



Date: 16 October 2020

To: All SLSNZ Clubs, Chairpersons, IRB Examiners, Instructors, Drivers and Crew

From: Ross Merrett (Safety, Welfare and Risk Manager)

Subject: IRB Accident – Lessons learned requiring changes to IRB training & operational procedures

What's happening?

SLSNZ is implementing important amendments to the training and operational procedures for IRBs. Specifically this is asking clubs to:

- Designate a 'lead' club for any joint club IRB training activities;
- Make sure any IRB training takes place in a clearly marked IRB training zone;
- Inform all IRB drivers and crew of new procedures for returning to shore.

The IRB Training Manual is being updated to reflect these changes (see Appendix 2), and IRB Instructors and Examiners are expected to train and examine IRB driver and crew candidates on the basis of the new procedures.

There may be further amendments once MNZ have completed their investigation into the incident below and Clubs will be informed of these as soon as possible.

Why is it happening?

In January 2020 an accident occurred during an IRB Training Session that resulted in a serious injury to a member of the public. Whilst MNZ are continuing to investigate the accident SLSNZ have conducted a review of the circumstances that led to the incident, and after liaising with MNZ, have decided to implement changes to improve the safe operation of IRBs. A detailed explanation of what occurred is set out in Appendix 1.

When is it happening?

Clubs are asked to follow the new procedures immediately, and advise their existing drivers and crew as soon as possible. Additional IRB Manual amendments will be incorporated into the next version in 2021. Instructors and Examiners are asked to start working with the new procedures immediately.

In it for life



What does it mean to me?

Who	What does it mean?
Clubs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Designated lead club during joint club training exercises</u> Whenever clubs come together for training, there needs to be a 'lead club' who takes responsibility for the training session and conducts the necessary risk assessments and any other associated paperwork. 2. <u>Designated IRB training area</u> When participating in IRB Lifeguard Training or IRB Sport Training there must be the appropriate safety signs, flags/cones and buoys that designate a 'zone' in which the training will take place. More details are set out below. 3. <u>Advise existing drivers and crew of new procedures of 'Returning to Shore'</u> When returning through surf, the new procedure requires an IRB to sit at a safe distance between waves, not on, close to, or on top of the leading wave. This is to ensure the driver has time to avoid colliding with someone who suddenly appears in front or in the wave, such as a surfer or swimmer. The detailed amendments to the IRB Training Manual occur on page 49 and can be found below in Appendix 2 and here. https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/lifesaving/lifesaving-resources
Drivers and Crew	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Follow new procedures of 'Returning to Shore'</u> When returning through surf, the new procedure requires an IRB to sit at a safe distance between waves, not on, close to, or on top of the leading wave. This is to ensure the driver has time to avoid colliding with someone who suddenly appears in front or in the wave, such as a surfer or swimmer. The detailed amendments to the IRB Training Manual occur on page 49 and can be found below in Appendix 2 and here. https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/lifesaving/lifesaving-resources
Instructors & Examiners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Designated IRB training area</u> When participating in IRB Lifeguard Training or IRB Sport Training there must be the appropriate safety signs, flags/cones and buoys that designate a 'zone' in which the training will take place. More details are set out below. 2. <u>Advise existing drivers and crew of new procedures of 'Returning to Shore'</u>

