

# WHS RISK ASSESSMENT SURFING AND BODYBOARDING

Workplace Health and Safety  
SA GOVERNMENT

## WHS General Risk Assessment template

Site name and ID No	Port Noarlunga Aquatic Centre			
Title, description and location of activity	<p><b>Activity Description</b>            Surfing/body boarding instruction is conducted at the beach at Southport            Students receive instruction commensurate with program length and student age/maturity with an emphasis on water safety. Instruction includes the following topics.            Relating to safety: Safe surf site selection; entry and exit points; consideration of weather/wind and wave conditions and height; presence of rips and undertows, prevalence of marine hazards e.g. Sharks, sting rays, jelly fish.            Personal equipment: Wet suits, boards - different construction material, shape and length, role of leg-rope/wrist leash, correct board selection based upon height, weight, and experience            Skills: carrying the board, safe entry and exit, negotiating the shore break, paddling skills, wave selection, catching a wave and transition from prone to standing, riding the wave and safe dismounting, leg rope release drill.</p> <p><b>General Safety consideration</b>            Instructors will always have rescue boards available.            Departmental sunsmart policy is clearly explained.            Known hazards such as rips, undertows and shallow sandbars will be identified to all participants.            Students will generally be required to wear wetsuits for warmth, buoyancy, and protection. (Rashie vests and board shorts may be worn when conditions are appropriate).            A knowledge and understanding by instructional staff of local water conditions (such as tidal variations) and climatic conditions (such as strong offshore winds). A knowledge and awareness by instructional staff of additional local hazards such as general community use/public surfers, the potential for marine creature hazards and under water structures such as reefs and sandbars.            All instructional staff and students will be aware of the centre's emergency procedure and protocols.            All student participants will have completed a detailed medical form to be considered and checked by instructors prior to the commencement of any activity. All student participants with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma) will always carry or have available their medication (carried in a water-proof container).            All centres will always have available a well-equipped first aid kit. Instructors and participating students must be clearly and easily identifiable. As this activity is conducted some distance from the PNA base an effective method of communication should be carried by instructors e.g. 2-way radio or mobile phone.</p>			
Risk Assessment done by:	Name	Position	Date of Assessment	Review Due (3 years)
	Andrew Hancock	Instructor in Charge	November 2020	November 2023
	Elizabeth Ellinger	Senior Instructor		

<b>Hazard identification</b> (What is the issue of concern?)	<b>Risk Controls</b> (What are you doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?)	<b>Risk</b> (With all controls in place)
1. Student suffers from a medical condition, (pre-existing e.g. Asthma attack or developed e.g. Nausea, sea sickness) whilst conducting an activity on the water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No student is permitted to be involved in an activity unless a medical form has been completed and sighted by centre staff.</li> <li>• All instructional staff aware of the location of completed medical forms for their group/school.</li> <li>• Medication for pre-existing conditions is carried with/by the student in a water-proof container.</li> <li>• Instructional staff carry (or have ready access to) a suitably equipped first aid kit, including spare asthma inhaler.</li> <li>• Students with known medical conditions are more closely monitored by both Aquatics Centre staff and supervising school staff. Students diagnosed with Epilepsy must have 1:1 supervision.</li> <li>• Appropriate first aid is sought as a matter of priority once a medical emergency has been identified. Rescue craft used if a rapid transfer is required.</li> <li>• Where an activity is conducted some distance from the main centre, 2-way radio/mobile telephone contact will be maintained with the aquatics centre/I/C or nominee).</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
2 Accident/injury on walk to and from surfing/bodyboarding beach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group kept together and under control.</li> <li>• Students no more than 10 metres from their instructor.</li> <li>• Instructor to supervise no more than two groups walking to and from base.</li> <li>• Injuries sustained, especially to feet, such as splinters and minor cuts, are treated promptly to reduce the likelihood of infection.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
3 Snake bite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any snake sighting is reported and noted on the white board.</li> <li>• Instructors keep sharp look out.</li> <li>• First aid kit and phone available.</li> <li>• If bite suspected ambulance will be called and instructors will apply first aid principles.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
4. Damage to equipment through incorrect use. Poor/inappropriate student behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct use of all equipment is demonstrated and reinforced through supervision. Correct fit of all personal equipment (e.g. wetsuits) to avoid “over stretching” or damage.</li> <li>• Student behaviour expectations and consequences are clearly established prior to the commencement of the activity and reinforced throughout instruction. Poor or unsafe student behaviour – student returned to shore for a period as determined by the instructor. Referral to school supervising teacher if required for further discipline.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>

