



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 Club IRB Driver Training – Session One

Accident Date 15th of April 2024

Location Northern Region

Description of the accident/incident

On Sunday, the 14th of April, at a Northern Region beach, the local SLSC commenced a new intake of IRB Drivers Training. They began with a dry session in the morning, covering a refresher of the IRB Crewing module, positioning in the boat, movement within the boat, and a basic introduction to motor maintenance. The crew then proceeded onto the beach for a discussion on driving the IRB and turning. The water training area was set up according to the IRB Training NSOP, with three buoys for the crews to practice their turns.

There were three crews, each consisting of trainee drivers who were all qualified Surf Lifeguards and IRB Crewpersons. On the beach, there was one qualified IRB Instructor, and a trainee IRB Instructor who was also a qualified IRB Driver. Additionally, there was one trainee IRB Instructor (also a qualified IRB Driver) out on the water in one of the IRBs.

One of the trainee crews comprised two experienced Surf Lifeguards. The crew had been driving for about 30 minutes, alternating between driving and crewing.

During their training briefing, they were instructed to turn the buoy at ¼-1/2 speed. As they approached the turn from starboard to port, the crewperson lifted himself off the pontoon to transfer his weight into the middle of the boat, intending to make the turn smoother and assist with weight transference. However, as the crew rounded the buoy, he fell overboard from the starboard side of the boat. The trainee driver observed this as the crewperson entered the water head/body first. The trainee driver chose to maintain her speed and complete the turn, but during the maneuverer, the motor leg struck the crewperson's helmet. He surfaced, and the trainee driver completed the turn before returning to recover the crewperson.

The crewperson sustained damage to his helmet and a laceration on the left side of his face.

The Qualified Instructor conducted a debrief with all trainee drivers and took the trainee driver who was driving at the time of the incident back out in the IRB to help her rebuild her confidence after the accident.

Outcome

He received first aid from his fellow Surf Lifeguards and was then taken to the local After-Hours facility, where he received seven stitches for a 4cm laceration. The member was not concussed, and the doctor cleared him to continue with his next training session.

Causes (Immediate, Underlying, Root Cause)

SLSNZ believe the cause of this accident was that the trainee drivers did not have a qualified IRB Driver in the boat to assist and guide them through during learning a new skill – when carrying out this skill something went wrong (crewperson fell out) and the trainee driver wasn't aware of how to respond. If there was a qualified IRB driver in the boat, they may have been able to help avoid this incident happening by changing their cause of the turn and/or even earlier adjusting their speed/angle into the turn.

Relevant Photo's

Damage to the helmet



Lessons Learned

There are two main lessons for SLSNZ regarding this accident:

1. We will strongly reinforce to all SLSNZ Clubs and IRB instructors the necessity of having a qualified IRB Driver present in an IRB when a new trainee IRB Driver is learning.
2. We will issue a reminder to all members to incorporate into their standard practice the checking of the general condition and integrity of PPE. This should occur alongside checking for correct size and fitting.

Corrective Actions and suggestions moving forwards

This incident has been reported to Maritime New Zealand and the SLSNZ National Powercraft Advisory Committee. The lessons learned will be shared on our website's Lessons Learned page and with members via our communication channels.

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