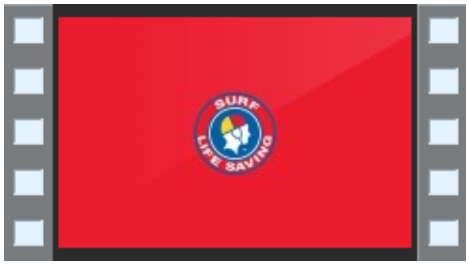
The use of rescue boards to rescue people from the surf and a wide range of aquatic environments has become widespread around the world. The rescue board provides a fast and reliable means of reaching victims and, if required, can support multiple victims in the water.

Approaching the victim

Paddle out towards the victim following the victim approach guidelines in this module and communicate reassurance as soon as possible. Approach the victim from the side with enough room to turn so that you arrive directly adjacent to the victim.

Where appropriate in relation to surf conditions, ensure the board is facing in the direction you want to paddle before you assist the victim onto the board.

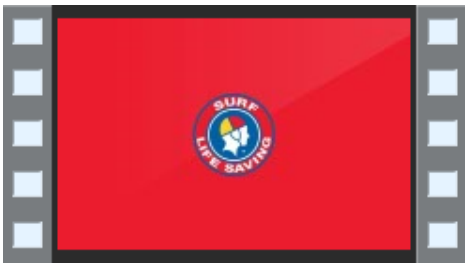
Conscious victim



Video - Board Rescue - Conscious victim

1. Place the rescue board between you and the victim as you approach the victim. Remember to manage your balance on the board, as victims are likely to reach out and grab it.
2. Provide reassurance to calm down a distressed victim who may also fear the rescue board, as they are unfamiliar with it. This can be done by exchanging names, reminding them to breathe normally, providing calm instructions:
   - beyond the surf zone—take your time and calmly explain how you want to proceed
   - within the surf zone—act quickly and explain to the victim how you want them to move onto and lie on the board.
3. Straddle the craft in a seated position slightly towards the tail. Remember you need to ensure that you position yourself and the victim so the total weight is evenly distributed on the board.
4. Ask the victim to reach across and take hold of the straps furthest away from them (on the other side of the board).
5. Direct the victim to pull themselves onto the board and swing their legs onto the deck so that they face the nose of the board.
6. Adjust your position by leaning forward to keep the board balanced while the victim is climbing on, and assist them if required by grasping their nearest leg and pulling them onto the board.
7. Determine whether you can return to shore safely with the victim:
   - safe—paddle to shore with the victim (See *Paddling to shore with a victim on a board)*
   - unsafe—reassure the victim and signal ‘assistance required’ or move to a safer position to wait for further assistance.

Heavy, exhausted or unconscious victim beyond the break



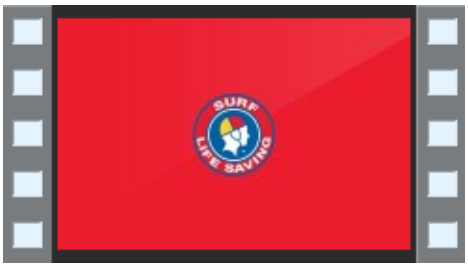
Video - Board rescue of heavy, exhausted or unconscious victim

1. Determine if the victim is unresponsive as you approach them.
2. Approach the victim from the side.
3. Turn your board so that it is parallel to the shoreline with the victim on the seaward side.
4. Take hold of the victim's arm or hand.
5. Turn sideways on your board and slide off into the water on the side opposite the victim. Maintain a tight grip on the victim.
6. Position the victim so that they are facing you and the board. The victim should be closer to the front of the board.
7. Hold the victim's hand firmly against the rail of the board closest to you as you roll the board upside down and away from the victim—the victim's arm is pulled across the underside of the board and their armpit should be firmly held against the victim's side of the board.
8. Position the victim so that their armpit closest to the nose of the board generally aligns with the 'S' of 'Surf' (of 'Surf Rescue') on the underside of the SLS rescue board.
9. Reach over and grasp the board strap or rail on the victim's side while keeping your grip on the victim's arm or hand.
10. Roll the board right side up so that the victim is lying across the deck (See note below for heavy victims).
11. Pull yourself back onto the board while keeping hold of the victim.
12. Position yourself towards the tail.
13. Pull the victim's legs onto the board.
14. Trim the board by:
    - lying in the prone paddling position behind the victim with your chest in contact with the victim's body
    - pulling the victim's legs to adjust their position if they are too far forward.
15. Determine whether you can return to shore safely with the victim:
    - safe—signal 'assistance required' and paddle to shore with the heavy, exhausted or unconscious victim (See *Paddling to shore with a victim on a board)*
    - unsafe—signal 'assistance required' or move to a safer position to wait for further assistance. Reassure the victim if they become conscious.

