

Advanced Surf Safety and Rescue - Course Trainer Notes

Introduction

This 1-day training course is designed to help the student achieve an understanding and a practical application of the various skills and techniques required by Advanced Leaders in a moderate to advanced surf environment. The day will consist of dry land discussions, sheltered water practice and in the surf scenarios.

Venue

The course director should provide a venue which can facilitate all aspects of the course: an initial dry venue suitable for lectures and discussions, a second venue suitable for practising rescue skills and scenarios, and a third beach-based venue with surf to provide realistic conditions in which the problem solving scenario-based training will take place. There should also be the opportunity to discuss safety and rescue issues involving reefs, points and off-shore breaks.

The course director will ensure that students and their equipment are both safe and suitable for use in an advanced surf situation; the course director will be responsible for safety throughout the duration of the course and ensure that students have access to all equipment required for the course.

Equipment at this level should be of a very practical nature and may be spread throughout the group. The equipment should be able to help the student create solutions to scenarios where the surf venue is exposed and the group face the following conditions:

- No landing zone;
- Travelling with a casualty;
- Equipment failure or loss;
- Injuries;
- Travel in and out through a surf zone;
- Summoning help.

A. Risk assessment and safe practice

Section A - deals mainly with the decision making process. This session could be run indoors by means of lectures and discussions then practically applied to sections B, C and D.

The course director will produce suitable material following the principles below:

Self – Team – Victim – Equipment

This protocol for prioritisation in the rescue situation is useful in helping would-be rescuers to remember that their first priority is to themselves, then to their team, then the victim and lastly to the equipment. This should encourage rescuers to look at low risk options first, discouraging a reckless approach to rescue.

Rescue options can be considered in the following order. However, the position of the rescuer will dictate the order of priority and also the content of the rescue.

Shout – Throw – Wade – Row – GO

Lower risk ←————→ Higher risk

A1. Environmental awareness

Identify Hazards – the student should be able to identify and be conversant on all aspects of hazards within a surfing environment including the effects of weather, tides, bathymetry, environmental hazards, other water users, each other, etc. The course director will, through lectures and discussion, expand this current knowledge into a more advanced environment with examples for reefs, point breaks, off shore breaks, etc. The course director will ensure that the students understand risk assessment in an advanced surf environment and discuss controls which can be put in place to manage the risk.

Manual Handling issues – all participants need to be aware of the risks associated with their involvement in surfing and in rescues. The course director will endeavour to make the student aware of these issues and introduce and adopt appropriate coaching methodologies and practices to minimise the risks for all involved.

Beach Management - starts as far back as the planning stage when gathering forecast information, choosing the location to suit the paddlers, choosing what equipment to take and being able to manage the ability of the paddlers. Once the suitable location has been chosen, risk management, group control and communication all have to be part of the beach management system.

The course director should make the student aware of the skills necessary to be able to manage a group of competent paddlers, and set up a safety framework appropriate to the environment.

The course director should develop the following themes:

- Information gathering;

- Group/environment and objective identification;
- Decision making;
- Dynamic risk identification and management;
- Creating a safe working environment;
- Group briefing, organisation and signals.

Adapting initial plans and decisions to match changing conditions **CLAP**:

- Communication with the group – keep it simple;
- Line of sight – ensure that all surfers within the group can see signals;
- Avoidance – always assess hazards and avoid them;
- Position of most usefulness – where does the paddler need to be to be most safe and useful?

Accident/emergency/operating procedure – the students should become conversant with an emergency operating procedure which can be adapted for a variety of locations which should include: signals to the rest of the group in the case of an accident/rescue, the decision making process when effecting a rescue, methods of clear instructions of individuals' roles during a rescue, casualty evacuation and summoning help either by mobile phone, VHF radio or knowing where your nearest point of contact may be and preparing the scene for a helicopter rescue. The course director will discuss adaptations of equipment to carry and of emergency operating procedure when working on reefs, point breaks and off shore breaks.

A2. Management

Briefings to a surf group should take into consideration all of the topics discussed in this section when deciding what to say and when is the most suitable time to give

certain information to the group for maximum impact. Topics to consider should include: avoidance of hazards, paddle out and surf zones, buddies, signals and systems of communication, systems of what to do in an emergency including what to do if the leader is incapacitated in any way due to an incident, safe surfing practice, etc.