<b>Hazard identification</b> (What is the issue of concern?)	<b>Risk Controls</b> (What are you doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?)	<b>Risk</b> (With all controls in place)
5. Injury due to slip or fall at beach entry/exit point to the water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry/exit points carefully considered with safe alternative options identified.</li> <li>• Entry/exit from rocks identified as potentially extremely dangerous and not attempted.</li> <li>• Instructor to enter first and clearly demonstrate safe entry technique/route.</li> <li>• Leg and wrist ropes/leashes fitted and removed at the water's edge to reduce the chance of entanglement leading to falls. Leg rope controlled/held whilst walking.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
6. Injury sustained whilst negotiating the shore break.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caution applied when extensive shore break is present. An alternative site should be selected for beginners and intermediate surfers.</li> <li>• All students and instructors to observe the shore break and establish the safest, cleanest path out through to clean water. This may be a short distance to one side of the surf area.</li> <li>• Students taught and practice the correct technique to ride over or dive under approaching waves.</li> <li>• Students to move through the shore break as quickly as possible into clean water</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
7. Student swallows water causing panic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructors closely monitored to identify students "in difficulty".</li> <li>• Student in distress assisted from the water, calmed, and reassured and allow to recover on shore.</li> <li>• Student closely monitored for signs of difficulty breathing or evidence that water may have entered the lungs. If suspected urgent medical support required.</li> <li>• If fully recovered and no suspicion of water entering the lungs, student encouraged to return to activity under close supervision to overcome panic.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
8. Student suffers sunburn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students briefed at the commencement of the session re. being sunsmart.</li> <li>• Sunscreen be made available the school, with regular breaks provided to reapply.</li> <li>• Students to wear hats (preferably broad brimmed) and either a wetsuit or shirt (preferably long sleeved) and shorts.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
9. Hypothermia/Hyperthermia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional staff to be aware of weather forecast for the day and plan accordingly.</li> <li>• Students to dress appropriate to the conditions and season. Cold Conditions: Wetsuits preferable, regular breaks to warm up. Hot conditions: students to wear long sleeved shirts, hats and sunscreen applied at regular intervals. Regular hydration breaks.</li> <li>• Condition of all students be closely monitored, and early/first signs of hypo/hyperthermia be recognised and promptly treated.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>

<b>Hazard identification</b> (What is the issue of concern?)	<b>Risk Controls</b> (What are you doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?)	<b>Risk</b> (With all controls in place)
10. Student suffers from dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are encouraged to drink water before starting session especially on hot days.</li> <li>Drinking water carried to lesson area if possible.</li> </ul>	Medium
11. Student suffers or is affected by exhaustion/fatigue/soft tissue injury e.g. Muscle strain or cramp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All instructional staff to continuously monitor students and be alert for students showing signs of fatigue, minor injury, or cramp.</li> <li>Instructors create frequent rest/recovery breaks commensurate with the age/skill level of the group.</li> <li>Students instructed as to the most appropriate method of signalling for assistance if required.</li> <li>A rescue board is positioned on the beach (or with instructor on the water) to enable instructors to assist a student in difficulty. Affected student to be promptly returned to shore for rest/recovery and/or further treatment.</li> </ul>	Medium
12. Student suffers neck/back injury because of being "dumped" by a breaking wave.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students receive instruction on wave selection identifying dumping and/or dangerous waves and how best/safest to exit (bail out) from a dumping wave. Students ride breaking "white water" waves to reduce chances of nosedives. "White is right...Green is mean".</li> <li>If conditions are such that dumping waves are frequent, then an alternative site should be considered.</li> <li>Instructors closely monitor students and respond quickly to a student who appears in any difficulty following being "dumped". Appropriate care of neck/back if any spinal damage suspected with assistance called for promptly.</li> <li>Encourage/ensure students ride white waves to reduce chance of nose dives. WHITE IT RIGHT, GREEN IS MEAN</li> </ul>	Medium
13. Head/neck injury due to fall or dismount (bail out) from board in shallow water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shallow water and/or sand banks/bars, reefs/rocks are clearly identified prior to students entering the water.</li> <li>Instructors to monitor water depth as tidal variation occurs.</li> <li>Students instructed as to the safest method of dismounting (bailing out) from the board. Jump/step off/fall flat. Instructors to explain demonstrate crash position. Students not to dive from the board, even in deep water.</li> </ul>	Medium
14. Student caught in a rip or unable to get back to shore.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beach site assessed by staff prior to students entering the water.</li> <li>Students briefed prior to entering the water as to how to identify a rip and the safest response to this situation. (Remain calm and paddle/swim parallel to the shore until out of the rip and then paddle in).</li> <li>On water instructor to assist any surfer that gets into difficulty.</li> </ul>	Medium

