



Bulletin

Title:	Mandatory Surf Helmets in Surf Boats – Updated Implementation Plan
Document ID:	SLSA Bulletin 04/13-14
Department:	Capacity and Capability
Audience:	Surf Boat Participants, State/Territory Centres, Surf Boat Committee/ASRL
Summary:	This bulletin outlines updates to the implementation timeline and implementation policies which were confirmed by the SLSA Board at its meeting on 27th October 2013.

Background:

In August 2013 the SLSA Board made a decision to mandate the wearing of surf helmets in surf boat competition and in surf boat training effective 1 January 2014 (see SLSA Bulletin 02/13-14 issued 26/08/2013).

Since the release of this decision, a number of operational impacts and considerations have been evaluated in consultation with the Australian Surf Rowers League (ASRL) and State/Territory centres to ensure an effective implementation of the SLSA Board decisions. SLSA reinforces that surf helmets will become mandatory in both training and competition. The following decisions relate to the implementation of these decisions.

Decisions:

At its meeting on 27 October 2013, the SLSA Board made the following decisions with regard to implementation of the mandatory wearing of surf helmets in surf boats:

- 1) Effective from 1st October 2014 the SLSA Board mandate EN1385 certified and SLSA approved (SLSA approved after satisfactory fit for purpose testing of the product) surf helmets be worn in surf boat competition and in surf boat training.
- 2) That accredited surf boat sweeps holding a minimum current level 1 SLSA coaching accreditation be permitted to issue a dispensation of the mandatory wearing of a certified surf helmet in a surf boat training context subject to completion of a documented SLSA approved risk assessment that determines an acceptably low risk level should helmets not be worn.

Note: Please refer to SLSA Water Safety Procedure issued October 2012 for more information regarding pre-activity risk assessment. The SLSA smartphone “risk apps” are an acceptable form of pre-activity risk assessment.

- 3) That there is a mandatory appointment of a ‘boat panel’ of at least three (3) qualified, accredited and experienced surf boat sweeps, appointed by the event referee (or their delegated representative), to assess hazards and provide advice to the competition committee regarding sport specific safety considerations including recommending that surf helmets be optional for a competition in the case of low surf zone hazard levels.



- 4) That a competition committee (or duly authorised person / committee) be permitted to issue a dispensation of the mandatory wearing of a certified surf helmet in a surf boat competition subject to completion of a documented SLSA approved risk assessment, and having considered advice from the appointed surf boat panel, that determines an acceptably low risk level should helmets not be worn. As a guideline, a nominal wave height of 1m be the highest threshold by which a decision to not wear helmets be considered.

- 5) That a review of implementation be completed May/June 2015 (i.e. after first full season of implementation) to consider any opportunities to optimise surf boat safety with regard to use of surf helmets.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Education:

1. The above decisions reinforce that SLSA's default position is to mandate the wearing of surf helmets in surf boat training and competition. That said, the decision allows for accredited sweeps (in a training context) and a competition safety authority (in competition context - such as a competition committee) to allow the optional wearing of surf helmets where the surf hazard levels are very low.
2. The SLSA Board has determined that a nominal wave height of 1m be considered as the maximum wave height threshold where surf helmets may be considered for optional use. Wave height is only one consideration in assessing surf zone hazards (examples of others could include: a heavy shore break, littoral drift, shorter wave periods, wind strength and direction) thus accredited sweeps (training context) and the competition safety authority (competition context) will be required to complete a risk assessment in determining any decision to declare surf helmets optional.
3. SLSA highly recommends (effective immediately) that surf helmets be worn by surf boat crews where there are breaking or cresting waves in the surf zone.
4. SLSA will be developing and releasing video based education to assist members with implementation of surf helmets in surf boats. Modules to be covered will include:
 - a) Understanding surf helmet certification and approval
 - b) Correct sizing and fitting of surf helmets
 - c) Safety and Risk Management (training environment)
 - d) Safety and Risk Management (competition environment)

Surf Sport Rules:

1. A supplementary bulletin will be issued at a later date which drafts these decisions into the SLSA Surf Sport Manual (34th Edition). In particular, changes will include:
 - 5.1 (f): Update to Surf Boat Panel - Surf Boat Panel to be a mandatory panel for all surf boat competition (currently an optional provision)
 - 5.1 General Conditions – Surf Boats – New rule to be added outlining the mandatory wearing of helmets in competition unless completion of a SLSA approved risk assessment indicates a sufficiently low hazard level in order for the competition safety authority to declare the wearing of surf helmets optional.



Consultation:

1. Throughout implementation of this decision, SLSA shall continue to consult closely with the SLSA Surf Boat Committee / ASRL to ensure all impacts on surf boat participants are well considered, safe and appropriate.

Approved Surf Helmets:

1. SLSA has approved the Gath Sports "Gath Gedi" helmet (<http://www.gathsports.com/products.php?cat=10>).
2. In October 2013 James Cook University, with oversight from SAI Global quality assurance consultants, evaluated 13 models of surf helmets. SLSA will advise any additional helmet models that become approved once testing results are received.