



Circular 096:18

Date: 8th October 2018

Subject: Observational Patrolling method

Attention: Club Lifesaving Officers and Patrol Captains

Description: The information below summarizes the observational patrolling method. For more information or to receive a full copy of the draft SOPs please be in touch with the Lifeguard Supervisor - Volunteer Services

Circulars are available at: <http://lifesaving.org.nz/lifesaving/lifesaving-operations-circulars/>

Observational patrols

The observational patrolling method will be tried by SLSNR for the duration of the 2018/19 season. The concept introduces managing a beach by using a dedicated surveillance service with POM minimum lifeguards and equipment, without the use of the red and yellow patrol flags on the water's edge. However, tower flags, signage and rescue equipment will remain visible to inform the public that a lifesaving service is active. Observational patrols will use skilled lifeguards with a full complement of rescue and first aid equipment to provide a labour efficient alternative to lifesaving services at a patrol location. This will allow clubs to reduce the amount of members required on patrol to POM minimum for the duration of a **fixed** observational patrol. A **temporary** option also exists to operate without a flagged area when surf conditions are small, beach headcounts low and the weather intermittently severe. The minimum requirements for clubs to use this patrolling method are:

1. Number of Lifeguards: Minimum numbers and qualifications as stated in the POM section 5.5 (Base Patrol)
 2. Equipment (rescue and first aid): POM minimum as stated in section 3.2 (Lifesaving Equipment)
 3. Patrol Captains must be 18+ and have at least 3 years patrolling experience
- **Temporary measures** relate to the flexible use of the patrol method without downgrading the number of lifeguards (see table 1). Temporary timescales can last from 15 minutes to several hours; dependent on weather conditions, total headcounts and changes in surf conditions. **However, Patrol Captains must be confident that in water conditions do not warrant a flagged patrol area.** Environmental factors to consider include rip currents, location of inshore holes & strength of offshore winds
 - **Fixed measures** relate to permanent use of the patrolling method for the duration of daily patrol operations, this will permanently downgrade the number of lifeguards required on patrol to POM minimum (see table 1)

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Table 1: Conditions of use and thresholds of the Observational Patrolling method; the codes relate to *codes for recording patrol conditions* as used within the SLSNZ PC report form.

	Rationale	Oversight	Wave height/Wind strength thresholds (codes)	Weather (codes)	Flags required	No. of lifeguards required
Observational patrol	Scenario 1 (temporary): Weather conditions are a H&S risk to members on flag duty. Conditions do not warrant a flagged area	PC and SurfCom	< 0.5m (1) Light offshore winds (1-2)	Intermittent heavy Rainfall (5)	No flagged area required	NA
	Scenario 2 (temporary): On beach and in water headcounts <50 persons. Conditions do not warrant a flagged area	PC and Duty Officer	< 0.5m (1) Light offshore winds (1-2)	NA	No flagged area required	NA
	Scenario 3 (fixed): Forecasted severe rainfall event for full duration of patrolling hours	PC and Duty Officer	NA	Severe rainfall* (5)	No flagged area required	POM minimum: the remaining patrol members can be sent home
	Scenario 4 (Fixed): Poor water quality forecast for duration of patrolling hours	PC and SurfCom	NA	NA	Red Flag - 'swimming not advised'	POM minimum: the remaining patrol members can be sent home
	Scenario 5 (Temporary): Extension of patrolling hours	PC and Duty Officer	NA	NA	No flagged area required	POM minimum

* Severe rainfall thresholds as designated by Metservice: Rainfall: 50 mm or more in a 6-hour period

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- The decision to move between one patrolling method and another shall be decided on a case by case basis and must be communicated to either SurfCom or the Duty Officer. For **fixed** use of this a patrolling method a discussion between the Duty Officer and the Patrol Captain must occur before patrols are downgraded. See table 1+2 for guidance
- If an SLSNR auditor, staff member or Delta Officer arrives at the beach and the observational patrol is not being used correctly, clubs will receive a breach in Patrol Operating Standards
- During an observational patrol, proactive roaming of the patrol location is still a requirement as outlined in the POM

Contingencies

- An active callout squad is strongly advised for all clubs who wish to use a **fixed** observational patrol, with a recommended response time <20 mins. This will form an emergency response mechanism in the event of an incident or search as per after hours' procedure outlined in the POM

Foul weather patrols vs observational patrols

- Scenario 1 (**table 1**) is an extension of the Foul Weather Patrol; the only difference is this variation of the Observational Patrol method must only be used in where conditions **do not warrant the use of a flagged area**. See wave height/wind threshold guide to thresholds in **table 2** for guidance.
- E.g. If wave height is below 0.5m, offshore wind strength is still (1) to light (2) and there is intermittent heavy rain an Observational Patrol (**temporary**) is to be used. If wave height is above 0.5m, offshore winds are moderate to strong and there is intermittent heavy rain a Foul Weather Patrol is to be used.

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Patrolling Method	Rationale	Oversight	Wave height / wind strength thresholds (codes)	Weather (Codes)	Flags required	No. of lifeguards required
Base patrol	Normal operations. The flagged area can be safely managed by the patrol	PC	NA	Clear, scattered cloud, overcast & scattered showers (1-4)	Red & yellow	Full complement
Observational patrol	Scenario 1 (Temporary): Weather conditions are a H&S risk to members on flag duty. Conditions do not warrant a flagged area	PC and SurfCom	< 0.5m (1), Light offshore winds (1,2)	Intermittent heavy rainfall (5)	No flagged area required	Full complement
	Scenario 2 (temporary): On beach and in water headcounts <50 persons. Conditions do not warrant a flagged area	PC and Duty Officer	< 0.5m (1), Light offshore winds (1,2)	NA	No flagged area required	Full complement
	Scenario 2 (Fixed): Forecasted severe rainfall event forecast for duration of patrolling hours	PC and Duty Officer	NA	Severe rainfall* (5)	No flagged area required	POM minimum: the remaining patrol members can be sent home
	Scenario 3 (Fixed): Poor water quality forecast for duration of patrolling hours	PC and SurfCom	NA	NA	Red Flag - 'swimming not advised'	POM minimum: the remaining patrol members can be sent home
	Scenario 4 (Temporary): Extension of patrolling hours	PC and Duty Officer	NA	NA	No flagged area required	POM minimum

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Foul weather patrol	The Patrol Captain defines there is requirement to use a flagged area to prevent drowning and injury to members of the public.	PC	0.5m + (2-5) Moderate-strong offshore winds (3,4)	Intermittent heavy rainfall (5)	Red & yellow	Full complement
Dangerous Conditions Patrol	Dangerous weather/surf. The flagged area cannot be safely managed by the patrol	PC	NA	Severe weather* (5)	Red Flag - 'swimming not advised'	POM minimum

* Severe Weather thresholds as designated by MetService: Rainfall: 50 mm or more in a 6-hour period; Wind severe gales: Minimum mean speed of 90 km/h, or Frequent gusts exceeding 110 km/h

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