

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

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SOP 3.2 – Side-by-side Vehicles

Section 3 – Vehicle Operations

Scope

To describe the procedure to be followed by applicable agency personnel involved in the operation of Side-by-Side Vehicles (SSV).

Audience

	Patrol Captain	Patrol Member	State Duty Officer	Area Lifesaving Ops Officer (LOO)	EMCaR Staff	LSV Member
Basic Awareness						☒
Working Knowledge		☒				
Expert Knowledge	☒		☒	☒	☒	

Responsibilities

Name	Definition
Patrol Captain	Responsible for the coordination of all Patrol Members whilst on patrol and in the event of an incident; therefore, their instructions should be followed promptly. Provide an important role in being responsible for the health and safety of members conducting volunteer patrols and ensuring that safety is front and centre of all patrol activities. Note - This position in lifeguard services is titled Team Leader Refer to RS 1.1.1 for additional duties.
Patrol Member	Undertake several roles, including aquatic rescues, providing first aid and emergency care and providing surf safety information to the public. Note - This position in lifeguard services is titled Lifeguard Refer to RS 1.1.2 for additional duties.

Policy

Life Saving Victoria requires all Patrolling members to adhere to the established policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure safe and effective practices relating to operating Side-by-side (SSV) Vehicles.

Procedure

Side by Side Vehicles

A "Side-by-Side Vehicle" (SSV), also known as a utility task vehicle (UTV), is an off-road vehicle with a seating arrangement where the driver and passengers sit side-by-side within a roll cage. These vehicles typically have a steering wheel and foot pedals for control, and a minimum of four wheels.

SSVs enable suitably qualified lifesaving personnel to be more mobile and capable of quickly responding to emergencies both inside and outside their patrolled area.

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Qualifications

Lifesavers/lifeguards required to drive an SSV as part of their patrolling duties will only be permitted to do so if they hold the following driver qualifications or certifications:

- Victorian driver's license (provisional or open) suitable for that vehicle, and
- Appropriate or additional lifesaving qualifications for the patrol/response task (refer to the relevant SOP), i.e. hold current Bronze Medallion, Surf Rescue Certificate or Radio Operator Certificate to comply with the requirement to operate a LSV Radio
- Side-by-side Vehicle Operator Award or previous equivalent; and
- Vehicle induction (specific to that vehicle).

Note – Provisional drivers must display 'P plates' at all times when in control of the vehicle

Operational Requirements

- All SSVs are to meet SLSA gear and equipment specifications as specified in the SLSA Gear and Equipment List.
- All Australian Road Rules and vehicle regulations (including registration, speed, seat belts, red lights and parking) must be observed. Speed should be minimised at every opportunity. SSVs are not exempt from any fines or infringements, including operating during emergencies.
- Manufacturer's guidelines, local government, local land manager and state regulations concerning vehicle operations must always be adhered to.
- The SSV must not exceed 20km/h under normal operating conditions. The speed limit in heavily populated areas and between the red and yellow flags is 5km/h.
- It is the operator's responsibility to evaluate the environment to determine a safe and appropriate speed within these limits.
- Flashing amber lights (fully visible for 360 degrees) and headlights must be turned on whenever in motion.
- Permanently branded lifesaving vehicles must only be operated by approved personnel for approved duties.

Registration

All SSVs must be registered with VicRoads annually using either the Special Work Vehicle Registration form, known as a 'Machinery Pack' or full registration. For more information on this, please contact your Club Support Officer.

Equipment

All SSVs must carry the following lifesaving equipment and hold the following safety items:

- Appropriate rescue equipment e.g. rescue board or rescue tube + fins.
- Approved LSV Radio, fitted or portable (Inc. waterproof bag and harness)
- Loudhailer
- First aid, resuscitation kits and Automated External Defibrillator (AED)

All SSVs must have the following fitted:

- Reverse beepers (shall activate whenever in reverse)
- Flashing light (shall activate whenever SSV is running)
- Side doors/barriers (shall be securely closed when operating SSV)
- Towbar

Any modifications, including roll bars, carry racks and storage containers, must adhere to the manufacturer's guidelines and be carried out in consultation with the manufacturer or dealer and LSV.

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Vehicle Branding

Branding for all SSV vehicles must comply with the SLSA Equipment and Uniform Branding Guidelines. These guidelines can be obtained from the SLSA Hub, <https://hub.sls.com.au/dashboard/document-library>

When the vehicle is being disposed of, all lifesaving branding and equipment must be removed (refer to WI 1.4.2 – Disposal of Lifesaving Equipment).

Flashing Lights

The use of flashing lights must be restricted to on-beach patrolling/emergencies and must be used on gazetted roads. Lifesaving vehicles can only use amber flashing lights legally. A siren must not be fitted to the vehicle by law, and installation, even without use, is illegal.

