



**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 Crewpersons Training Weekend

Accident Date

Weekend of August 26th and 27<sup>th</sup> 2023

Location

Southern Region

### **Description of the accident/incident**

During a coordinated and combined IRB Crewpersons Training Module held on the weekend of August 26th and 27th at a Southern Region Beach, two clubs came together for an IRB Crewpersons course. Day one was designated as an instructional day, while day two focused on training continuation and the assessment of the crewpersons. The preparation for the weekend received support from the SLSNZ Southern Region Lifesaving Manager.

Throughout Saturday, two injuries occurred, and on Sunday, two additional injuries were reported. All injuries involved trainee crewpersons, with two sustaining ankle injuries (1 sprain and 1 fracture), one experiencing a foot fracture, and another enduring a ruptured thumb ligament.

It is noteworthy that all leg injuries affected the right lower leg.

### **Outcome**

The member with the right foot fracture required surgery and has since undergone additional surgery for complications. The right fractured ankle and thumb have recovered in plaster. All have undergone ongoing physiotherapy treatment and rehabilitation.

### **Causes (Immediate, Underlying, Root Cause)**

Analysis reveals that some of the injuries occurred during parallel running techniques, a dynamic training procedure that requires the crewperson to adjust their position within the boat for balance. The injuries highlight the importance of conducting dynamic risk assessments, ensuring correct crew positioning, and fostering crucial communication within the IRB during operations.

### **Other Considerations:**

All four injuries involved three different IRB Drivers, all of whom were competent, qualified, refreshed, and experienced. The drivers were repeatedly briefed on the significance of modeling sound dynamic risk assessment, correct crew positioning, and effective in-boat communication.

### **Relevant Photo's**

N/A

### **Lessons Learned**

- The occurrence of these injuries demonstrates and revalidates the need for heightened vigilance when situational factors change, such as conditions, crew composition, weather, or incidents.
- In such situations, the implementation of a Dynamic ORA is imperative prior to proceeding. While it remains uncertain whether this approach could have entirely prevented or mitigated the above injuries, it serves as a significant learning opportunity for all involved.
- To further enhance safety, SLSNZ will continue to reassess the ergonomics of IRB setup, particularly focusing on the right crewperson's foot strap, which anecdotal research suggests might be more suitable for smaller crewpersons.
- Instructional videos are also in development, centered on Safe Crewing Technique, in-boat communication, and the IRB Driver's responsibilities.

In conclusion, this report reiterates the significance of diligent dynamic risk assessment, effective crew communication, and adaptive training protocols to minimize the potential for injuries during IRB training.

### **Corrective Actions and suggestions moving forwards**

These incident's reiterate the significance of diligent dynamic risk assessment, effective crew communication, and adaptive training protocols to minimize the potential for injuries during IRB training.

The insights gained from these incidents will be shared widely among Instructors and Examiners within SLSNZ to foster a safer training environment and enhance operational preparedness.

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