

Bondi Girls Surf Riders

Shark Risk Management Policy

Purpose

The safety of our members, volunteers and spectators is our highest priority.

Bondi Girls Surf Riders (BGSR) recognises that surfing is an ocean sport where encounters with marine wildlife are possible. This policy outlines how the club manages shark-related risks during club competitions and provides members with a clear understanding of how decisions are made.

While BGSR aims to provide a safe competition environment, every member accepts that surfing in the ocean carries an inherent level of risk. Members are encouraged to make their own assessment of conditions and are always free to choose not to enter or continue surfing if they are uncomfortable for any reason, including concerns about shark activity.

This policy is based on Surfing NSW's Shark Mitigation Guidance and the Surfing Australia Rule Book and will always be implemented alongside any directions from Waverley Council Lifeguards and local Surf Life Saving personnel.

1. Before Competition

Before each competition begins, the Competition Director (in consultation with the Head Judge and available committee members) will conduct a shark risk assessment.

The assessment will consider:

- Recent shark sightings reported through the NSW SharkSmart and Dorsal apps, Drone Shark posts and local council alerts
- Advice from Waverley Council Lifeguards
- Drone observations on the day
- Water visibility
- Recent heavy rain or flooding
- Presence of baitfish or large numbers of diving birds
- Any other local conditions that may increase shark activity

Members are encouraged to download the NSW SharkSmart App and remain informed of local shark activity.

2. When Competition Will Not Start

BGSR will not commence competition if:

- the beach is officially closed because of shark activity;
 - there has been a documented shark interaction involving a person or marine mammal within the previous 72 hours; or
 - local authorities advise that conditions are unsafe.
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3. Shark Sighting During Competition

If a shark is sighted, or credible information is received that a shark is in or near the competition area:

1. Competition will stop immediately.
2. Five horn blasts will signal all surfers to leave the water.
3. Announcements will be made over the PA system.
4. The Competition Director will consult with council lifeguards and Surf Life Saving personnel.
5. Competition will remain suspended while the situation is assessed.

The Competition Director will keep members informed throughout the suspension wherever possible.

4. Restarting Competition

Competition will only recommence when the Competition Director is satisfied that it is safe to do so.

This decision will be based on:

- advice from council lifeguards;
- observations from drone surveillance;
- absence of further shark sightings; and
- current environmental conditions.

As a guide:

- without aerial surveillance, competition will generally remain suspended for at least one hour;
- where continuous aerial surveillance is available and no further risk is identified, competition may recommence after approximately 30 minutes if all decision-makers agree conditions are safe.

Safety will always take precedence over the competition schedule.

5. When Competition Will Not Restart

Competition will not recommence if:

- there are continued shark sightings;
 - a White, Bull or Tiger Shark is reported nearby;
 - any shark greater than approximately 1.5 metres is observed within or near the competition area;
 - environmental conditions continue to indicate an elevated level of risk; or
 - local authorities recommend against reopening the beach.
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6. Cancelling Competition

Competition may be cancelled for the remainder of the day if:

- elevated shark risk continues for more than two hours following a sighting; or
- competition has already been suspended twice due to shark activity.

The Competition Director's decision is final.

7. Member Responsibilities

All competitors are expected to:

- immediately leave the water when instructed;
 - follow directions from officials and lifeguards;
 - avoid re-entering the water until advised;
 - report any shark sightings immediately to a club official; and
 - understand that participation in surfing always involves an element of natural risk.
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8. Decision Making

While drone reports, Surfing NSW and Surfing Australia can provide guidance, every shark sighting is unique.

The Competition Director, in consultation with the Head Judge, committee members and local lifeguards, will consider all available information before making a decision.

Where uncertainty exists, BGSR will always adopt the more conservative approach.

Our guiding principle is simple: if there is doubt, we stay out.