

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES

WATER SKIING

Baptist communities are often involved in water based activities during the warmer months. One of the most popular activities is water skiing. While this activity can be extremely enjoyable, there are inherent risks that need to be managed to minimise the risk of injury and damage.

This checklist sets out matters for consideration when conducting a risk assessment for water skiing.

Location

Selecting the correct location for water skiing is very important. The following should be considered when selecting and using a location:

- Identify shallow water that could impact safety of skiing
- Locate and monitor hazards (sandbars, rocks, snags). Design ski courses to avoid such obstacles
- Organisers should identify the boundaries within which skiing can take place. This will take account of designated zones for skiing (state and location specific)
- Understand the likely impact of marine creatures (e.g. snakes, stingers, bluebottles, sharks, etc.) in the chosen location. Be prepared to change plans if likelihood of biting/attack is high
- Observe restrictions in relation to speed when in proximity to swimmers, other boats, divers jetties and wharves
- Familiarise drivers and observers with the location
- Observe water conditions (chop, waves, currents, tides. etc.) and consider their impact on skiing
- Establish whether any local underwater vegetation could impact skiing safety
- Check the location for floating debris that could impact boats and skiers.
- The location should allow access to launch and retrieve boats; it also should have space for shore based participants to wait until their turn for skiing.
- Ensure water quality is suitable for skiing (no pollution) – in some cases water quality may be very poor after heavy rain or prolonged dry periods.
- Determine whether the activity should proceed due to abnormal weather conditions – too hot, wind, storms, etc.

Driver

- Ensure that the driver holds a License required by the jurisdiction in which the skiing is to happen (note that interstate licences are valid where a licence holder has lived in a jurisdiction for less than 3 months)

The information provided is of a general nature only and may not identify all matters that need to be included in the design of effective controls for the subject area. Professional advice should be obtained on individual circumstances.

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES

WATER SKIING

- Ensure that the driver and observer have established clear communications protocols (including hand signals for speed up, slow down, turn, back to shore, cut motor, OK after all, stop and all OK).
- Does the driver have a communications device to summon emergency assistance (e.g. a mobile phone with coverage)?
- BIS recommends that correctly fitted approved Personal Floatation Devices (PFD) should be worn by drivers. In many jurisdictions the wearing of PFDs is mandatory.
- In many locations, there will be designated areas for skiing. Drivers should only drive in approved locations. In the absence of designated skiing areas, then general state or territory rules about skiing should be observed, e.g. distance from swimmers, speeds, etc.
- Ensure that drivers are aware of their need to be aware of the location of other boats and skiers, to minimise the risk of collision.

Observer

- A separate observer must be present in each ski boat and must sit facing backwards so they can observe the skier(s) at all times.
- Does the observer have a communications device to summon emergency assistance (e.g. a mobile phone with coverage)?
- Is each observer experienced in their role? If not, what instruction has been provided?
- Each observer should know the standard hand signals to communicate with skiers and the driver, including: speed up, slow down, turn, back to shore, cut motor, OK after all, stop and all OK.
- BIS recommends that observers wear correctly fitted Personal Floatation Devices (PFD). In many jurisdiction the wearing of PFDs is mandatory.
- Ensure that each observer is aware of the need to be alert to possible collisions.

Skiers

- The skiing capability of each skier should be assessed. Skiing activities should be tailored to an individual's capability.
- Skiers should be instructed in correct skiing technique to minimise the possibility of them being injured.
- Each skier should practice floating with a buoyancy device in deep water prior to skiing.
- Each skier should know the standard hand signals to communicate with the observer and the driver, including: speed up, slow down, turn, back to shore, cut motor, OK after all, stop and all OK.
- Swimming ability of each skier should be determined prior to commencing skiing activities.
- Ensure the skier is wearing a correctly fitted Personal Floatation Device (PFD).
- Medical plans should be in place for each skier with pre-existing medical conditions, e.g. allergies, etc.

The information provided is of a general nature only and may not identify all matters that need to be included in the design of effective controls for the subject area. Professional advice should be obtained on individual circumstances.

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES WATER SKIING

Spectators / Non-skiers

- Ensure that spectators are provided with a safe area to observe. This may include a safe swimming area.
- Appropriate supervision should be in place for swimmers who are not skiing.

Boats

- Ensure that all boats are appropriately registered – sight copies of current registration.
- Establish what insurance is in place in relation to each boat – sight certificates of currency.
- Insurance policies should include water skiing extensions
- Ensure that correct safety equipment is carried in each boat.
- Confirm that ropes and skis are in good condition – visual inspection required.
- Ensure the availability of rescue craft.

Lifesaving

- Arrange for at least one qualified lifesaver (Bronze Medallion) to be on hand.
- Ensure that qualified first aid practitioners are present including at least one competent in performing CPR.
- Does the group have the means of contacting emergency services (mobile phone with coverage)?

Safety Equipment

- Make sure that Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs) are available for all skiing participants.
- Ensure that PFDs are in good condition (visual check) and are correctly worn.
- Consider the provision of Wetsuit pants for skiers.
- Consider the provision of helmets for younger skiers.

Other Craft

- Ensure that drivers and observers understand the need to be alert to the presence of other watercraft at all times.

Transport

- What consideration has been given to the risks associated with transporting boats to the skiing location?
- What consideration has been given to the risk associated with launching and recovering boats?

The information provided is of a general nature only and may not identify all matters that need to be included in the design of effective controls for the subject area. Professional advice should be obtained on individual circumstances.

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES WATER SKIING

Insurance

- It is important that event organisers sight proof (Certificate of Currency) of current insurance for each boat. Ensure that boats are insured and that the insurance covers legal liability for water-sports and damage to other property.
- Baptist Insurance does not provide cover for participants in skiing competitions.

Common Water Issues

Certain risks and controls apply to all water based activities. For assistance in understanding those risks refer to the following publication on the BIS website – Risk Management Considerations – “General Water Activities”. The address for this document is:

<http://www.baptistinsurance.com.au/sites/default/files/Vero%20Water%20Activities%20information.pdf>

Common Outing / Camping Issues

Certain risks are common to any planned youth activity. For a guide to the risks that might arise please refer to the BIS Risk Checklist – Churches “Youth Activities”.

The address for this document is:

http://www.baptistinsurance.com.au/sites/default/files/BIS001%20Chk_Churches_Youth%20activities.pdf