<b>Hazard identification</b> (What is the issue of concern?)	<b>Risk Controls</b> (What are you doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?)	<b>Risk</b> (With all controls in place)
15. Student suffers rash from board contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students required to wear wet suits or rashie and board shorts</li> </ul>	Medium
16. Student becomes separated from their board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leg ropes and wrist leashes always used, and students instructed as to their correct use/fit.</li> <li>Students receive instruction on the most appropriate method to signal for assistance if they become separated from their board and are unable to retrieve it.</li> <li>If skill level and confidence of the group is appropriate students receive instruction and practice assisting/rescuing a fellow surfer and bringing them to shore i.e. 2 students prone on 1 board</li> <li>A rescue board is positioned on the beach (or with instructor in the water) to enable instructors to affect a rescue/assist a student into shore to retrieve their board if they are unable to swim in.</li> </ul>	Medium
17. Injury due to impact from another surfer's board or own board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students instructed as to wave selection and the protocol of who has "right of way" or "ownership" of the wave.</li> <li>Instructors to ensure students maintain an appropriate safe distance between surfers and discourage multiple surfers on the one wave.</li> <li>Students instructed as to the safest method of dismounting, that is to avoid falling in-front of their board and to step/jump off or fall flat.</li> <li>Leg ropes and wrist leashes should be used to avoid loose/lost boards from becoming a hazard</li> <li>Appropriate first aid kit is easily accessible to treat minor injuries.</li> </ul>	Medium
18. Students unable to hear instructions/commands due to wind direction, sound of the surf or distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students briefed in the initial safety address regarding appropriate signalling method prior to entering the water. This will include the use of a whistle, or arm signals/visual commands. An emergency evacuation procedure and signal will also be established at the safety address.</li> <li>Students encouraged to look to the instructor after each wave to receive feedback relating to either performance or safety.</li> <li>When working with a 2-instructor group - 1 instructor should be out in the water with an appropriate board to facilitate a rescue and assist with instruction and on-water communication. The second instructor should be on the beach or in the water as appropriate.</li> </ul>	Medium

<b>Hazard identification</b> (What is the issue of concern?)	<b>Risk Controls</b> (What are you doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?)	<b>Risk (With all controls in place)</b>
19. Student suffers injury from member of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency procedures known by instructors to keep everyone safe</li> <li>• Jet skis, surf skis – if general if the public are engaged in these activities this site should not be used.</li> <li>• Public surfers. Wherever possible student groups should be kept separate from public surfers. If possible, negotiate politely with public surfers to ensure area is exclusive to students. If this is not possible, consider alternative site.</li> <li>• If using public/community change rooms or toilets primary age students using the toilet must be accompanied by a teacher/instructor or with a “buddy” for secondary aged students.</li> <li>• Staff to remain vigilant for people loitering, particularly around public/community change rooms/toilets, and if appropriate contact police or Centre I/C for assistance.</li> <li>• Photographs of students only taken if permission from parents obtained.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
20. Thunderstorm/lightening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructors to monitor weather forecasts for thunderstorm/lightning and remain vigilant for rapidly deteriorating weather/approaching storms.</li> <li>• If thunder becomes easily audible, students to be removed from the water and everyone to proceed to dry ground.</li> <li>• If anyone’s hair stands on end or buzzing heard from nearby rocks and fences, everyone to move to a new position immediately.</li> <li>• If in the open away from shelter, everyone to crouch down, preferably in a hollow with feet together, and remove any metal objects from the head and body. Individuals should not lie down but avoid being the highest object in the vicinity.</li> <li>• Telephone use should be avoided where possible because the telephone system can become highly charged. If an emergency call is necessary, it must be brief.</li> <li>• Storms generally pass within ten minutes. If thunder is no longer easily audible, instructors will check the sky in the direction that the storm approached from noting that there could be a second front.) If sky clear students may return to their activity.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
21. Large waves; rising swell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beach/surf site assessed by staff both prior to the session and continuously monitored during the session, considering student experience and ability to handle wave height and intensity. Less confident/ experienced individuals may need to be removed from the surf as conditions build.</li> <li>• As wave height and risk factors increase additional instructors should be used and appropriate safety strategies implemented., such as stricter/tighter boundaries, more frequent rest breaks on shore and increased frequency of signals (communication) between instructors and students.</li> <li>• If wave height exceeds student’s abilities/confidence, then the activity should be moved to a safer location or stopped.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>

