



## SLSNZ MEDIA GUIDELINES & TIPS FOR CLUBS

All organisations need media profile and none more so than charities like Surf Life Saving. It's important that we all maximise any media opportunities and convey consistent messaging.

Surf Life Saving Clubs have the ability to play a pivotal role in media relations and many will be contacted by media to comment on activity and incidents at their patrolled location.

The purpose of this document is to provide some guidelines and tips for dealing with media in order to ensure that all media opportunities are maximised and any risk to your club and SLSNZ is minimised wherever possible.

Media refers to all print, television, radio and online media (including bloggers).

### Process:

Surf Life Saving's standard practice for media is that any stories of national significance need to come through SLSNZ to appoint the appropriate spokesperson with specialist knowledge. We will then allocate one of our senior members of staff, depending on the nature of the story, to comment on behalf of the organisation or the Surf Life Saving movement as a whole. This approach is consistent across all four regions.

In any multi-agency operation, comment should be left to the lead agency ie Police. Any approved comment from Surf Life Saving should be restricted to the part played by lifeguards. Any detail about the incident itself and the patient(s) should be left to Police.

We have close working relationships with a number of related organisations such as Water Safety NZ, Coastguard and Police to name but a few. We keep each other informed about related media so there are no surprises and each of us is keeping to our specialist area of expertise. SLSNZ and clubs should only comment on surf lifesaving activities and leave any comment on other areas to the respective organisation.

Individual clubs are certainly encouraged to undertake media opportunities in relation to their own club, although SLSNZ does still appreciate being kept in the loop so we can offer any support if needed and also so we are aware what's being covered around the country.

### Guidelines for clubs:

- Comments should be limited to the activities of your club and patrol locations. All matters of national importance should be referred to the SLSNZ Media & Communications Manager or your Regional Manager who will deal with this accordingly.
- Ensure any comment you make in relation to your club and operational activities is appropriate to the position you hold. If you're approached by media on a topic where you're not the club's appointed spokesperson, advise the journalist that someone will get back to them as soon as possible and take their key details ie name, publication, nature of story and information required.
- Don't make assumptions or comments about what you think might be the case at other clubs or beaches. Always be mindful to emphasise the club aspect as a comment you may make in your local paper may be picked up by national media or reproduced in a digital space if it could be skewed to a national matter.
- Any comment should be from the perspective of your club and not attached to personal views/opinions.
- Be very clear and precise with your comments and don't give any opportunity to be misquoted. You can say a lot, but if your quote has the potential for media to take a 'grab' - sometimes they will choose to use selected words or sentences out of context which can skew the comment.
- Be aware that anything you post on your club's social media pages can be picked up, used and quoted by media across national and local media- so always be mindful of what you are writing.
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*In it for life*



- Active lifeguards should wear their full and current red and yellow lifeguard uniform for all photography/filming/interview requirements. Wearing old, faded or untidy uniform is not presenting a professional image and may not reflect current sponsorship arrangements. Alternatively, a club polo or tidy attire should be worn.
- Capturing patients' contact details is really important to maximise media and PR opportunities. Wherever possible, strive to collect this information on the incident report form at the conclusion of a rescue.
- You should remember that your comments will often be permanently available and able to be reproduced in other media.

#### **In a major incident:**

- Always deal with the incident first- the safety of the lifeguards and the public comes first.
- If media are on the beach and in the way- politely advise them there is a rescue in progress and the area needs to be kept clear.
- Offer to pass their details onto the [SLSNZ Media & Communications Manager](#) who will be able to assist.
- Call your Regional Manager who can then advise the SLSNZ Media & Communications Manager as soon as the incident has been dealt with.

#### **HELPFUL TIPS**

- Journalists are trained to interview people. If they ask you a question you're unsure about, don't be afraid to make a note of it and tell them you'll come back to them with the answer. It's better than guessing and then seeing your guess attached to an angle you didn't consider.
- If you ever say something you realise you shouldn't have said, or it could be misunderstood or put in the wrong context - tell them your quote 'is off the record' – but you must get in quick or it's fair game for them to quote you.
- If in doubt about what to say, just stick to the facts and explain what happened.

#### **Useful media phrases during emergencies:**

- I can confirm that lifeguards have been called to assist and a rescue crew has (or is about to be) dispatched. But we have no other detail for media at this stage. Please, try us again in 30/40/50 minutes.
- We've been asked to refer all media calls to Police, so unfortunately I'm unable to make any comment.
- (For photographers) I'm going to have to ask you to remain right here please. We have an operation underway right now, and beyond this area is a no-go zone. But we will try to get you closer for a photo once things settle.

#### **Useful media phrases during a serious incident:**

- Give me a couple of minutes please – I need to have a debrief with my colleagues. But I'll be back to talk to you as soon as I can.
- I can give you some brief details but I'm only authorised to talk about Surf Life Saving's role in today's rescue.
- I'm afraid I'm not authorised to talk to the media yet. Give me a contact number and I'll make sure someone gets in touch as soon as possible.

#### **Sidestepping sensitive questions:**

- I need to stop you because these questions should be directed to our national office. I'll have to refer you to our Media & Communications Manager.
- That's a matter you should really address with the Police.
- I'm not authorised to comment on this, I'll have to refer you to our Media & Communications Manager.

#### **Dealing with tragedy:**

- What happened here today is an absolute tragedy for the friends and family of this person.
- It's not for me to say how or why this tragedy occurred, but I can tell you that someone has lost a family member or friend and that's going to be devastating for them and all those involved.
- That's a private matter for the family. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on how they reacted to today's tragedy.

#### **At the completion of a rescue:**

- I'm particularly proud of the way our lifeguards performed today.
- This successful rescue is an outstanding example of the professionalism and commitment of volunteer surf lifeguards.
- New Zealanders should be very proud of their volunteer surf lifeguards. These men and woman put their own needs to the side to rescue people.

For more information, assistance or tips, please contact:  
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