Note:

- If the victim is heavier than you can safely lift, signal for assistance to return the victim to shore as fast as possible.
- Remember to reassure and communicate the rescue process with any conscious victim.
- When rolling the board right side up with a heavy victim, take a kneeling position on the underside of the board and reach for the straps on the victim's side with your free hand. This allows you to roll the board using your weight as well as your strength.

Board rescues in the break zone



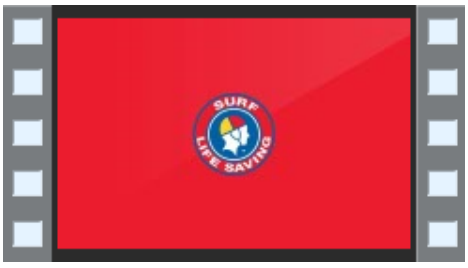
Video - Board rescues in the break zone

1. Determine if the victim is unresponsive as you cautiously approach the victim.
2. Keep the board on the seaward side of the victim as you approach them.
3. Lift the victim so that the nose of the board is lifted above the water when you are both aboard.
4. Trim the board by lying in the prone paddling position behind the victim with your chest in contact with the victim's body.
5. Determine whether you can return to shore safely with the victim:
   - safe—signal 'assistance required' and paddle to shore with the unconscious, exhausted or heavy victim (See *Paddling to shore with a victim on a board*)
   - unsafe—signal for assistance or move to a safer position to wait for further assistance. Reassure the victim if they are conscious.

Note:

- If the victim is conscious, tell them to grip the straps and be prepared to move back.
- If you are going to be hit by a wave, place your arms under the victim's armpits and grab the strapping. This will pin the victim to the board.
- If you are unable to get the victim onto the board, position yourself and the victim on the seaward side of the board before hooking your arms underneath the victim's arms and grabbing the straps. This is a useful technique when in a break zone and there is insufficient time to safely get the victim onto the board.
- Only experienced lifesavers should risk catching waves before they break.

Paddling to shore with a victim on a board



Video – Board rescue – returning to shore

Rescue boards have sufficient flotation to carry two adults—a lifesaver and a victim. However, the extra weight of a second person significantly changes how the board performs. Always practise paddling your board with a victim in calm water before attempting to paddle a victim in surf conditions.

When you have a victim on a rescue board:

- check that the victim is positioned correctly on the board to provide good board trim (See *Positioning the victim*)
- have both yourself and the victim lying in the prone paddling position
- lie behind the victim with your chest in contact with the victim's body
- trim the board so that your combined weight is evenly distributed
- communicate what the victim can expect to experience when returning to shore, e.g., changing your position by pushing or pulling their legs to redistribute your weight and avoid nosedives
- communicate how the victim can assist you returning to shore safely
- try to stay in time with the victim's paddling
- remember to signal 'assistance required' if required, e.g., an IRB to assist you, another lifesaver to assist you when there are strong waves in a 'shore break'.

Positioning the victim

- A board will tend to nosedive in the break zone or white water if the victim positions themselves too far forward.
- After communicating to the victim the need to move towards the back of the board, you can assist them by pulling their legs to move them backwards.
- Your legs should be in the water acting as an anchor if the victim is too far to the rear of the board. In this case, you will need to ask them to move forward using the straps.

Note:

- Excess weight at the front of the board will make it unstable in the white water and increase the risk of nosediving.
- Too much weight at the back of the board will slow your forward momentum.

When returning to shore through a break zone:

- assess the surf conditions and safest timing to start paddling to shore
- wait for a lull in the wave pattern to paddle and remember there is no rush if the victim is conscious
- move yourself and the victim further back on the board
- catch a broken wave to quickly return to shore
- continue to assess the surf conditions ahead as you approach the shore
- provide instructions and ask the victim for details while paddling to both reassure the victim and ensure a safer return to shore
- instruct the victim to slide off towards the side of the board when in waist deep water and the surf conditions in the shore break will not injure them, or assistance arrives
- assist the victim out of the water appropriately, ensuring that the rescue board does not cause injury to yourself, the victim or others
- assess the victim's condition once at the shoreline and treat as required (See *Primary assessment—DRSABCD*).

