



Beachsafe

88 coastal drowning deaths in 2007-08

88 people died by drowning around Australia's coastline in 2007-08, according to a study released by Surf Life Saving Australia to mark the first day of summer. The findings show that males continue to be the highest risk group and for the first time in recent years, the 20 to 29 years age bracket had the highest representation of drowning deaths at 24%. In the 2006-07 season, most coastal drowning deaths occurred in the 30 to 39 age bracket.

The National Coastal Safety Report also found that:

- Males continue to dominate the coastal drowning death figure, representing 78 of 88 drowning fatalities (89%).
- 18 drowning deaths (20%) have been confirmed to have either a foreign nationality or birthplace, up from 11 (or 14%) in the previous season.
- 33 coastal drowning deaths occurred in New South Wales, 18 in Victoria, 11 in South Australia, 10 in Western Australia with eight in both Queensland and Tasmania. The Northern Territory had no coastal drowning deaths.
- 36 (41%) coastal drowning deaths occurred less than 1km from a lifesaving service and just over 30 (34%) occurred more than 5km from a lifesaving service.
- 18 coastal drowning deaths occurred during March, showing an irregular late season peak.
- In the 2007-08 season the most fatal time of the day was between midday and 1pm with nine (10%) coastal drowning deaths, but 22 (25%) occurred between 6pm and 8am.
- Saturday was the deadliest day of the week with 22 (25%) drowning deaths. 55 (63%) drowning deaths occurred during the week.
- During the period December to March, 53 coastal drowning deaths occurred. This equates to an average of one every two to three days.
- Around the coastline, 38 (43%) of all those who died by drowning were swimming or wading at the time.
- 16 (18%) coastal drowning deaths involved a rock or cliff related activity.



More information For a full copy of the 2008 National Coastal Safety Report, go to www.slsa.com.au (see 'about us/news' or call Surf Life Saving Australia +61 (0)2 9300 4000.

Welcome to Issue 15

Welcome to BeachSafe, the newsletter designed to communicate and inform valued stakeholders of Surf Life Saving about latest initiatives and information relating to beach and water safety in Australia.

WHO WE ARE:

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) is Australia's major water safety and rescue authority, and is one of the largest volunteer organisations in Australia. Our mission is to provide safer beaches in Australia.

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

Lifesaving and aquatic safety services – through volunteer surf lifesavers in 305 Surf Life Saving Clubs, and professional support operations through the Australian Lifeguard Service, Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopters, Jet Rescue Boats, Rescue Water Craft and SurfCom Communication Centres.

WHY WE EXIST:

Australia's coastline stretches more than 35,000 kilometres and there are some 11,000 beaches around the coast. There are about 60 million visitations to Australia's beaches each year. Despite significant advancements in technology, techniques and knowledge, people still drown on our beaches. Surf Life Saving exists to save lives, develop practices in education, prevention and rescue, and ultimately to meet the target of 'zero preventable drownings' as we set the benchmark for aquatic safety both in Australia and around the world. BeachSafe is distributed four times per year – summer, autumn, winter and spring to keep you informed and updated on the latest issues relating to beach safety and Surf Life Saving services.

If you missed the last issue of BeachSafe (Winter 2008), email info@slsa.asn.au to obtain a copy.

Reducing coastal drowning deaths

The Australian Water Safety Strategy 2008-11 sets the foundation to achieve a 50% reduction in drowning deaths by 2020. The strategy contains four priority areas:

- 1. Adopting a 'life stages' approach** – targeting children under five; men and alcohol; and older people.
- 2. Addressing 'high risk' locations** – targeting rural and remote locations; surf beaches; and home pools.
- 3. Meeting key drowning challenges** – targeting high risk recreational activities; high risk populations; and extreme weather and the impact of climate change.

4. Strengthening drowning prevention pillars – targeting safe venues; lifesaving people; legislation and policy; and collaboration and research.

To achieve these goals, SLSA will draw on its own strategic plan 'Saving Lives in the Water 2007-11'. Specific tactics include:

- 1. Facilitating 'smart' lifesaving services and systems:**
 - a. Developing and maintaining national and state/territory total lifesaving plans.
 - b. Facilitating effective coordination and delivery systems.

2. Extending lifesaving services:

- a. Identifying and prioritising areas and times requiring improved and/or extra lifesaving services.
- b. Improving and/or increasing services to meet needs.