<b>Hazard identification</b> (What is the issue of concern?)	<b>Risk Controls</b> (What are you doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?)	<b>Risk</b> (With all controls in place)
22 Loss of group control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class ratio kept within guidelines.</li> <li>• Students provided with immediate feedback, support and encouragement.</li> <li>• Instructor attempt to ensure all group members are experiencing some success and enjoyment.</li> </ul>	Medium
23. Water contamination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice is sought from appropriate authorities re. safety. E.g. SA Water, Onkaparinga council.</li> </ul>	Medium
24 Student goes missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructors conduct regular checks and head counts.</li> <li>• Students likely to disappear have been identified by the school and extra support put in place.</li> </ul>	Medium
25. Rapid deterioration in weather conditions,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructor-In-Charge to monitor weather during the day and inform instructors if sessions need to be cancelled or seriously modified.</li> </ul>	Medium
26 Danger from marine creatures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Centres should have a carefully considered and documented shark sighting protocol that is known and reviewed by all instructional staff.</li> <li>• Instructors to remain vigilant for marine creature hazards and evacuate students from the sea at the first sign of danger. (If a possible shark sighting occurs it may well be appropriate to avoid using the word "shark" to prevent student panic unless a positive/confirmed sighting has been made and danger is extremely close. Dolphin sightings are common along our coast. Students should not re-enter the water until instructors have declared the beach to be safe. If a confirmed sighting of a large shark activity for the day will be cancelled.</li> <li>• All students and staff are aware of the Emergency evacuation signal (whistle/hand signals) and the procedure to exit the water (including assembly/meeting point) as quickly and safely as possible.</li> <li>• If jellyfish are present in large numbers students should be removed from the water. If small numbers, monitor students for signs of stings and treat accordingly. Wet suits should be mandatory for all forms of surfing to help reduce stings.</li> <li>• If a stingray is observed in the area (or immediately adjacent) students should be removed from the water until it has moved away.</li> </ul>	Medium
27. Theft of student/staff personal items whilst stand up paddling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students encouraged to leave valuable items at home or back at the aquatics centre.</li> <li>• Items such as towels, shoes, sunglasses should be left in a central location on the beach where onshore instructors can monitor them.</li> </ul>	Medium



<b>Hazard identification</b> (What is the issue of concern?)	<b>Risk Controls</b> (What are you doing to eliminate or reduce the risk?)	<b>Risk</b> (With all controls in place)
28. Instructor fatigue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent rotation of instructors with roles varied. E.g. 1 instructor to delivery safety briefing, 1 on the water coaching with roles reversed for each session.</li> <li>• Instructors encouraged to develop an effective method of hand signals to communicate with students from the beach to avoid excessive use of their voice.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
29. Transmission of disease due to shared use of wetsuits. E.g. Skin infections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students allocated a wetsuit to use for the session/day.</li> <li>• All aquatics centres have a cleaning procedure that is rigorously followed (with supervision from instructors to ensure compliance).</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
30 Problems arising from intoxication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure department's no alcohol and drug policy is enforced.</li> <li>• Exclude anyone under the influence of alcohol or drugs.</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>
31. Transmission of COVID-19 through use of surfing or body boarding equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cleaning process for boards is rigorously followed before re-use of equipment by another student</li> <li>• Social distancing between instructors and students wherever possible</li> <li>• Hand sanitiser used by instructors before and after providing assistance wherever possible</li> <li>• Strict instruction on non-sharing of equipment.</li> <li>• Instructors to ensure equipment is suitable prior to starting the session.</li> <li>• After use each student to wash their boards with warm soapy. Procedure to be supervised by the instructor.</li> </ul>	<b>High</b>

## Risk management – What you need to do!

**Step 1:** Have a look at [WHS safety management](#) intranet and see if there are any activity hazards that are not already covered.

**Step 2:** Identify controls for your remaining hazards. Use the hierarchy of control chart to help select controls that provide the highest level of protection to employees.



**Step 3:** Assess the level of risk for the remaining hazards with all controls in place.

WHS Risk Assessment Matrix		Consequences				
		First aid, Personal support or counselling.	Medical or dental treatment.	Hospital emergency department (Out-patient)	Admitted to Hospital (In-patient)	Death, permanent disabling injury
Likelihood	<b>Certain:</b> to occur at some stage	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	<b>Likely:</b> to occur	Low	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	<b>Possible:</b> could reasonably occur	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
	<b>Unlikely:</b> to occur	Low	Low	Medium	High	Extreme
	<b>Rare:</b> not expected to occur	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High

**Step 4:** Check the assessed risk level and undertake the associated action.

<b>Extreme</b>	<b>Do not undertake the activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact the Work Health and Safety team on <a href="mailto:Education.WHS@sa.gov.au">Education.WHS@sa.gov.au</a> or on 8226 1440 for guidance on risk reduction</li> <li>Consult with workgroup Health and Safety Representative where available</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<b>Reduce the risk as far as reasonably practicable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escalate to site leader and/or local safety/ management committee for review</li> <li>Consult with workgroup Health and Safety Representative and affected parties</li> <li>Review department <a href="#">WHS safety management</a> intranet for control requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Medium</b>	<b>Activity may be undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider ways to further reduce the risk and review the department <a href="#">WHS safety management</a> intranet</li> <li>Consult with workgroup Health and Safety Representative or affected parties</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<b>Activity may be undertaken safely</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the activity and controls to ensure the risk remains low</li> </ul>