

EXT 031: SHARK HAZARD RESPONSE

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to –

- 1.1. Provide direction for responding to shark attacks and shark sightings, as well as the broader approach to water safety warnings and information provided to the public.
- 1.2. Guide the administration of the Shire of Esperance Property Local Law 2009, under which a sign may be erected to regulate, prohibit or restrict specific activities on the beach or in the water and the giving of directions to swimmers to leave the water if a shark is suspected of being in the vicinity of the beach.

Scope

This policy applies to beach areas under the care, control or management of the Shire, excluding privately owned land, land under the care control or management of another government agency, extending along the coast from the Shire of Ravensthorpe boundary to the Shire of Dundas boundary.

Interpretation

Authorised Person means the Chief Executive Officer or a person or class of persons appointed under section 9.10 of the *Local Government Act 1995* for the purpose of administering the Shire of Esperance Property Local Law 2009

SLSWA means Surf Life Saving Western Australia

Patrolled Beach means a beach that has a SLSWA beach safety and surveillance service in operation.

Unverified Shark Sighting means a shark sighting reported to the Shire from Water Police WA and forwarded to the Shire from the Water Police WA.

Verified Shark Sighting means a shark sighting reported to the Shire from WA Government Shark Monitoring Network.

General Principles

- 4.1. The Chief Executive Officer will prepare more detailed internal procedures/protocol to supplement this policy and to guide operational staff in the exercise of their functions. The Chief Executive Officer will consult with Councillors as appropriate in the development of those procedures/protocol.
- 4.2. The policy acknowledges the length of the Esperance coastline. Beaches have been categorized using factors such as SLSWA patrols, vacation swimming,

access and use. Response to shark sightings at the different categories are reflective of these factors.

- 4.3. This policy recognises that at a beach patrolled by SLSWA, the on duty life saver will be responsible for implementing shark sighting response in accordance with the SLSWA standard operating procedures.
- 4.4. The Shire will be responsible for activation of Shark Warning Towers (Spectur) at Kelp Beds, West and Twilight Beaches
- 4.5. The Shire will engage with SLSWA with the aim of updating coastal risk and safety signage.
- 4.6. Shark sighting reports received by the Shire from through the Shark Monitoring Network generally provide details about the location of the shark, species species and in some instances direction of travel, which are essential for making decisions about swimmer safety. The Shark Monitoring Network service available will inform the Shire's response to a shark sighting.
- 4.7. Shark sighting reports received by the Shire from the WA Water Police will be assessed acknowledging the source of the information ie a public report.
- 4.8. In the event of a shark attack fatality, WA Police are the lead agency. The Shire will provide assistance with the management of the shark attack and implement beach safety measures as considered necessary and under the direction of the WA Police.
- 4.9. Where an order to capture a shark has been granted to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and a direction given to swimmers to leave the water following a shark attack, the decision to re-opening a beach for swimming should be not less than 24 hours after the shark attack occurred and or after the Department of Primary Industries and Development advise that the order to capture the shark has been lifted.
- 4.10. Policy recognizes the need for improving community awareness and education about the shared responsibility of risk. The Shire will actively promote:
 - Report Shark Sightings to Water Police on 9442 8600;
 - WA Governments Shark Smart website; and,
 - Other communication mechanisms to inform the community of recent reports of shark activity/management.

Policy Content

- 5.1. At a Patrolled Beach, an SLSWA life guard is the authorised person for responding to a shark sighting and for implementing the SLSWA response procedure which may include sounding alarms* to alert swimmers, clearing the water of swimmers and monitoring shark presence.

* Note – this alarm is separate to the Shark Warning Tower (Spectur) system managed by Shire Rangers.

- 5.2. Shire Rangers are authorised persons for the purpose of responding to a shark sighting. Subject to availability (i.e. during rostered hours, usually 6am-12pm, seven days per week, and when priorities allow, noting that fire/emergency management response, dog attacks or other work that addresses more pressing

risks will be prioritised when there is a need to prioritise due to resources being finite),

5.2.1. If the shark sighted is less than 2 metres in total length, the Shire will maintain normal operations and not take any action.

5.2.2. The Shire will mobilise Authorised Persons to respond to a shark sighting reported by Water Police or a credible source where it meets **ALL** of the following criteria:

Type: White, Whaler, Tiger or Bull Shark;
Size: an individual shark being 2-3 metres in size, or a species of schooling sharks;
Location: Sighted within 500m of shore, beach;

Or

Size: Greater than 3 metres in size; and,
Location: Sighted within 1 km of shore, and within Shire managed coastline

The Shire may also mobilise as outlined below in the event of an unconfirmed shark sighting to minimize risk to the community.

5.2.3. The Shire will be responsible for activation of Shark Warning Towers (Spectur) at Kelp Beds, West and Twilight Beaches

5.2.4. If the shark sighted is greater than 2m meters in total length and less than 500 meters from the shore, temporary signage is to be placed on the beach immediately adjacent to the shark sighting location, at intervals of approximately 500 metres and/or on key beach entry points, for a distance of approximately 1000 meters from a point on the beach immediately adjacent to the shark sighting location.

5.2.5. Signage installed on a beach shall not mean beach closure and shall be advisory signage only and remain in place for at least 24 hours from the time of notification after the last shark sighting (if after 5pm, signs are to remain in-situ overnight).

5.3. Community awareness of shark hazard will be promoted by:

5.3.1. Providing information on the Shire website about how to access recent reports of shark activity from the WA Government information and encourage swimmers to SLSWA patrolled beaches.

5.3.2. Installing permanent signage at key beach car parks to inform and promote to beach users, how to access the most recent information on local shark activity.

5.3.3. Temporary signage installed in accordance with this policy shall be used to inform beach users and swimmers that a shark has been sighted in the vicinity and provide information on how to access the latest shark sighting report information from the WA Government information and communication platforms.

..... Policy Ends