SURF LIFE SAVING

Surf Lifeguard & Patrol Support Refresher Manual

Updated: July 2026

In it for life.

Introduction

Refreshers are a tool for clubs to use in identifying the capabilities of members before they start their roles in the new season. SLSNZ requires completion of refreshers to ensure that members can deal with situations that occur in Surf Lifesaving and use Surf Lifesaving equipment in a safe and appropriate way.

This manual includes the following refreshers:

1. Patrol Support (PS) Refresher
2. Surf Lifeguard Award (SLA) Refresher

Lifeguards **are required** to be currently refreshed before commencing any patrolling. At any time, a Surf Lifeguard/Patrol Support member will be considered to be currently refreshed or not by the timeline below:

- Surf Lifeguard and Patrol Support Refreshers have a **12-month cycle**. For example, if a member completes their refresher on 2 September 2026, it will expire on 2 September 2027.

It is expected that all Surf Lifeguards and Patrol Support members will complete their refresher(s) annually before the expiry date.

Remember that Refreshers are:

- Managed online through etrainu
- Available ALL year

Refer to the *Refreshers Set-up Manual* for further information on the refresher process.

Surf Lifeguard and Patrol Support Refreshers

Surf Life Saving New Zealand has determined that the SLA/PS Refresher has two parts – and to refresh you must complete all applicable components.

Surf Lifeguard Refresher

The Surf Lifeguard Refresher is a tool for clubs to use in identifying the capabilities of patrolling members on an annual basis. SLSNZ requires completion of refreshers to ensure that members can deal with situations that occur in Surf Lifesaving and use Surf Lifesaving equipment in a safe and appropriate way before they are in a 'live' patrol situation.

The SLA Refresher is made up of two parts:

- **Online Refresher**: Theory Test – 20 questions, in a 60-minute timeframe, with 80% pass rate.
- **Practical Refresher:** Components include:
  - 200m Run-Swim-Run (time limit set by Assessor that reasonably measures lifeguard competency in prevailing local conditions) using rescue fins* **OR** 400m Pool Swim in under 9 minutes,
  - Tube Rescue and Recovery Position demonstration, and
  - CPR Demonstration.

*More details about Surf Lifeguard Run-Swim-Run, Use of fins change (1 Sep 2025)

Patrol Support Refresher

The Patrol Support Refresher is intended for any member who holds their Patrol Support Award, or any Surf Lifeguard who can't complete the practical water elements of the Surf Lifeguard Refresher.

Patrol Support Refreshers is made up of two parts:

- **Online Refresher**: Theory Test – 20 questions, in 60-minute timeframe, with 80% pass rate; and
- **Practical Refresher:** Component:
  - CPR Demonstration.

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There are separate refresher courses online, one for Surf Lifeguards and one for Patrol Support. Please ensure that members are**:**

1. **Enrolled in the correct course; and**
2. **Signed off against it when completed**.

Assessment Checklists/Requirements – SLA/PS

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

Venue

- Room should be clean, well-lit and well-ventilated for the test.
- Room should be in a quiet area.
- Room should be large enough for two Assessors, two refreshing members and two CPR manikins.
- Assessors should have a clear view of the member and the manikin.
- Manikins should be checked and cleaned as per the "cleaning guidelines" prior to use.

Equipment Required

- Resuscitation Checklist (page 6).
- Clock/watch.
- Adult manikins.
- Manikin face shields.
- Disposable gloves.
- Manikin Antiseptic Wipes (Alcoholic Chlorhexidine 70% solution).
- Bucket

Conduct of the Section

- Before the test starts brief the group on the format of the test. Assessors should brief members on how the assessment will run, how long the assessment will run for and any other specific assessment points.
- Refreshing members are to remain outside the assessment area until called upon by the Assessor.
- Refreshing members may be numbered to assist with efficiency.
- The Assessor will call refreshing members in one at a time:
    - "Act on commands given" (or similar).
    - "You have arrived on the scene and have found the patient lying on the ground/beach/rocks" (or similar scenario).
    - Ask the refreshing members to conduct a 'primary assessment' of the situation and the victim.
    - When the refreshing member has opened the airway and completed the 'look listen and feel' phase, give the command "breathing is absent" (or similar).
    - When the refreshing member has "sent for help", CPR should begin.
- The CPR is to be timed for a minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 5 minutes.
- After that time (2 to 5 minutes) the Assessor states clearly "trained help has arrived, and you have been relieved. Please clean the manikin and move outside the room."
- Upon completion, the refreshing member will be asked to leave the room, and the Assessors are to commence with the next rotation of refreshing members, using techniques described above.