3. Preventing deaths and injuries via proactive education:

- a. Facilitating ongoing beach safety education to the community.
- b. Identifying, developing and delivering special targeted education programs to 'high risk' groups.

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Ms Desley Boyle, Queensland Minister for Tourism, Regional Development & Industry, Mr Ron Rankin AM, SLSA President, Mr Chris Lane, founder of Coastalwatch, and Ms Christine Smith MP, Member for Burleigh. Image: Norm Farmer

Surf Life Saving partners CoastalCOMS

Australia's surf lifesavers and lifeguards will remain at the cutting edge of coastal safety surveillance, thanks to a \$1M grant from the Queensland Government to a Burleigh firm CoastalCOMS to develop a high-tech safety rating for beaches. The project aims to develop a technology to create a 'live real time assessment tool' that will provide a dynamic beach risk index for beaches around Australia. Norm Farmer, SLSA's Manager of Coastal Safety Services said "the new

technology to be developed will use a network of beach safety cameras in Queensland to provide surf lifesavers and lifeguards with 'real time' and predictive coastal information, including wave height, surf quality and dynamics, wind and weather, beach state, beach usage and shoreline position." Video images will be transmitted back to the data storage facility of CoastalCOMS, resulting in a comprehensive database of beach conditions in real time.

"This data will then be analysed using algorithms that will make it possible to create a live risk rating that can be provided to surf lifesavers through a web portal," Farmer said. CoastalCOMS is partnering with Coastalwatch, Griffith University, Surf Life Saving Queensland and Surf Life Saving Australia to develop the technology. SLSA hopes to eventually have these technologies in use at all its lifesaving service sites around Australia.

Partnership with renowned coastal scientist spans more than 20 years

Coastal safety across Australia has benefited from a long-standing relationship between Surf Life Saving and Professor Andy Short of the University of Sydney.

Starting in 1986-87 with the NSW Beach Safety Program, which involved a comprehensive assessment of every beach in that state, Professor Short has now visited every beach in the country, as part of the Australian Beach Safety and Management Program.

He is continuing this long-standing relationship as a coastal advisor to SLSA and is also working on the CoastalCOMS project team.

Expands coastal surveillance network in Queensland

Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) is in the process of expanding its coastal camera network throughout Queensland with new installations planned for the following locations:

- Four Mile Beach, Port Douglas
- Palm Cove, Cairns
- Horseshoe Bay, Magnetic Island, Townsville
- The Strand, Townsville
- Double Island Point, North of Noosa
- Rainbow Beach, North of Noosa
- Cylinder Beach, North Stradbroke Island
- Frenchman's Bay, North Stradbroke Island
- Point Lookout, North Stradbroke Island.

In addition, SLSQ will also implement new CoastalCOMS systems into their new SurfCOM centres which will come online this season in Cairns and Townsville to provide an aid to its lifesaving service operators in these areas.

Other planned camera installations around Australia

- **South Australia** – the first camera for SA is planned for Glenelg with installation expected shortly.
- **Tasmania** – Coastview, the Tasmanian coastal camera group are now aligned with Coastalwatch. The Clifton Beach camera is being relocated to the Clifton Beach SLSC patrol tower. Another camera will be installed at West Beach Burnie.
- **Northern Territory** – the first cameras are most likely to be installed at Mindil Beach in Darwin and at Nhulunbuy at the Gove Peninsula SLSC, over the coming months.

New technologies assisting surf lifesavers

Surf Life Saving has access to a range of CoastalCOMS modules relating to coastal conditions. Each module displays elements derived directly from video, raw data from climatic and other physical processes, and processed information (including predictive information) derived from this raw data. The SLSA SurfCOMS centres across Australia may select any or all modules depending on the characteristics of their location and needs. The CoastalCOMS modules are: Vision, Wave Height, Beach Usage, Boat Usage, Shoreline Position, Beach State, Beach Risk, and Surf Quality. The Beach State, Beach Risk and Surf Quality modules are still under development. Two important modules for lifesaving services are 'beach usage' and the 'beach risk':