The use of flashing lights does not exempt lifesaving services from any laws, regulations and by-laws (including speed/parking, etc.).

Driving on Beaches

The following information provides general advice on the safe use of SSV vehicles during normal lifesaving service operations.

- Wide-shelving beaches indicate firm, packed sand and good driving conditions.
- Steep, short beaches indicate soft sand and challenging driving conditions.
- Avoid excessive use of engine power and wheel spinning.

Before driving on Sand

- Lower tyre pressure to 65% of the recommended highway pressure
- Ensure vehicle is in high range Four Wheel Drive mode (H4)

Stopping and Turning

- Avoid heavy braking, where possible, try to coast to a stop
- When stopping on the beach, always stop above the high-water mark, with the vehicle facing downhill.
- Maintain a firm grip on the steering wheel with both hands.

Avoid driving across slopes where possible; the safest route is directly up or down slopes. Driving in Salt Water

- At times, it may be necessary to drive through salt water; however, this should be kept to a minimum.
- Clubs should thoroughly rinse an SSV that has been driven in salt water immediately after use, including thorough rinsing under the vehicle.

Bogged Vehicle

Step 1

- Check that you have correctly engaged 4WD.
- Check the vehicle tyre pressure is appropriate for the sand conditions and adjust if necessary. Take note to reinflate tyres where required after beach driving.
- Rock the vehicle forwards and backwards by alternating between forward and reverse gear at an idle and low range.
- Do not over-rev the engine and avoid wheel spin.

Step 2 (if Step 1 fails)

- Dig away sand from the front and back of the wheel and anywhere it is caught under the body.
- Drive the vehicle out, being careful not to over-rev and spin the wheels—the vehicle should come free on the first attempt.

The use of traction boards will assist a bogged vehicle significantly. Always ensure to use the supplied

locator straps when deploying traction boards.

Remember, your vehicle is high profile and always be conservative and considerate when driving on the beach.

Always hose down your vehicle at the end of the day to ensure all salt and sand deposits are washed away and the vehicle is ready for use.

Special Considerations

All members need to ensure that the protection and preservation of life is always maintained.

In the application of this SOP, the following safety considerations apply:

- When assessing risk, responder safety is paramount
- When driving in close proximity to the public in areas such as beaches and public car parks, due care should be taken. At times, drivers may have limited vision; it is recommended that, as well as driving slowly and carefully, another member be used to 'spot' risk areas and warn the driver. For example, the 'spotter' may be seated within the vehicle or outside the vehicle, e.g. at a corner in an access track, or where an access path meets a ramp at a T-intersection.
- Suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (i.e. role/task dependent uniform or Hi Vis jacket) and serviceable Lifesaving equipment should always be available for use by members.
- Clubs must ensure compliance with OHS guidelines and procedures, and the use of protective clothing or equipment provided at all required times.
- All members are responsible for identifying hazards, monitoring and assessing risk. Any incident which involves an injury, near miss, damage to equipment or any other hazard observed in the workplace should be reported as soon as practicable.
- The safety of the individual member and others should always be considered.

If involved in an accident, please refer to SOP 3.3 Accidents involving Lifesaving Vehicles and SSVs

Related Information

The following references were used in the development of the SOP:

- SOP 1.3 – Patrol Equipment
- SOP 3.1 Lifesaving Motor Vehicles
- SOP 3.3 Accidents involving Lifesaving Vehicles and Side-by-side Vehicles
- SLSA Policy 1.06 – Gear and Equipment
- SLSA Equipment and Uniform Branding Guidelines
- WI 1.4.2 – Disposal of Lifesaving Equipment

Definitions

4WD:	<i>Four Wheel Drive</i>
AED:	<i>Automated External Defibrillator</i>
EMCaR:	Emergency Management Capability and Response
LOO:	Lifesaving Operations Officer
LSV:	Life Saving Victoria
LSV Comms:	Life Saving Victoria Communications
LSV Member:	Any financial volunteer of an affiliated lifesaving club, any staff member employed by LSV
OHS:	Occupational Health and Safety
PPE:	Personal Protective Equipment
RS:	Role Statement
SLSA:	Surf Life Saving Australia
SSV:	Side-by-side Vehicle

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SOP: Standard Operating Procedure
UTV: Utility Task Vehicle
VicRoads: Statutory corporation responsible for driver licensing and vehicle registration in Victoria, Australia
WI: Work Instruction

Attachments

Nil

Revision Version Control

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0.1	26 June 2025	S. White	Initial Draft Documentation

Endorsement

Effective Date	Endorsed By:
15 October 2025	Kirsty Robertson (COO)