Use and care of Resuscitation Manikins

Prior to the Test

- Manikins should be checked to ensure they are clean and in excellent working condition and that the lung and other disposable components have been replaced.

During the Test

- Refreshing members should wash their hands prior to using a manikin and should wear gloves during the refresher.
- Refreshing members should not be tested on manikins if they are known to be in an active stage of an infectious illness, or if they have a skin disease on their hands, or around the mouth or face.
- Each refreshing member will have either an individual sterilized face mask or a disposable face shield e.g. Laerdal Manikin Face Shields (Cat. No. 151200).
- Face shields issued in a resuscitation training session are for practice on manikins only. They are not suitable for use in real life emergencies and therefore Assessors should ensure these are discarded at the end of a resuscitation session.

At the end of the day (after the test)

- Disinfect all manikin face masks according to the method you choose. Remove and place in large bucket following use.
- Scrub manikin face masks under cold running water.
- Soak manikin face masks in presept solution (i.e. 1 tablet to 500 ml's cold water) or equivalent solution for twenty minutes.
- Drain and dry manikin face masks (drip dry detachable manikin faces), store in a clean container.
- Clean out storage bucket with soap and water, and dry thoroughly ready for the next session.
- Check for any damage or faults and have the units serviced if required.

General Care

- Periodic cleaning of the manikin torso is necessary. A non-abrasive household cleaner that is safe for plastics may be used for badly stained surfaces. The rubber pads can be dusted with talcum powder to prevent sticking.
- For manikins in daily use, cleaning need only be performed once a week.
- Manikins should be inspected routinely for cracks or tears in plastic surfaces as these make thorough cleaning impossible.
- Manikin clothing should be washed regularly or whenever visibly soiled.
- The member responsible for the use and maintenance of manikins should be encouraged not to rely totally on the presence of disinfectant to protect them and their members from cross infection during training sessions.

Resuscitation Checklist

SLSNZ are assessing Surf Lifeguards & Patrol Support personnel on their knowledge of The New Zealand Resuscitation Council's Resuscitation guidelines.

Adult CPR (8 Years+)

Danger

☐	Check if scene is safe. Check that there is no danger to yourself, bystanders and the patient. If any hazards are present, actions to minimize or isolate the hazard are performed.
☐	Approach patient without undue delay if it is safe to do so.

Responsiveness

☐	Check for response to voice or touch.

Send for help

☐	Call 111 for emergency services or send someone else to call and report back when completed.

Airway

☐	Check in mouth for airway obstruction.
☐	If obstructed, roll onto side and clear.
☐	Open the airway by using the head tilt, chin lift technique.

Breathing

☐	Look, listen and feel for normal breathing.
☐	Assess this for 10 seconds.
☐	Identify the need for resuscitation.

Circulation

☐	Locate correct hand position.
☐	30 chest compressions at correct speed (100-120 per min).
☐	Compress chest to 1/3 depth of chest.
☐	Two breaths (delivered over one second each – airway should be reopened to ensure effective ventilations. Maximum 5 attempts to deliver these breaths).
☐	Continue with compression to breath ratio of 30:2

Defibrillation

☐	Communicates need for AED by radio or sending someone to retrieve.
☐	Attached an AED (defibrillator) as soon as possible.
☐	Turn AED on and follow voice prompts.

Additional Questions That May Be Asked

If you are breathing into the patient but the patient's chest isn't rising, what could be the problem?

- Not enough 'airtight' seal. The patient's nose must be pinched and an airtight seal around the patient's lips or face shield/mask; or
- An airway obstruction.

How far should the chest be depressed?

- 1/3 depth of chest or approximately the depth of the patient's thumb.

If you are alone with an unresponsive adult patient, what should you do?

- Check for DANGER.
- Approach victim and assess responsiveness.
- Put into recovery position, call out, and go for help.

What is the correct speed for compressions?