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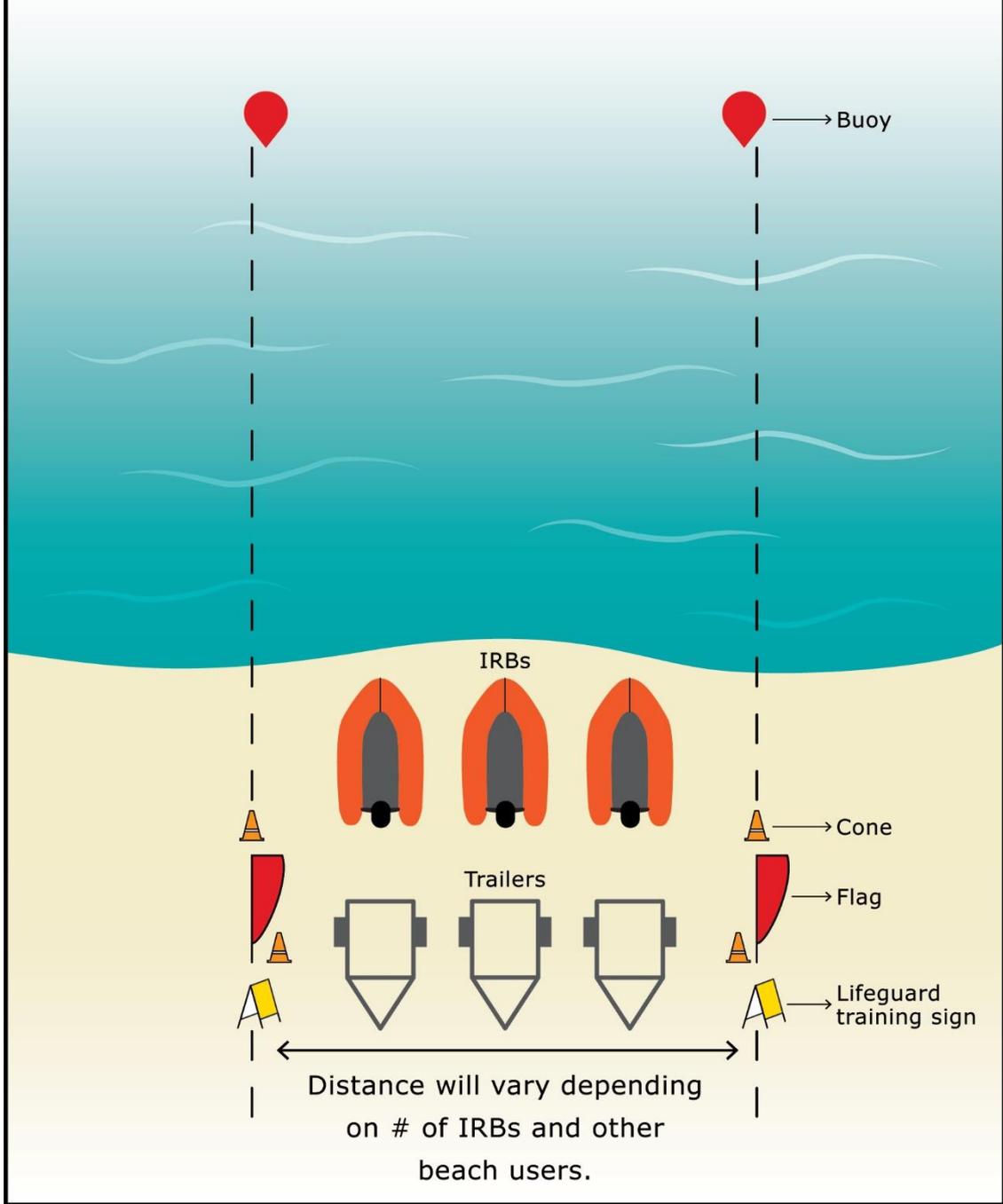
Designated IRB 'safe training area'

SLSNZ acknowledges that Club IRB training activities are one of many activities occurring on beaches around the country. In conjunction with Clubs, SLSNZ has a duty to ensure that both our members and people that may be affected by our activities are not harmed from these activities.

SLSNZ requires all Clubs implement a 'safe training area' for both IRB Lifeguard and IRB Sport Training as detailed below to better alert other beach users of IRB training activities, as well as the extent of these activities, both on the beach and on the water where practicable to do so.

The diagram below requires Clubs to clearly identify both sides of the IRB training zone. The distance between the signs, cones and flags on either side will depend on the number of IRB, and the area required to undertake the training (excluding parallel running). However Clubs may need to limit their training area to accommodate other beach/water users. A combination of existing Lifeguard Training signs, in conjunction with tall safety cones and/or flags is encouraged. Where practicable and safe to do so, and where driver and crew competency permits, two buoys should be placed in the water, identifying the outer perimeter of the training zone. This zone, should define the area in which IRB will travel to and from the open sea, i.e. practice runs out and back through the surf zone. Clubs are not expected to define the area in which they may practice *parallel running*. However care must be taken to ensure that Maritime Regulations are adhered to at all times, while also allowing for operations in accordance with [SLSNZ's Safety Case to Maritime New Zealand](https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/media/989040/slsnz-safety-case-with-maritime-new-zealand.pdf). <https://www.surflifesaving.org.nz/media/989040/slsnz-safety-case-with-maritime-new-zealand.pdf>

IRB Lifeguard and IRB Sport Safe Training Area



Appendix 1: Incident Report

Jan 2020 - following recent regional IRB driver training and development opportunities, an informal local interclub IRB driver development group was formed with the intention of organising and hosting occasional local IRB driver training events.

The group arranged an informal IRB training via Facebook. The training commenced at approximately 6:30pm on an east coast beach with representatives from several clubs, led by a local IRB instructor/examiner. All attendees were members of SLSNZ and were volunteering their time to continue their training.

A 1-1.5m clean swell from the N-NE was operating with 8-10 second interval between waves, with little to no wind. Visibility at the commencement of the training was unlimited, clear with scattered cloud high above. The temperature was approximately 23 degrees C. The tide was low but incoming.

Prior to the arrival of the group to the beach, the instructor referred to the Operational Risk Assessments (ORA) completed by the regional guards earlier that day, and wrote on his IRB Training ORA "*same as regional guards + surfers*".

Prior to entering the water, the group discussed the purpose of the training, and determined that due to large numbers of surfers on either side of the proposed training zone, the IRB training would operate between the two groups of surfers. The Lifeguard Training sign was positioned in the middle of the training zone along with an ATV and four IRB trailers.