The course director will lead a discussion on the anatomy of rips and how to deal with each one individually. Also topics such as the potential need for knowing the grid reference of your area of operation especially if it is remote or off shore. This, and all other knowledge imparted during the course, will help the student to understand the concept of Proactive Incident Management. The process of ensuring primary safety of a high standard throughout the session will undoubtedly help you to avoid use of some of the secondary safety rescue techniques which the course director will go on to discuss in sections B, C and D. Using this methodology, and by sharing insights and a structure on how to constantly dynamically risk assess, the course director will help develop skills which should result in consistently safe surf sessions every time.



Although students will be familiar with the concepts of generic risk assessment in relation to rescues and the surf environment, their attention should be drawn to the principles of dynamic assessments to reflect the ever changing, “fluid” nature of surf-based paddling. During the course of a rescue, the student should be constantly reviewing the developing incident to identify any developing hazards that may not have been present when the incident initially occurred. This is a skill that should be developed as part of the students’ general paddling and will lead to an improved awareness of the primary safety skills.

Casualty management and beach evacuation – the course director will lead a workshop on the use of survival bags for deep water immersion protection, to mark your position when immersed in big water and for re-warming casualties on the beach. This session should also cover the use of shelters, first aid kits and other peripheral equipment. Discussion should take place as to the importance of local knowledge when notifying emergency services and various ways of evacuating casualties depending on injury and location, including helicopter rescue.

A3. Safety equipment

During active participation in a surf session, where a group member is a rescue award holder they have a duty of care over the other participants and should be made to understand the importance of appropriate and serviceable, personal protective equipment, especially their own. The course director will lead a discussion on what is suitable to meet the safety and rescue requirements of an advanced surf environment; this will include personal paddling kit, rescue equipment and leader/rescuer kit.

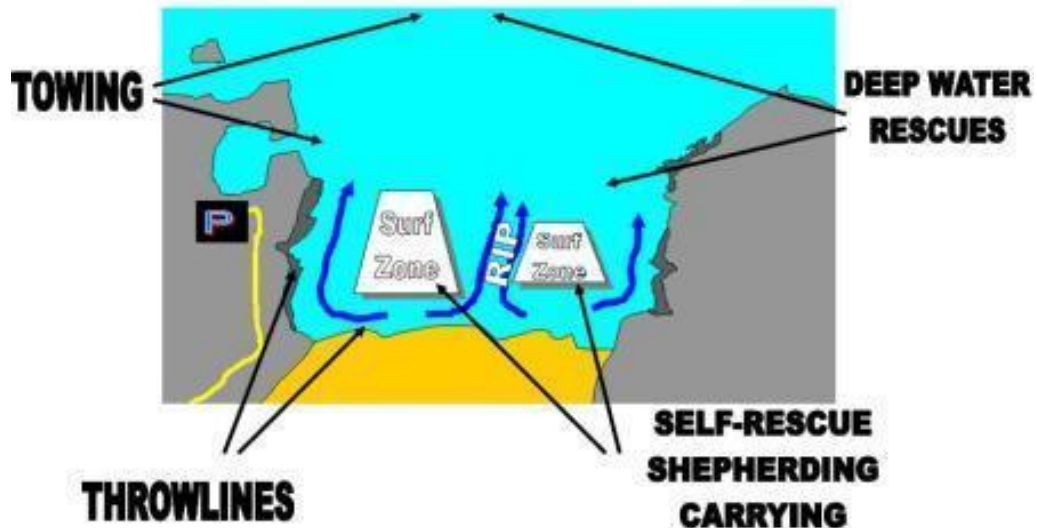
A4. Safe paddling and etiquette

The advanced surf environment, be it on a large beach break or on an off shore reef, is literally changing every minute. Participants must always be aware of changes and have the capacity to proactively adapt the group's behaviour and the "management" of the surf zone. It may be required that the group change signals, surf zones/lanes, entire areas of operations also constantly dynamically assessing and managing risk. One of the significant dangers when surfing in a group can be other group members who do not have a full grasp of the safe surfers operating procedure, referred to as surf etiquette or the "rules of the road". The course director must ensure that the student is completely conversant in surf etiquette and can apply this when in the water in order to ensure safe and incident free surfing (director to provide etiquette handout).