Note:

- If the victim is unable to stand, slide off the rescue board when the water is waist deep, ensuring one arm remains over the victim to stabilise them on the board. Then carry the victim from the water using a two-person carry when assistance arrives. You may use the rescue board as a carrying device to extract the victim from danger if an appropriate number of people are available to safely assist with the carry (See Manual handling). Do not try this with soft-top rescue boards as they may become damaged if the victim is too heavy.
- Remember—only risk catching an unbroken wave if you have great experience. Catching unbroken waves increases the risk of both the victim and lifesaver falling off the board and a rogue board rolling through the waves. The consequences of these risks are further injury and harm to the victim, lifesaver and other beachgoers.

1. Quickly grab the victim's legs and pull them backwards on the board if required to avoid a nosedive when catching a wave.
2. Stop and signal for assistance again if there are strong waves in the shore break. It may be safer to slide off one side of the board and hold your victim on the board until assistance arrives.

Mass rescues

Mass rescues occur when multiple people require help at the same time and at the same location. Examples of mass rescues include:

- a boat overturning
- a large surging wave washing up the face of a sloping beach or over a rock platform and dragging people out to sea
- a rip current dragging a group of swimmers into deeper water
- swimmers suddenly washed off a sandbank and into deep water
- two jet skis colliding.

For mass rescues, always assess:

- how close the victims are to each other
- the priority of the victims—assist an unconscious victim first
- what and how much rescue equipment and flotation devices are available.

Mass rescue situations may occur quickly and without warning.

If a mass rescue is beyond the capacity of the lifesaving service, follow the steps below.

1. Use the radio to call 'Rescue Rescue Rescue'. Provide information using the '4 Ps'.
2. Sound the mass rescue alarm—three blasts of the alarm or siren.
3. Your SLS communication centre should be notified immediately with a request for assistance.
4. All available lifesavers and support personnel with spare rescue equipment should report to the patrol team leader and follow instructions.
5. Fast-moving and manually operated equipment, such as boards, tubes with fins and powercraft resources should be sent to help victims in difficulty.
6. Other team members should control crowds on the beach and prepare an area where first aid or resuscitation can be performed.
7. Competent members of the public may help. For example, board riders may paddle out to support victims awaiting rescue.

Multiple victims with a rescue tube

1. Quickly assess the victims as you approach them.
2. Adopt a defensive position.
3. Reassure the victims and explain how you will proceed.
4. Secure the most vulnerable victim with a rescue tube.
5. Assist other victims to lock their arms inside the tube.
6. Signal 'assistance required'.
7. Monitor and reassure the victims.

Multiple victims with a rescue board

Rescue boards have a large buoyancy factor and are very good for supporting victims in a mass rescue incident. You should:

- quickly assess the victims
- manoeuvre the rescue board to the most vulnerable victim
- roll them onto the board if they are or become unconscious and encourage all other conscious victims to swim to the board
- instruct the victims to remain in the water and grasp the board straps
- encourage victims to adopt the buddy procedure and alert you to any issue
- signal 'assistance required'
- monitor and reassure the victims.

Note: If you are in the break zone with multiple victims, encourage all victims to hold on to the seaward side of the board as tightly as possible and allow the waves to wash you back to shore. You may have to secure the most vulnerable victim.

Using other flotation resources

Providing buoyancy to a distressed victim is the key to preventing panic and any irrational actions that may endanger you.

If you do not have access to a rescue tube or rescue board, always try to offer the victim something that floats, e.g., life jacket, a life buoy, a surfboard, stand-up paddle board, kayak, bodyboard. Even the lid of an esky or a ball will help.

Providing flotation to a distressed, struggling victim interrupts the drowning process. Victims rarely drown if provided with flotation. This may remove the urgency of immediate rescue and allow you more time to plan and effect the rescue.

Victim handling techniques

The transport and movement of an injured or incapacitated victim requires skill and care. The coastal and aquatic environment presents some unique challenges. Inshore areas can be treacherous, and beaches can be difficult places for vehicles and manual handling techniques.

Where urgency is not required, there is usually time to develop a team approach and to select a method of movement that is appropriate for your safety and that of the victim. Use of bystanders should be considered when trained lifesavers or first responders are not available.

Before moving a victim, you should consider:

- equipment available
- location—how far you must move them and over what terrain
- safe manual handling techniques (See Manual handling)
- the victim's injury and condition
- urgency.