The instructor stated that he briefed the lifeguards about the hazards and risks and made specific mention of the presence of surfers and the need to keep a look out for surfers and remain at least 50m away from surfers at all times.

At approximately 8:10 pm, the IRBs returned to shore. However with the sun setting in the west, visibility was limited.

Also, at approximately 8:10 pm, a local surfer entered the beach between the two larger groups of surfers, to use the uncluttered stretch of water between them, where a "*good wave*" was present. This area had been used by the IRBs for the previous 1.5 hrs. At time of interview, the surfer stated that he recalls seeing the ATV and a trailer on the beach, but did not recall seeing any IRBs on the water. He did not make any connection between the presence of the ATV and trailer and the possibility of IRB on the water.

As one of the IRB approached shore on the back of a wave, as prescribed in the IRB manual, with the crewperson in a sitting position, a surfer suddenly popped up through a wave approximately 1m

in front of the IRB which was traveling at the same speed as the wave in front. Despite attempts to avoid the surfer, and despite also killing the motor, the IRB travelled over the surfer resulting in the surfer being hit by the prop guard. First aid was provided to the surfer who was later diagnosed with a cranial fracture of the right orbit (eye socket), facial lacerations, and severe headaches requiring several days off work. The surfer is expected to make a full recovery, although this may take up to 12 months.

The incident required notification to SLSNZ and Maritime NZ. Both SLSNZ and Maritime NZ (MNZ) have undertaken investigations into the incident. MNZ's investigation is ongoing.

Appendix 2: Amendments to the IRB Training Manual (page 49):

Returning to shore

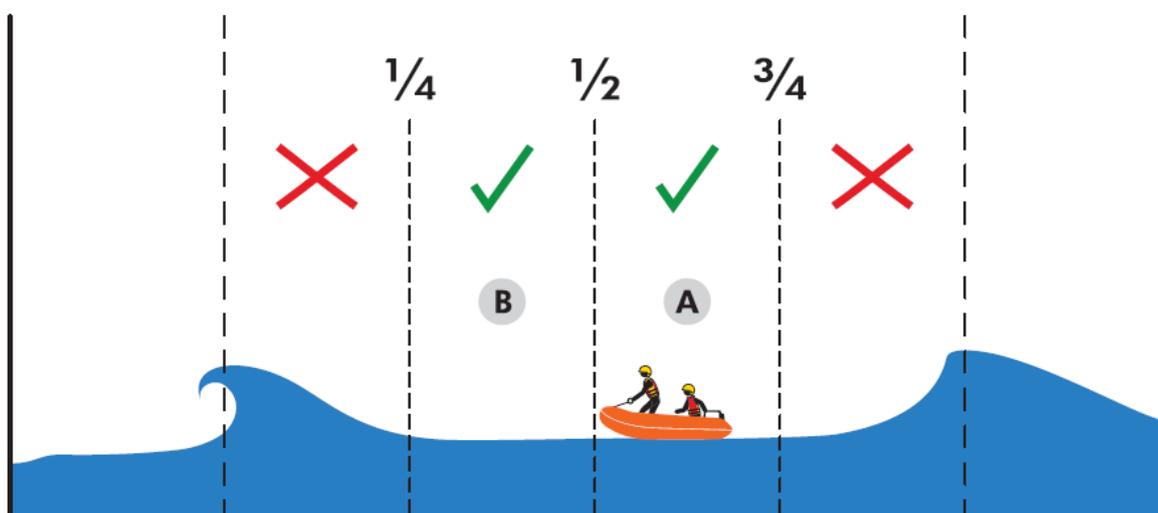
Select a suitable wave to follow and move in behind it. Ensure that you remain in zone A **F28** between waves, without slipping back into the wave behind. The driver should watch carefully how the wave forms and breaks to ensure the IRB is capable of maintaining a position behind the wave in front, yet remain ahead of the wave behind, particularly with patients aboard. If the IRB is not safe between waves, abort the attempt and try again.

Where the driver does not have a clear view ahead, the crewperson should stand where practicable to do so, and shall direct the passage of the IRB by hand signals supplemented by verbal communication. If the IRB is transporting a patient, the crew must securely position the patient on the floor, from the mid to rear of the boat before the crew person attempted to stand and assist the driver.

Drivers should not over run the wave in front unless absolutely necessary to do so, e.g. undertaking a rescue, or if the wave behind is travelling faster than the wave in front and is likely to catch up the wave in front, causing a double up. Care must be taken to ensure the way ahead is clear of others users, and where available and practicable, an onshore spotter should be engaged to guide the IRB ashore using hand signals and/or radio communication.

As the IRB approaches shore, the IRB should move to zone B **F28** immediately prior to beaching the IRB, but only if it is safe and practicable to do so, i.e. ensure the way ahead is clear of other users. By moving to the back of the wave ahead, there should be sufficient time to beach the IRB before the next wave arrives.

F28



A Remain in this zone when returning to shore.

B Move into this zone immediately prior to beaching your craft.