



**SURF LIFE SAVING®**  
NEW ZEALAND

**Date:** 11-4-22

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**To:** SAR Coordinators SAR Squad Members SLSNZ Lifesaving Staff

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**From:** Allan Mundy National Search and Rescue Manager

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**Subject:** Food Rescue Advisement for Operations

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With the possibility of widespread flooding throughout the country over the next few days, I am passing on some key lessons learnt from the International Flood Rescue training I attended in Tasmania in December 2017&18 and consistent with the current international practices.

Most flood rescue is done in slow-moving water when a river has broken its banks and inundated the surrounding low lying areas.

Most rescues are of persons on structures such as rooftops or balconies, and there is no need for unplanned haste.

**Caution SLSNZ or SLSNR Insurance policy does not cover loss or damage to personal items in flood operations.**

**If the rescue is to be carried out in fast-moving water, be very mind full and aware of the limitations of your craft and lack of training in this environment.**

## **Don'ts**

**Don't** Undertake the task if you are unsure of the safety of all your crew.

**Don't** Enter into a flood without backup; this may be at least another IRB downstream or an air asset helicopter (request this from the declaratory authority, either Police or Civil defence)

**Don't** Deploy in the dark, with debris, unfamiliar water and nil visibility. This is extremely dangerous

**Don't** Immerse yourself in flooded waters even if you have on a wet suit!

There potentially will be raw sewage containing human pathogens in the water ¾ of all first responders in Cyclone Trina ended up in the hospital due to contamination and skin infections. The warm layer of water between your wetsuit and your skin is a perfect breeding ground for incubating the pathogens.

There will be many poisonous contaminants from concentrated chemicals in industrial areas and rural areas. Pesticides in rural areas are hazardous; they are used to kill animals just like us and do so in minimal concentrations; however, in an uncontrolled flooded environment, you may be exposed to high concentrations.

**Don't** Enter into a flooded river that has NOT yet broken its banks

The river channel will be full of unforeseen debris such as large logs and trees, wire from demolished fences, and lost building materials, all of which can rip an IRB's hull.

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**Surf Life Saving New Zealand**

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**Don't** Approach Vehicles in flooded waters from behind; come at them from the side and ferry glide across the current and hover alongside to make the extraction. Joining from the rear can alter the hydrology of the vehicle and reduce its weight causing it to float downstream, taking the IRB with it.

**Don't** Drive at speed; you should never cause wake!

You will be driving over many unforeseen obstacles, and hitting them at speed may damage your boat. The wake will cause unnecessary damage to property by enhancing the floodwater level, and the wake may break windows when it hits the houses.

**Don't** Consume any food or water when in the flood zone.

Keep your hands away from your mouth at all times. Only consume food and water once you have changed from the flood-contaminated clothing and washed hands with detergent or sanitiser.

## Do's

**Do** Undertake a full operational risk assessment with all Squad members before entering the flood zone

**Do** Crew all boats with three crew. The extra rescuer position is needed as high-speed patient pickups are often impossible in confined areas around buildings within, cars, etc. With the three crews, you may need all the help to get larger patients into the craft.

**Do** Approach vehicles in rivers from the side, NOT directly behind the car. Come at them from the side and ferry glide across the current and hover alongside to make the extraction. Joining from the rear can alter the hydrology of the vehicle and reduce its weight, causing it to float downstream, taking the IRB with it.

**Do** Decontaminate all gear that has been used in the floods with industrial-strength disinfectants.

If not properly washed away, hazardous chemicals will continue to interact with all equipment and you. Pathogens will become activated once the gear becomes wet again and infect those using the gear some time down the line.

Talk to your fire department; they will point you in the right direction and may even have a hazardous chemical decontamination unit set up.

Decontaminate all clothing and wet suits with a strong detergent on a HOT Heavy duty Wash in a washing machine.

**Do** Keep the Bow of the IRB pointed upstream at all times wherever possible. All Patient Pick-ups should be executed in this direction.

Approaching a patient is BEST done from downstream up towards the target, hovering in the current to pick up the patients at a standstill Bow into the current.

If approaching from upstream in fast-flowing water, use the reduction in throttle to reduce the water speed and have the boat drift down onto the patient

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