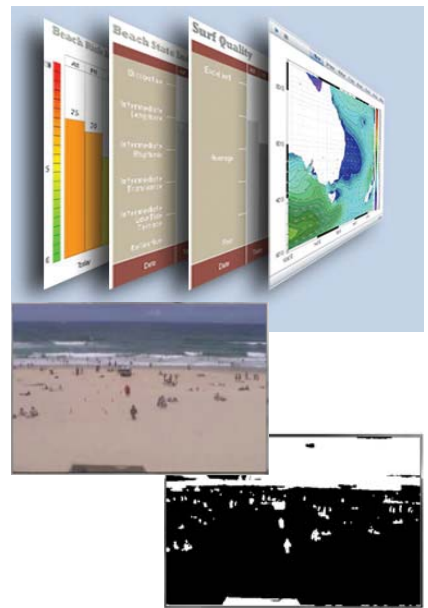
- **Beach usage:** Monitoring beach usage is important for providing data to help predict future beach needs and to better plan lifesaving service resource requirements. CoastalCOMS can measure the extent of beach usage by counting how many people are on the beach at any one time. The following image shows an example of data captured from a CoastalCOMS camera. This automatic data collection will reduce the requirement for the duty surf lifesavers and lifeguards who currently manually record the beach usage.

Information obtained about how people are using the beach can provide data to coastal councils and coastal management authorities to help future beach planning, and can be useful for environmental impact monitoring, surf lifesaving organisations and tourism.

- **Beach risk index:** CoastalCOMS can use expert analysis of long-term video footage of beaches, in conjunction with forecast wave and weather data from other sources and CoastalCOMS modules, to generate a rating of beach risk. The integration of factors such as the beach state and potential variations in wave energy results in a short-term predictive capacity for risk assessment. This is of particular benefit to coastal organisations that need to effectively manage resources over large areas subject to variations in risk, and of extreme importance to all beach users. The following image depicts how the beach hazard rating can change over the course of a day and a number of days based on beach and water conditions.



More information Surf Life Saving Australia on (02) 9300 4000 www.slsa.com.au or CoastalCOMS on www.coastalcoms.com



Shown here are examples of CoastalCOMS modules relating to coastal conditions. Images courtesy Coastalwatch.

Australian Lifesaving Academy Queensland at Mt Isa Mines

The Australian Lifesaving Academy of Queensland (ALAQ) has taken surf lifesaving safety to another level by delivering first aid and CPR training to the mining industry and local community at the Rutherfords MIRATS training centre in Mt Isa. Surf Life Saving Queensland is one of the largest RTO (Registered Training Organisation) in Queensland and has many years of experience in training and assessment.

The Australian Lifesaving Academy of Queensland contracts two qualified trainers and assessors to travel to Mt Isa on a regular basis to deliver on site training to more than 700 people a month. Both trainers hold Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment along with qualifications in the fields they teach and have also undertaken mines induction to allow them to train on site at the mines as required.

The training courses currently conducted consist of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), CPR with low voltage rescue and applied first aid. Each course is renewed on a 12 month basis with electricians having to renew low voltage rescue techniques every six months. Each month more than 400 people are trained in CPR, another 60-80 in senior first aid and up to 200 electricians in low voltage rescue. Each session caters for up to 20 people. ALAQ trainers can also adapt course schedules so they suit the mine operation needs.

The flexibility of these trainers goes well beyond long and varied hours; they must also cater for a wide variety of participants and conduct training in many locations, including the actual mine sites or at the smelter. Recently one of the trainers found himself under a tree at Camooweal delivering first aid training to indigenous youth at a cattle industry ringers training course. The courses have also expanded to include first aid training for the Mt Isa TAFE at the Rutherford facility with both child and aged care workers enrolling in a weekend course.

New regional development funding program

SLSA also provided information to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government inquiry into a new regional development funding program. Key recommendations included:

- Regional development funding programs should be continued, in particular for community safety, health and wellbeing related projects.
- Regional development funding programs should be flexible to include a range of infrastructure needs such

as that required by surf lifesaving facilities.

- SLSA should be supported by a regional development funding program to enable a review of its lifesaving infrastructure across Australia.
- Regional development funding programs should be flexible and support innovation or variation from the norm such that coastal infrastructure meets the changing social and environmental needs of the community, for example changing surf life saving club infrastructure footprints.
- Regional development funding programs should support

infrastructure that addresses emerging community safety needs and opportunities, such as the emergency service capabilities of surf lifesaving organisations.

- Regional development funding program should be available for environmentally positive infrastructure projects such as those currently being showcased by a number of surf life saving clubs across Australia and fostered by SLSA, the benefits of which will be shared with other community organisations, in particular those who are situated in the coastal zone.