- 100-120 per minute.

How long should you continue CPR?

- Until advanced medical help arrives and relieves you.
- The victim recovers.
- It becomes too dangerous to continue; or
- You are physically too exhausted to continue.
- If a doctor or paramedic is present to assume care, it is their responsibility to decide when to stop resuscitation.

What is the correct compression: breath ratio?

- 30:2

What should you do if the patient vomits?

- No matter what causes vomiting, it is important to turn the patient's head and body to the side and clear the airway by sweeping the mouth (be mindful of other injuries E.g. Spine or neck injuries).
- A piece of available cloth (corner of clothing, handkerchief, etc.) over your fingers can be used to sweep out the mouth. The patient should then be returned to their back and CPR continued.
- Additional information: Vomiting is a hazard of resuscitation and may be due to air in the stomach from ventilations being too large.
- Resuscitation of a drowned patient often produces a lot of foam. This is not vomit and unless it is obstructing the airway, should not interrupt CPR.

When you look–listen–feel what are you looking, listening and feeling for?

- Looking to see if the chest is rising, listening for sounds of normal breathing and feeling the chest for movement.

What is the correct compression: breath ratio for children?

- 30:2

What should you do if a patient is unconscious but breathing?

- Complete DRS (Danger, Response, Send for Help) of DRSABCD.
- Place patient into the recovery position.
- Monitor patient's ABC's (Airway, Breathing and Circulation) and keep them safe and warm until advanced help arrives.

400m Pool Swim

Venue

- A swimming pool no shorter than 25 metres in length.

Equipment Required

- Pool Swim Time Sheet (see page 10).
- 1 x stopwatch per lane + one spare.
- Refreshing members are to provide their own swimming attire E.g. Togs and towel.

Conduct of the Section

- Surf Lifeguards are broken into subgroups of no more than six per lane, preferably grouped with individuals of similar swimming ability.
- Swimmer's names will be entered on the '*Pool Swim Time Sheet'*.
- The Assessor shall start the swimmers by saying "Surf Lifeguards name, Go." There should be a 5 second gap before starting the next swimmer.
- The first swimmer's time will read correctly. The following swimmer's times will need to be adjusted accordingly. For example:
    - If Surf Lifeguard "B" left 25 seconds after the first swimmer and their finishing time was 7 minutes, subtract 25 seconds from this time for an actual swim time of 6 minutes 35 seconds.
- The swim will be continuous freestyle. No aids are to be used (fins, kickboards, wetsuits, pull buoys, hand paddles etc.).
- Surf Lifeguards may **not:**
    - Stop and/or walk.
    - Stand up during the turn (tumble or push turns are acceptable).
    - Hold onto the end or the side of the pool unless they require assistance and are withdrawing from the swim.
- If a swimmer needs to adjust goggles, this is to be done while kicking on their back.
- Assessors are to record the result for each Surf Lifeguard and then transfer the result and upload to the event on etrainu's Assessor app.
- Surf Lifeguards must swim 400 metres in 9 minutes or less. 9:00.00 is a pass. 9:00.01 is a fail/re-test required.

Pool Swim Time Sheet

Location: **Date:**

Lane:		Time			Pass / Re–Test
Name	Description	Start	Finish	Elapsed	
1.		:00			
2.		:05			
3.		:10			
4.		:15			
5.		:20			
6.		:25			

Lane:		Time			Pass / Re–Test
Name	Description	Start	Finish	Elapsed	
1.		:00			
2.		:05			
3.		:10			
4.		:15			
5.		:20			
6.		:25			

Lane:		Time			Pass / Re–Test
Name	Description	Start	Finish	Elapsed	
1.		:00			
2.		:05			
3.		:10			
4.		:15			
5.		:20			

Run–Swim–Run (R-S-R)

- Surf Lifeguards are now in the public eye. The test should appear well organised and controlled. *Lifeguards should all make a conscientious effort to perform the refresher to the best of their abilities.*
- Surf Lifeguard uniforms do not have to be worn; however, a high-vis vest or Lifeguard Rash top is required for all water activities.
- 'Training in Progress' signs should be displayed.
- Each refreshing member must use a pair of rescue fins to complete the R-S-R.

