



Health-Safety-Welfare Skin Cancer Prevention

1.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all SLSNZ clubs, members, and employees.

2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for minimizing the risk of skin cancer among members.

Surf Life Saving New Zealand (SLSNZ) acknowledges that its members, including volunteers and employees, face an elevated risk of skin cancer due to sun exposure during surf life-saving activities.

SLSNZ strongly encourages members to lead and promote positive Sun-Safe Practices to reduce their skin cancer risk.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

New Zealanders and Australians have the world's highest skin cancer rates, primarily due to the large number of fair-skinned individuals exposed to high levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Surf Lifeguards face an even higher risk of skin cancer than the average New Zealander due to direct, water-reflected, and sand-reflected UV exposure, increased UV penetration through wet skin and clothing, extended sun exposure, and a sun-seeking culture.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

The following definition applies to this policy:

- NSOP: National Standard Operating Procedure

5.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

1. SLSNZ Policy – Lifeguard and Patrol Support Uniform
2. NSOP – General Risk Assessment

6.0 EXCEPTIONS

There are no exceptions to this policy.



7.0 POLICY

The key interventions for reducing UV exposure and cancer risk, listed in order of practical effectiveness, are as follows:

7.1 Increase the provision of shade:

Shade is more effective than clothing and sunscreen in preventing UV damage. Portable shelters, covered lifeguard towers, UV-protected vehicles, shade sails, and other shade solutions should be used to limit members' and employees' exposure to direct sunlight.

7.2 Limit exposure between 11am-4pm:

If possible, consideration should be given to reschedule training sessions to earlier mornings or late afternoons, especially for children in surf sports. Avoid prolonged exposure during midday when UV radiation is highest. We acknowledge that limiting hours of providing patrols is more challenging, but we encourage rotating patrolling members regularly and seeking shelter wherever possible.

7.3 Use sun-protective clothing:

SLSNZ provides (through its clubs) high collared long-sleeved shirts, shorts, and full-brimmed hats for patrolling members. For swimmers, long-sleeved rash guards or wetsuits are encouraged. SLSNZ strongly encourages the use of wide-brimmed hats (over the “baseball style cap”), and the use of UV-protective sunglasses.

7.4 Promote proper sunscreen use:

Apply sunscreen to dry skin at least twenty minutes before outdoor activities. Reapply every two hours and after swimming or sweating. Use an adequate amount (about 30 ml per application).

7.5 Role model sun-safe behaviours:

SLSNZ encourages the routine use of brimmed hats and discourages sunbathing. We emphasize that UV damage accumulates over a lifetime. Therefore we seek to role-model Sun-Safe behaviour.



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7.6 Prevent childhood sun damage:

Take sunburns in childhood seriously, as they significantly increase the risk of melanoma. Educate children and parents about sun protection.

7.7 Support GP follow-up for all members:

SLSNZ encourage lifeguards to have a relationship with a GP trained in skin cancer screening, including dermoscopy.

7.8 Support ILSF recommendations:

SLSNZ endorses ILSF recommendations, including mandatory use of wide brim hats, UPF 50+ clothing, adequate shade, SPF 50 sunscreen, UV protection sunglasses, physician evaluations, and yearly skin cancer checks and eye exams.

7.9 Implement skin surveillance:

SLSNZ is investigating options including implementing a skin surveillance program to support members. In the interim we encourage yearly skin cancer checks with competent GPs for lifeguards.

7.10 Education and skin self-screening:

SLSNZ educate and encourage lifeguards to perform regular skin self-screening and mole checking. Please refer to posters on your surf club walls for guidance.

8.0 PROCEDURES

Follow:

- SLSNZ Policy – Lifeguard and Patrol Support Uniform
- NSOP – General Risk Assessment

9.0 DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Policy owner	National Health & Safety Advisor	Date issued	July 2023
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Approved By	Chief Operations Officer		