Victoria's remote lifesavers in contact with confidence

In Victoria at present there are some lifesaving services unable to communicate directly with the SurfCOMS centre due to absence of radio signal or a repeater station. The technology associated with the coastal camera installations is now allowing reliable communication to and from Victoria's remote lifesaving services. The new

voice over internet (VoIP) communication capability via the ADSL camera network will enable remote lifesaving services at Victorian beaches such as Warrnambool, Mallacoota, Woodside and Lakes Entrance to have reliable contact with the SurfCOMS centre at Life Saving Victoria Headquarters in Port Melbourne. A marine

communications grant from Marine Safety Victoria is enabling this upgrade of state-wide digital communications with VHF capability. The successful implementation of this technology will see additional remote services across Australia coming on-line and integrated into the vast surf lifesaving telecommunications network.

Impacts of climate change on coastal regions

SLSA recently provided information to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities. Key recommendations included:

Lifesaving infrastructure changes and enhancements will need to keep pace with population growth, trends and shifts, be cognisant of the changing impacts of climate change, remain consistent with community expectations, and provide ready access to beaches for lifesaving equipment, craft and vehicles.

Consideration will need to be given by coastal planners and managers for expansion of special lifesaving and support services such as lifesaving command and communication centres, helicopter search and rescue, special water craft launch and/or mooring facilities and the like.

Governments need to recognise the extensive network of SLSA surf life saving clubs, lifeguards and operations support services and the role they can play in not only

providing safety services, but in monitoring the changing conditions of Australia's beaches and coastline.

The Council of Australian Governments should recognise the extensive SLSA network and take appropriate steps, both organisationally and fiscally, to integrate the SLSA network into emergency services preparedness, planning, and response systems and activities.

The provision of funding to provide regularly updated data on, and visual surveillance of, each of Australia's 500 most attended beaches, including those with a lifesaving service, will not only enhance safety provision but will provide a visual history of changing coastal conditions.

SLSA should receive the support of all levels of government, industry and local corporate support to introduce positive environmental initiatives such as renewable energy, recycling, water consumption minimisation, 'green' club houses and marine and coastal care programs across Australia.



More information SLSA on (02) 9300 4000

Coastal Public Safety Guidelines win 2008 Australian Safer Communities Award

The Australian Coastal Public Safety Guidelines developed by SLSA were awarded the Project of National Significance prize by Attorney-General Rob McClelland MP at the national Awards presentation ceremony held at Parliament House on 11 November.

The Australian Safer Communities Awards cover all aspects of community safety in the context of emergency management and recognise best practice and innovation by organisations and individuals that help to build safer communities across Australia. As a Safer Communities Award winner,

SLSA was recognised throughout the emergency management sector for their outstanding achievement, innovation and professional standing.

The Australian Coastal Public Safety Guidelines have been designed by SLSA as a comprehensive and invaluable tool for those responsible for managing Australia's vast coastline. With the beach being the highest use area on a coast for public recreation, issues such as public access, pleasantness of place and safety have been ranked higher than general

coastal management. The trigger was the need for a single reference source for information dealing with coastal public safety. Developed over two years through research, examination of best practice operations, standards and regulations – this body of knowledge has been collated into the Guidelines. This collection of regional guidelines and information from organisations around the world will guide coast and beach managers and operators in providing a safe aquatic environment for all coastal users.



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Would you like to receive BeachSafe via email? Please contact your State Surf Life Saving office.

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Upcoming events of interest:

► 9-13 February 2009:

Extremes: Climate and Water in the Southern Hemisphere - 9th International Conference on Southern Hemisphere Meteorology and Oceanography (9ICSHMO) Melbourne

► 10-13 February 2009:

Australian Disasters Conference 2008: Surviving Future Risks, Canberra, Australia

► 23-24 February 2009:

National Drowning Prevention Symposium, Deauville Beach Resort, Miami Beach, Florida, USA

► 1-4 March 2009:

APCOA 2009 Conference and Exhibition – The Future Through Innovation, Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh, Sydney

► 2-5 March 2009:

2009 BIG Skills Conference, Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre Darling Harbour, Sydney

► 2-5 March 2009:

Coastal Geotools 2009, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, USA

► 16-18 March 2009:

Ozwater 09, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

► 23-26 March 2009:

Greenhouse 2009 – Climate Change and Resources, Burswood Convention Centre, Perth WA

► 30-31 March 2009:

Search and Rescue 2009, Ritz Carlton, Tyson's Corner, Washington DC USA Burswood Convention Centre, Perth WA