

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025

**To:** All Surf Lifeguards, Instructors and Examiners.

**National or Region:** National

**Section:** Education

**Description:** Surf Lifeguard Run-Swim-Run, Use of Fins Change

**Action Requested:** Read and distribute

## What is happening?

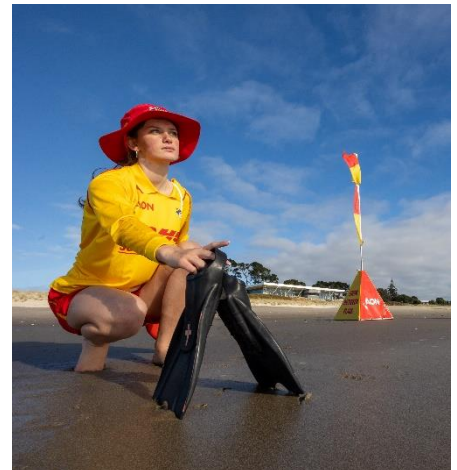
1. It is now required that all trainee Surf Lifeguards must wear fins during their **Run-Swim-Run** component of the Surf Lifeguard Examination, in all conditions.
2. All Surf Lifeguard Run-Swim-Run refreshers must also wear fins, in all conditions.

## Why is it happening?

The current Surf Lifeguard Award (SLA) training manual requires lifeguards to use fins when on patrol and performing a tube rescue. At the 2024 annual SLA Chief Examiners meeting, an item was raised to review the use of fins during the SLA Exam and subsequent surf lifeguard refreshers.

A Chief Examiner working group was set up to investigate and review the pros and cons of changing this to introduce using fins.

While the current Run-Swim-Run component is designed to assess a candidate's surf competency, it does not fully align with the equipment typically used in our lifeguarding operations. The three key reasons for change are:



### 1. Operational Relevance

Lifeguards routinely use fins during rescues, particularly in high-surf or heavy conditions. Requiring fins in this assessment increases realism, ensures candidates are proficient with rescue ready gear and better prepares them for patrol. We teach our lifeguards to use PPE in our training and reference this in the Surf Lifeguard Manual, pg. 58.

### 2. Skill Transfer and Safety

Comfort and familiarity using fins in the surf is a vital skill. Fins enable a more consistent standard of assessment and support member safety where there are strong currents or heavy shore break. It builds safety and confidence using the PPE we want our lifeguards to use in a rescue situation.

### 3. Culture Shift

The working group and National Lifesaving Committee believe that changing to use fins in the SLA Exam and lifeguard refreshers will drive a culture shift where all lifeguards have access to, carry at all times, and are confident using fins. It supports patrol readiness, standardises expectations across clubs, and ultimately leads to safer rescues. This change will also show candidates that fins are not just optional gear, they are essential rescue tools.

Requiring fins during the run-swim-run better reflects the operational context of surf lifeguarding, supports candidate safety, and reinforces critical rescue skills.

## When is it happening?

All Surf Lifeguard Award Exams and Surf Lifeguard refreshers must now wear fins for the Run-Swim-Run assessment component from **1<sup>st</sup> September 2025**.

## What does it mean to me?

**Qualified Surf Lifeguards:** You must wear fins during your Run-Swim-Run refresher component if you choose this as your assessment preference, over the 400m pool swim option.

**Surf Lifeguard Instructors:** Candidates must be taught to use fins during the Run-Swim-Run component of their surf lifeguard training.

**Surf Lifeguard Examiners:** Please review the updated SLA Examiner Manual before examining this season. All Run-Swim-Run exams must be examined wearing fins, in all conditions. The assessment time for the Run-Swim-Run component has now been reduced to 7 minutes (conditions dependent, as per the examiner manual).

**Clubs:** Ensure you have sufficient fins available for candidates, either as club equipment or personal PPE. Fins fall into the Government OPEX Funding guidelines under the 'Lifesaving Equipment Minor' section.

## Fin Types

Recommended fins for swimming in the surf environment are rubber fins with an open heel band, as pictured below.



## For more information, please contact:

Name: Belinda Slement  
Title: National Education Manger  
Email: [Belinda.slement@surflifesaving.org.nz](mailto:Belinda.slement@surflifesaving.org.nz)