Equipment Required

- Swim buoys and anchors.
- Turning flags or markers E.g. Orange Road Cones.
- 'Training in Progress' sign
- Laser range finder.
- Stopwatch.
- Refreshing members are to provide their own swimming attire E.g. Togs and towel.
- One pair of rescue fins for each refreshing member (club equipment or personal PPE).
- Hi-vis vests or Lifeguard rash top
- The use of wetsuits is optional.

Conduct of the Session

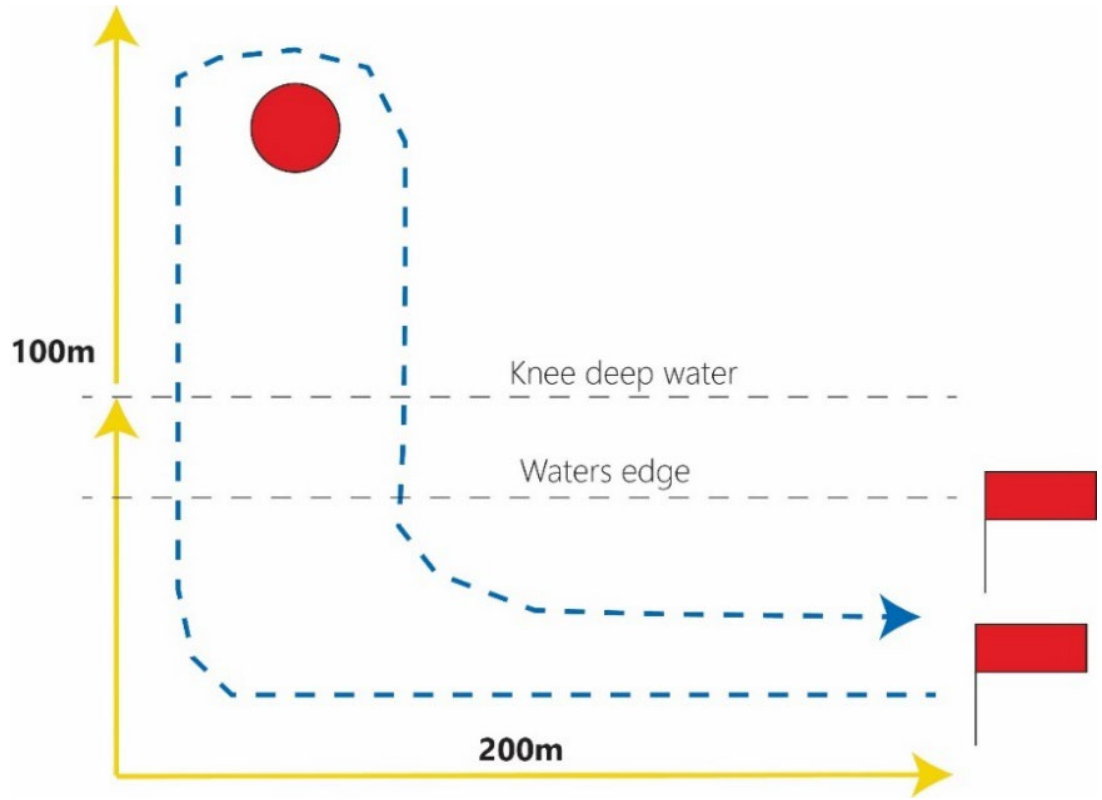
- The Assessor appoints a 'Run–Swim–Run Coordinator'.
- The Run–Swim–Run Coordinator is responsible for:
    - Setting the Run–Swim–Run course:
        - The course should be measured using a laser range finder.
        - The surf and/or beach conditions will dictate what type of course should be laid. Either a one or two buoy course is acceptable.
        - The first buoy must be laid a minimum of 50 metres to sea from knee depth water, opposite the turning flag, positioned near the water's edge.
        - Along the water's edge, either way from the turning flag, a start line depicted by two flags or markers shall be positioned at an angle or at right angles to the water's edge.
        - This start line shall also be the finish line and shall be a distance of 100 metres measured from knee depth water back to and around the turning flag or marker.
        - Checking with the duty Patrol Captain of the beach to suit local conditions.
    - Instructing the Surf Lifeguards on course and time limit:
        - The course shall be completed within the times as per requirements.
        - Ultimately, the time limit is at the discretion of the Assessor.
        - Regardless of agreed time limit, the member is required to demonstrate a standard of performance that the Assessor is confident will ensure the safety of all members, the public and other members in the case of an emergency.
        - If conditions warrant, the time for the course may be altered (before the commencement of the Run–Swim–Run) by the Assessors.
    - Counting number of Surf Lifeguards to do course.
    - Commencing course on whistle blast and time keeping.
    - Re-count number of Surf Lifeguards who completed the course.

