

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

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SOP 3.1 – Lifesaving Motor Vehicles

Section 3 – Vehicle Operations

Scope

To describe the procedure to be followed by applicable agency personnel involved in the operation of lifesaving motor vehicles.

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 essential 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 a number of 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 lifesaving motor vehicles.

Procedure

Lifesaving Motor Vehicles

Lifesaving Motor Vehicles include 4WD utility or SUVs used to transport rescue equipment to the beach and may include the towing of equipment trailers or power craft.

For the purposes of this SOP, this document does not include Side-by-side Vehicles (refer to SOP 3.2 Side-by-side Vehicles).

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Qualifications

Lifesavers/lifeguards required to drive 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 with current expiry date entered on Surfguard; and
- Appropriate or additional lifesaving qualifications for the patrol/response task (refer to SOP 1.1 Patrol Operations); and
- Vehicle induction (specific to that vehicle).

Operation - General

Lifesaving vehicles must abide at all times with speed limits and all relevant laws and regulations (national, state and local) relating to vehicles (including registrations, speed, seat belts, red lights, parking, etc.). Lifesaving vehicles are not exempt from any fines and infringements, including during emergencies.

Permanently branded lifesaving vehicles must only be operated by approved personnel for approved duties.

Operation – On Beach

Vehicles operating on the beach must minimise speed and must operate with headlights and hazard lights on at all times.

The vehicle should 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.

Registration

All Lifesaving Vehicles must be registered with VicRoads annually. For information on this, please contact your Club Support Officer.

Equipment

It is required that all vehicles assigned to patrol/response duties are fitted with the following items:

- Lifesaving branding.
- Reversing beepers.
- Amber flashing lights—visible 360 degrees around the vehicle.

It is recommended that all vehicles assigned to patrol/response duties carry the following lifesaving equipment during operational times:

- Oxygen resuscitation equipment + AED + first aid kit.
- Rescue board.
- Rescue tube + fins,
- Approved LSV radio.
- Loud Hailer/portable PA system.
- Spinal board & straps/stretchers, and
- Torch.

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. To confirm this, contact Lifesaving Operations.

Vehicle Branding

Branding for all lifesaving vehicles must comply with the SLSA Equipment and Uniform Branding Guidelines. These guidelines can be obtained from the SLSA portal, library and then the SLSA Members Portal.

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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

Use of flashing lights must be restricted to dedicated and approved lifesaving vehicles (not private vehicles).

The use of flashing lights must be restricted to on-beach patrolling/emergencies and must not be used on public roads. Lifesaving vehicles can legally only use amber flashing lights. 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).

Driving on Beaches

The following information provides general advice on the safe use of 4WD 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 placard highway pressure (tyre placard is located on the driver's door frame)
- 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 a 4WD 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 has been lowered; you may need to lower the pressure further (minimum 25% of placarded highway pressure)
- **Take note to reinflate tyres before driving on highways.**
- 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.

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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 maintained at all times.

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 and the vehicle driven
- Suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) 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 be considered at all times.

Related Information

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

- RS 1.1.1 – Patrol Captain RS 1.1.2 – Patrol Member
- SOP 1.3 – Patrol Equipment
- WI 4.1.1 – LSV Comms Sign On and Off
- SLISA Equipment and Uniform Branding Guidelines
- WI 1.4.2 – Disposal of Lifesaving Equipment

Abbreviations

4WD:	Four Wheel Drive
AED:	Automated External Defibrillator
EMCaR:	Emergency Management Capability and Response
LOO:	Lifesaving Operations Officer
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
OHS:	Occupational Health and Safety
RS:	Role Statement
SLISA:	Surf Life Saving Australia
SSV:	Side-by-side Vehicle
SOP:	Standard Operating Procedure
VicRoads:	Statutory corporation responsible for driver licensing and vehicle registration in Victoria, Australia
WI:	Work Instruction

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Attachments

Nil

Revision Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Details
0.1	26 June 2025	S. White	Initial Draft Documentation

Endorsement

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