



SURF LIFE SAVING®
NEW ZEALAND

Sharing of Lessons Learnt from a Review of a Surf Life Saving Accident or Incident

Lived it – Learnt from it

Incident Name

Beach Education Incident

Incident Date

17th October, 2022

Location

Southern Region

Description of the accident/incident

On a nice sunny day in the southern region, a school was enjoying the water component of Beach Education when a child fell over near an in-water Beach Education instructor. The instructor witnessed the child get knocked over by a wave, find their feet, stand back up, and continue playing in the waves. Another wave soon knocked over the same child. The Instructor approached, picked the child up, and noticed they were showing some mild respiratory distress (coughing, elevated respiration rate) and were understandably frightened. The child was carried to shore and continued coughing, was pale, and presenting as struggling to breathe. After communication with the lead teacher and the lead Beach Education instructor, the child was taken to the surf club's first aid room.

While in the first aid room, the child was monitored for another couple minutes. With no improvement, it was decided to give the child oxygen. Within 10 minutes, the child's breathing had improved significantly; he was now smiling and interacting appropriately.

Outcome

There was a plan developed with the Beach Education instructor looking after the child and the lead teacher from the school. Given the child's improvement, it was decided that the child could return to school with the class. The teacher would then talk with the child's next of kin (Grandma) upon arrival at school, for her to take the child to the GP for a precautionary check-up.

Causes (Immediate, Underlying, Root Cause)

N/A

Relevant Photo's

N/A

Lessons Learned

If a Surf Lifeguard (Beach Education instructor) determines that a patient requires oxygen, they will simultaneously call an ambulance through the emergency number 111. In this specific case, the child experienced a non-fatal drowning incident.

As qualified First Responders, we need to be involved in the conversation with a parent/next of kin if we are concerned about a child who had a medical event or became injured while we were responsible for the child's well-being through our programmes and activities.

Corrective Actions and suggestions moving forwards

The Health & Safety Adviser contacted the regional Beach Education instructors the next day and requested that we immediately remind all Beach Education instructors: if they are required to administer oxygen for a patient, they must simultaneously call an ambulance through the emergency number 111 or request via SurfComm.

This incident will be shared at next seasons Beach Education Instructors Inductions as a learning opportunity.

We are committed to continuous improvement and fostering a no-blame culture. Surf Life Saving New Zealand's plan is to share learnings and examples of decision-making from actual incidents and accidents that our members have experienced, with the goal of preventing avoidable accidents.