Water Safety

- Explain to Surf Lifeguards the emergency procedure: "In an emergency, if you require assistance during this assessment, signal for assistance."
- There will be no more than 20 members doing a run–swim–run at any one time.
- It is essential that the Assessors discuss this with the Patrol Captain (if applicable) prior to any water activities.
- There must be as a minimum, one safety swimmer either with a rescue tube and fins or a rescue board for the duration of the Run-Swim-Run.
- An IRB (with qualified and refreshed driver and crewperson) may also be arranged prior to the refresher to act as a 'safety boat' for the duration of the Run-Swim-Run.
- Assessors must fill out an Operational Risk Assessment on the Patrol App for any on-the-water refresher events.

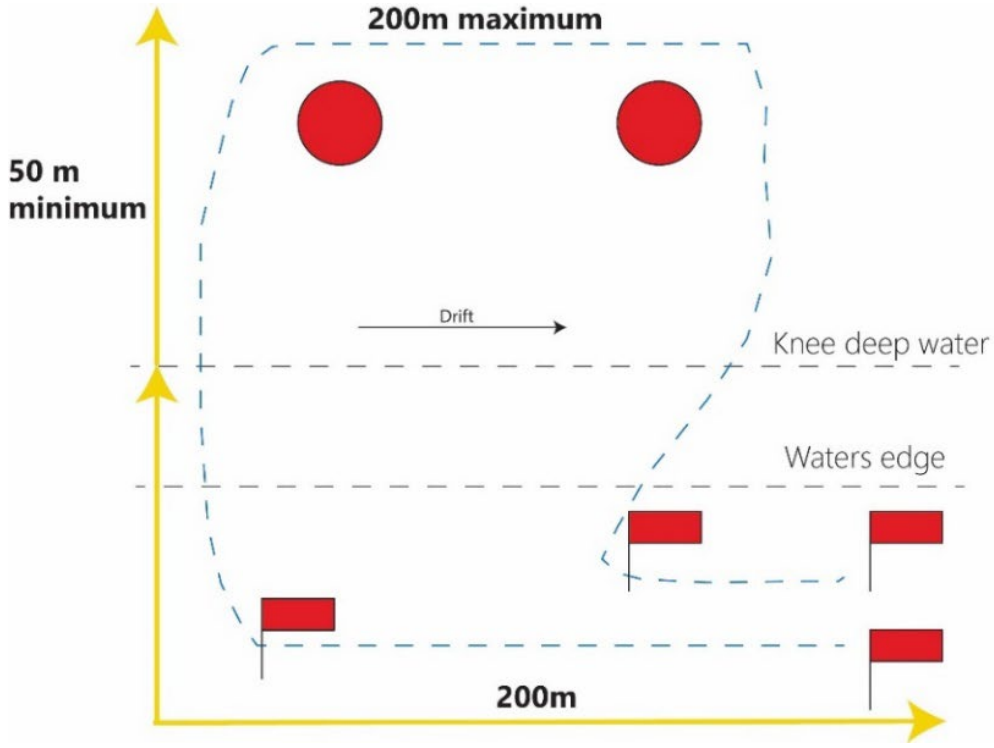
Option One

An example of small or no surf (no drift) Run-Swim-Run format.
Time limit: At the Assessor's discretion.



Option Two

An example of large surf and strong drift Run-Swim-Run format.
Time limit: At the Assessor's discretion.



Tube Rescue & Recovery Position

- Surf Lifeguards are now in the public eye. The test should appear well organised and controlled.
- Surf Lifeguard uniforms do not have to be worn; however a high-vis vest or Lifeguard Rash top is required for all water activities.
- 'Training in Progress' signs should be displayed.
- Members of the public to be informed that these tube rescues are training and not a real-life rescue.
- Tube rescues must be conducted at the beach and cannot be done in a pool environment.

