
Guidelines for the risk assessment and management of event water safety – Interim results

Adam Wooler¹, Connor Moss², David Walker³ and John Clark¹
Surf Life Saving GB¹, University of Derby², RoSPA³

Background

In the UK, most national governing bodies for sport have their own risk assessment and safety management practices but there are no national guidelines. Independent event organisers only need to satisfy the requirements of the local authority where their event takes place – normally a self-certified risk assessment. This often leads to highly variable levels of event water safety provision, with no regulatory body responsible for ensuring event water safety provision is suitable, appropriate or to a recognised standard. Where companies and organisations are requested to provide a risk assessment, there is no national guidance document to refer to which could leave their risk assessment open to challenge if things go wrong. The increase in popularity of open water events, especially triathlons and long distance swims, often used as charity events, as well as the general increase in aquatic water sports and associated sporting events, has meant that this unregulated event water safety provision could be putting lives at risk.

Aims

The project, which will have largely been completed by the conference, will result in the publication of Guidelines for the Risk Assessment and Management of Event Water Safety. The guidelines will be one of the first documents to incorporate the new ISO risk management and risk assessment standards. The University of Derby will use the guidelines to design an accredited course in Event Water Safety and include it in their University Diploma in Events Safety Management. In addition, with the advent of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and its associated open water events, the provision of event water safety to a common high standard through the adoption of UK National Guidelines is paramount and when in place, will leave a lasting legacy.

Methods

The research team conducted desk-based research to ascertain current UK and International legislation, guidance and advice in relation to Water Safety at events or similar recreational activities. The team then hosted a roundtable event of the relevant stakeholders to discuss the key issues and share best practice. An in-depth study using questionnaires, observations at events, case studies, interviews and/or focus groups was also conducted.

Results

By the date of the conference, draft guidelines for consultation will be available.

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Corresponding Author

Adam Wooler
CEO
Surf Life Saving GB
19 Southernhay West
Exeter Devon UK EX1 1PJ
Email: awooler@slsgb.org.uk
Website: www.slsgb.org.uk
Telephone: +44 7976 236318