



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

Accident Name

IRB Race Training Incident

Accident Date

9th October, 2022

Location

Southern Region

Description of the accident/incident

Two club members had decided to enter their local Long Hull Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) Event in the coming weeks. The driver had raced IRBs previously, although not for some time, and the crewperson hadn't raced IRBs before but was comfortable and qualified to crew the IRB. They decided to have a training session on a Sunday afternoon with a focus on getting boat fit/ready and practicing their starts off the beach.

During the session, the crew did a start from knee-deep water, allowing the boat's speed to pull the crew into the boat. They successfully hit the first wave as planned. However, on the second wave, they hit it faster and harder than the crewperson anticipated, causing them to become unbalanced. As a result, they hit a third wave, which catapulted the crewperson into the air, landing heavily on their right foot and falling into the hull of the IRB.

Outcome

The crewperson fractured several small bones in his right foot.

Causes (Immediate, Underlying, Root Cause)

The identified cause of this accident was a misunderstanding between the crew. The crewperson was expecting the speed of the IRB to slow down after hitting the first wave off the beach, while the driver was planning to go "hard" out to the last wave.

Lessons Learned

Clear communication between the driver and crewperson about the training plan and intention is crucial. The driver acknowledges that there was a different understanding between them on this occasion, which contributed to confusion and the occurrence of the accident.

Corrective Actions and suggestions moving forwards

In July, Surf Life Saving New Zealand (SLSNZ) will be releasing new educational videos focused on planning and operating an IRB. One of the videos will highlight the role of an IRB crew, demonstrating the importance of discussing their intentions while in the IRB and carrying an Operational Risk Assessment.

This incident has been reported to Maritime New Zealand.

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.