Equipment Required

- Tube Rescue and Recovery Position Checklist (page 16).
- Two buoys and anchors.
- 'Training in progress" sign.
- Refreshing members are to provide their own swimming attire E.g. Togs and towel.
- Rescue Tubes (enough for one per 2 x Surf Lifeguards).
- One pair of surf fins per Surf Lifeguard (club equipment or personal PPE).
- Hi-vis vests or Lifeguard rash top

Conduct of the Session

- Surf Lifeguards are to work in pairs:
  - One to act as rescuer.
  - One to act as patient.
- Surf Lifeguards may be numbered to assist with efficiency.
- Clearly explain to the Surf Lifeguards what is expected of them and give ample opportunity for questions.
- Indicate patient is to be conscious.
- The rescuer must wear swim fins for the duration of the swim and rescue, putting these on in accordance with the assessment sheet.
- Inform patients to proceed out to sea to the designated position (there may be a swim buoy to indicate position).
- The Assessor should signal commencement of assessment and state clearly "check and prepare equipment for tube rescue." It is a requirement of the refresher that the tying of a tube is performed by the member themselves. These cannot be tied by someone else or pre-tied. The Assessor will be required to watch and assess surf lifeguards during the tying process.
- The Assessor must be in a position to adequately assess the rescue. While the patients are swimming out to sea the Assessor should check the rescuer:
  - Has tied their tube.
  - Are observing the patient's progress.
- Once the patients have reached the required distance the Assessor will signal the patients to remain stationary, and the patient should signal the rescuers by raising one arm straight up in the air.
- Once equipment has been prepared state clearly; "you have a patient, rescue commence" (or similar).
- Rescuer commences rescue (refer to the Assessment Sheet).
- On return to shore, upon reaching knee depth water, the rescuer shall assist the patient from the water. Patients may stand and walk with the rescuer.

- It is at the discretion of the Assessor to discuss and/or demonstrate other drags and carries E.g. Two Person Drag.
- The Rescuer then lays the patient on the sand above the water line and places the patient in the Recovery Position (refer to the Assessment Sheet).

Water Safety

- Explain to Surf Lifeguards the emergency procedure: "In an emergency, if you require assistance during this assessment, signal for assistance".
- There will be no more than five Surf Lifeguards performing rescues at any one time.
- It is essential that the Assessors discuss this assessment and water safety plans with the Patrol Captain (if applicable) prior to any water activities commencing.
- An IRB (with qualified and refreshed driver and crewperson) may also be arranged prior to the SLR to act as a 'safety boat' for the duration of the Tube Rescue demonstration.
- Assessors must fill out an Operational Risk Assessment on the Patrol App for any on-the-water refresher events.

Rescue Tube & Recovery Position Checklist

☐	Tube tied correctly prior to the rescue.

Entering the Water

☐	Patient identified and route plotted to patient.
☐	Rescuer enters the water, wades and duck dives to waist depth, puts swim fins on in a timely fashion and swims towards the patient (utilising surf conditions for maximal benefit).

Approaching the Patient

☐	When within voice range – reassure the patient.
☐	Stop short of the patient, adopt an appropriate position and push the rescue tube towards them.
☐	Once the patient has hold of the rescue tube and has calmed down, the rescuer should secure the rescue tube to the patient by clipping them into the appropriate brass ring.

Returning to Shore

☐	The rescuer should encourage the patient to lie back and assist by kicking, whilst the rescuer swims them both to shore.
☐	Once in the surf break zone it is recommended that the rescuer adjust their swimming style, so as to keep an eye on the patient and the surf.
☐	If a large wave approaches, the rescuer should secure the patient, and provide support whilst the wave passes.
☐	Upon reaching the shallows the rescuer shall escort the patient to dry land. The rescuer should remove their fins and secure (arms through the ankle loops) and walk backwards so as to keep an eye on the surf.

Recovery Position

☐	Patient is stable and will not roll onto their back or front.
☐	Airway is open (head tilted), positioned to allow free drainage.
☐	The position is appropriate to the patient's condition.
☐	The patient can be easily monitored.
☐	The patient can be easily rolled onto their back if the need arises.
☐	Patient is laid down on their side, well clear of the water.