Your safety is most important when lifting or moving any rescue victim. Seek assistance from other lifesavers or bystanders if you do not have the strength or body size to manoeuvre a victim safely. Remember to follow the steps on 'how to lift' outlined in the *Safety and Wellbeing* module of this manual as well as those relating to victim handling below.

When lifting or lowering a victim as a team, everyone should move at the same time on an agreed count, e.g., a team leader counts 'three, two, one, lift' or 'three, two, one, lower'.

Two-person carries and drags

There are several types of two-person carries. The type to use depends on the condition and location of the victim. Always communicate what to expect and gain consent from conscious victims.

Two-person carry ('trunk and legs')




This carry should be used when an exhausted or unconscious victim requires:

- removal from the shallows or the water's edge
- removal from danger on the beach or other land location.

Lifesaver 1:

1. Gain consent from the victim to move them if they are conscious.
2. Slide both arms under both of the victim's armpits from behind them.
3. Support the victim against your chest.

Lifesaver 2:

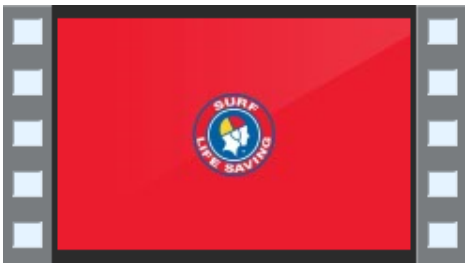
4. Lift the victim's legs under the knees and thighs, using your legs and not your back to lift.
5. Carry both victim's legs to one side (usually on your hip). Make sure you support the victim at your elbow line and not with your wrists.

Both lifesavers:

6. Carry the victim to a safe location while walking at a similar pace. Coordinate any turn so that Lifesaver 2 is facing in the direction of travel.
7. Lower the victim at the same time to a supported sitting position (if conscious) or on their back (if unconscious) for victim assessment. Keep your back straight and vertical while lowering the victim.
8. Assess the victim's condition and treat as required (See *Primary assessment—DRSABCD*).

Note: When performing a two-person carry, it is best practice to use one hand to maintain a pistol grip on the victim's jawline. However, for heavier victims this may be a manual handling risk—you should maintain your own safety first.

IRB variation of two-person carry



Video - IRB variation of two-person carry

Both lifesavers:

1. Wait at the water's edge to steady the IRB against any oncoming waves and receive the victim.

IRB crew:

2. The IRB driver and IRB crewperson should lift the victim onto the pontoon.

Lifesaver 1:

3. Slide both arms under both of the victim's armpits and lift the victim off the pontoon. Make sure you support the victim at your elbow line and not with your wrists.

Lifesaver 2:

4. Immediately lift the victim's legs under the knees and thighs, carrying both legs to one side (usually on your hip).

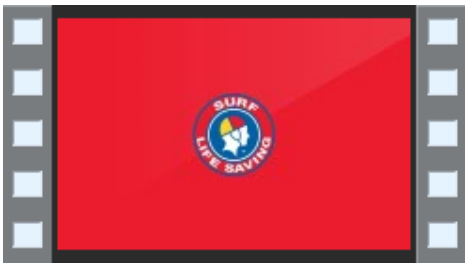
Both lifesavers:

1. Carry the victim away from the IRB to a safe location while walking at a similar pace. Coordinate any turn so that Lifesaver 2 is facing in the direction of travel.
2. Lower the victim at the same time to a supported sitting position (if conscious) or on their back (if unconscious) for victim assessment. Keep your back straight and vertical while lowering the victim.
3. Assess the victim's condition and treat as required (See *Primary assessment—DRSABCD*).

Note:

- Sudden movement of an IRB from wave action is a major hazard. You should remain vigilant and follow the instructions of the IRB driver and crewperson.
- If the IRB is likely to be affected by the shore break, and there are enough lifesavers and bystanders present, the IRB driver may request that the IRB is dragged further up the beach to a safe position. Ideally, the IRB crewperson will remain in the IRB with the victim held securely.

RWC variation of two-person carry



Video - RWC variation of two-person carry

Both lifesavers:

1. Wait at the water's edge to receive the victim.
2. Position yourself for the RWC to beach itself safely within the designated powercraft area.
3. Move safely towards the seaward side of the sled after the RWC has beached.

Lifesaver 1:

4. Slide both arms under both of the victim's armpits and roll the victim off the sled. Make sure you support the victim at your elbow line and not with your wrists.