Rescue Skills

The course director should equip the student with a skill set which allows the paddler to be able to rescue from a variety of positions with multiple strategies. (Complicated rescue scenarios that are indicative of the types of waves and breaks surfed at this level should be engineered.) A solid understanding should be evident of the rescue building blocks, checked in a controlled environment before testing in more demanding situations. The course director should be extremely careful not to expose students to potentially dangerous exercises whilst still acquiring skills in the application of problem solving and decision making skills. Safe beaches should be the initial venue but whenever possible safe practice in challenging environments and situations not always immediately accessed from a car park should be sought out, in order to progress the participants understanding and level of competence.

RESCUE ZONES



B. Beach Based Rescue (Shout)

B1. Coach a swimmer to shore

From a position of personal safety the students will practice, gaining and maintaining the swimmer's attention, shouting clear and concise instructions to guide the swimmer into shore whilst avoiding any dangers and, where possible, maintaining contact with their surfing equipment.

B2. Rescue a swimmer using a throw line (packed and unpacked) (Throw)

The course director should set up a practice session on dry land, then in a safe water environment ensuring throwing with reasonable accuracy and consistency before setting up a scenario in the surf zone.

Throw bag rescues should be practiced from a safe and most useful position, this may be from the shore if working with a strong long shore drift or from the rocks at

the side of a bay when there may be a strong rip flowing back out to sea. The rescuer must ensure that they have access to a knife and be able to take the strain of the casualty on the rope without slipping or being pulled into the water. Team members may also help but will need to be appropriately managed by the rescuer in charge.

Throw line rescues in the surf

Here we see the swimmer in the rip and the bag being thrown over the rip into the surf zone on the other side. When the swimmer grabs the line they are instructed to lie on their back and kick.



The rescuer must ensure that the timing is accurate and the swimmer is not in danger of colliding with rocks or other obstacles if a set comes through the rip. When close, the swimmer is instructed to turn over and body surf/swim, while keeping hold of the line, towards the landing site if possible.



The rescuer should then instruct the other team members to carefully help the swimmer out of the water in between any waves that may be breaking on the rescue site. The swimmer should be helped away from the shoreline and checked for injury.

B3. Walk in rescue of a swimmer from the water (Wade)

The course director should ensure during training that the student always self-checks that personal safety precautions are taken before effecting any rescue. The scenario should involve a tired or injured swimmer close to shore who needs assistance onto the beach. The rescuer will call clear instructions to the swimmer, enter the water and go no deeper than ankle, knee or waist height in relation to the strength of the rip/long shore drift. The rescuer should help the swimmer to shore by a suitable method matching the condition of the swimmer ensuring that the spine is in line.

C. Boat Based Rescues (Row)

C1. Rescue a capsized paddler using a deep water rescue

A deep water rescue can only be performed safely and successfully out with the surf zone. The student should practice a method which can rescue various low volume, finned crafts and wave skis. If all crafts are not available, the student should have an understanding of how to adapt the rescue to accommodate other crafts.



Here we see a short, low volume finned boat rescuing a low volume long boat with an assistant. The rescuer has all the paddles and the swimmer on their boat.



The low volume stern is pulled over both boats to create a platform to allow the swimmer to re-enter their boat.



The assistant secures both the rescuer's and the swimmer's boat whilst the rescuer helps the swimmer into their boat.



The rescuer ensures that the swimmer's spray deck is on before sliding them off on to the water, whilst all are still in contact with each other, paddles are handed back. This same method can be used for all finned boats – however, care should be taken to place the “un-finned” section of the swimmer's boat to top of the rescuer's boat to prevent spray deck and/or boat damage occurring.

Ski to kayak rescues - place boat across the ski, swimmer climbs up and, as the ski sinks below surface, the ski paddler helps the swimmer into their boat, etc.

C2. Rescue an unconscious paddler from their boat

The course director will first look at several practices in simple water before setting scenarios around the surf zone. Practices should include kayak and ski paddler and options of what to do once the casualty has been righted.

C3. Rescue a conscious entrapped paddler from their boat

The course director will lead discussions on various scenarios of when and how a paddler could become entrapped whilst surfing, e.g. rescuing an entrapped ski paddler where the waist belt has slipped up underneath the arm pits, the feet are out of the foot loops and paddler “hangs” him/herself, thus restricting breathing, then continuing to discuss getting the casualty to the beach, casualty care and evacuation.

C4. In a kayak/ski approach and shepherd a swimmer to shore

In the surf zone, the student will demonstrate the ability to shepherd a conscious and communicative swimmer and their equipment to the shore, taking into consideration the position and safety of the rescuer and the swimmer and the often restricted ability to communicate.



C5. In a kayak/ski approach and transport a swimmer to shore

In the surf zone, the student will demonstrate the ability to “piggy back” a swimmer on the stern or bow of their kayak and transport them into shore whilst maintaining communication. On a wave ski this will necessitate hanging on to foot loops, surfing the ski with the stern pointed forwards with the casualty kicking legs in the water or, alternatively, with the ski being used as a surfboard as in two-man surfboard rescue (lying on the ski, with rescuer hanging onto the back of ski holding onto the casualty’s legs and ski both lying in the water surfing in).



C6. Recover an unaccompanied boat to the shore

The student should demonstrate recovering an unaccompanied boat to the shore by methods such as: twisting to empty the boat and pushing in on the oncoming waves then recovering and repeating until at shore. Rescuer must ensure the way is clear of other water users to avoid risk of injury.

C7. Recover an upright, but incapacitated paddler to the shore

The student will take part in problem solving scenarios to get an upright, incapacitated paddler to shore through the surf zone. The injuries could be

dislocated shoulder/thumb, injury to head/neck, bleeding, etc. The rescuer could use a tow line up to the surf zone then a double or triple raft, etc. Discussion should take place on the positives and negatives of towing close to a surf environment.



C8. Recover an abandoned paddle to the shore

The student should demonstrate an effective method of recovering an abandoned paddle to shore – paddling with 2 paddles or throwing the paddle in on a wave, chasing and repeating, etc.

C9. Self-Rescue

The student is required to demonstrate a method of self-rescue – re-entry and roll (accepting that this is not achievable in all craft), paddling a swamped craft ashore, capsize and swim a kayak and a paddle to shore, ski surfing in without a paddle sitting and lying. Kayaker to surf in without paddle.

C10. Rescue a swimmer from a rip

The student should be able to identify a swimmer in difficulty by the use of the recognised distress signal wave – clenched fist with a straight arm waving side to side.



The rescuer has to be confident to pick up the swimmer, in the rip on their craft, and ferry glide them back into the surf zone and in towards the shore.

D. Swimmer to swimmer rescues (Go)

Swimmer to swimmer rescues fringe onto the realms of the Beach Lifeguard Award and it should be noted that this programme is not intended to replace the skills taught and assessed on courses of that nature. However, there may be times when the rescuer is in a position out of their boat and has to quickly affect a rescue. In most cases, if the swimmer is conscious and wearing a buoyancy aid, there will never be a need to enter the water as a rescue swimmer.

D1. Rescue an injured/tired swimmer

The course director should develop students' problem solving skills to help arm them for differing eventualities. Correct deployment of appropriate tows and strategies for various injuries with multiple outcomes should be explored.

D2. Rescue an unconscious swimmer

If the casualty is unconscious, the ability to rescue from a kayak is significantly hindered and a swimmer to swimmer method may be the most appropriate. Methods of towing should be explored, with students incorporating protection of the airway as waves pass by. Casualty management through all of the surf zones should be discussed, always returning to the 'self–team–victim–equipment' principles.

D3. Principles of deep water EAV

The course director should discuss that, as far as possible, casualties should always be removed from the water as quickly as possible if they require EAV, however, it may be required to start rescue breathing whilst the casualty is in the water. Students should be shown the rafted resuscitation platform and have the opportunity to simulate the mouth to nose technique.

D4. Use of rescue aids

The course director will run a discussion or workshop to explore various rescue aids that can be available to a surf rescuer and their various advantages and disadvantages. This could include some of the following – Pietersen tubes, rescue boards and skis, and swim fins.

Acknowledgements

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