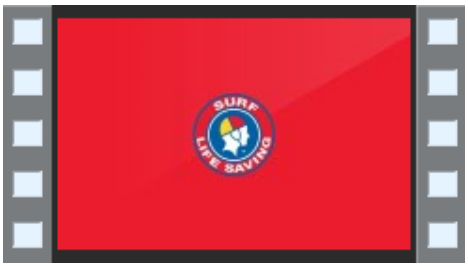
Lifesaver 2:

5. Immediately lift the victim's legs under the knees and thighs, carrying both legs to one side (usually on your hip).

Both lifesavers:

6. Carry the victim away from the RWC to a safe location while walking at a similar pace. Coordinate any turn so that Lifesaver 2 is facing in the direction of travel.
7. Lower the victim at the same time to a supported sitting position (if conscious) or on their back (if unconscious) for victim assessment. Keep your back straight and vertical while lowering the victim.
8. Assess the victim's condition and treat as required (See *Primary assessment—DRSABCD*).

Two-handed seat carry



Video – Two-person seat carry

This carry is used for a conscious victim who has provided their consent to be moved to safety.

Both lifesavers

1. Stand facing each other, on opposite sides of the victim.
2. Bend their knees and place one arm each around the victim's waist.
3. Place free arms under the victim's thighs and grasp the other lifesaver's forearm (close to the elbow if possible).
4. Advise the victim to place their arms around both lifesavers' shoulders.
5. Stand up straight at the same time, thus creating a chair.
6. Move the victim to a safe area while walking at a similar pace.




Two-person drag

This drag may be used for the urgent removal of a victim from the water. It is a useful technique for a victim stung by dangerous marine stingers, particularly if tentacles may still be present. It may also be used if a victim is too heavy for the lifesavers to lift.

Both lifesavers

1. Gain the victim's consent to drag them.
2. Check that the victim does not have an arm or shoulder injury and put on PPE if necessary.
3. Hold the victim by the wrist and the inside of the upper arm above the elbow.
4. Drag the victim to a safe area while walking at a similar pace.
5. Lower the victim at the same time to a supported sitting position (if conscious) or on their back (if unconscious) for victim assessment. Keep your back straight and vertical while lowering the victim.
6. Assess the victim's condition and treat as required (See *Primary assessment—DRSABCD*).

Note:

- The severe pain of a box jellyfish sting may cause sudden physical movements, even convulsions. Treatment of marine envenomation is covered in your first aid training.

Post-rescue operations

Post-operational procedures need to be completed as per your local SOPs. This includes providing further care to the victim and completing appropriate reports, attending team debriefing sessions as required and returning to a 'rescue ready' status.

Team debriefing and reporting

Following a rescue, it is important that you and your team members start mental health conversations and review your patrol team's rescue response.

Your patrol captain will apply the principles of psychological first aid, help you fill out the appropriate reports, and remind you of your mental health training (See *Mental health*).

You should also expect to participate in an operational debrief led by a duty officer following any critical incident on patrol. Refer to the *Safety and Wellbeing* module of this manual for more information about critical incidents on patrol and operational debriefs.

Note: Be aware of the signs and symptoms of critical incident stress, how to manage critical incident stress and your local SOPs for accessing mental health support services. You can also visit a local mental health professional at any time if you are feeling depressed, stressed or anxious.

Equipment cleaning and maintenance

Patrol equipment used in rescues must be restored to maintain rescue readiness. Make sure all equipment used in rescue operations is recovered, cleaned and maintained as per manufacturer instructions and to organisation standards. For example, ensure that you are following your surf lifesaving club's SOPs safety and hygiene precautions when cleaning. Refer to any chemical's Safety Data Sheets (SDS) or warning instructions and advise the appropriate club personnel when any chemicals expire or need replacing.

Any broken rescue equipment will require:

- an identification tag, or other similar identifier, attached to ensure it is not accidentally used on patrol
- removal from usage until repaired or replaced
- your surf lifesaving club's gear steward to be notified
- you to follow your surf lifesaving club or service's maintenance and hazard reporting processes for equipment requiring repair or replacement.

References

[1] National Coastal Safety Report 2018, page 36. https://issuu.com/surflifesavingaustralia/docs/ncsr-2018 OR https://sls.com.au/publications/

[2] National Coastal Safety Report 2018, page 20. https://issuu.com/surflifesavingaustralia/docs/ncsr-2018 OR https://sls.com.au/publications/

[3] Abraldes JA, Soares S, Lima AB, Fernandes RJ and Vilas-Boas JP (2007). 'The effect of fin use on the speed of lifesaving rescues'. International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education. 1, 329–340.