2007 Year of the Surf Lifesaver

FACT SHEET

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TOWARDS ZERO PREVENTABLE DEATHS AROUND THE COAST

Overview

Each year, SLSA's trained volunteer surf lifesavers provide more than 1.4 million hours of patrol time on weekends and public holidays. It has been estimated[1] that if not for the efforts of Australia's surf life savers, around 500 people would drown around the coast each year.

DID YOU KNOW? The value to the community of averting dangers at the beach has been estimated at more than $1.4 billion each year.

2006 National Surf Safety Report – Key Findings

How many people drowned around the coast in 2005-06?

- Sixty-two people drowned in the 2005-06 season.
- This was an increase of five compared to the previous season, and six above the five-year average for 2001-06.

Who drowned?

- 89 per cent (n=55) of coastal drowning deaths were male.
- 23 per cent (n=14) were aged between 40 and 49 years.
- 18 per cent (n=11) were in the 30 to 39 year old category and another 18 per cent were in the 50 to 59 category.

Where did they drown?

- 15 coastal drowning deaths (where location was recorded) occurred within 1 km of the red and yellow flags.

When did they drown?

- 56 per cent (n=35) of coastal drowning deaths occurred over the summer months with 50 per cent (n=31) of deaths occurring over a 62 day period between 27/12/05 to 26/02/06 – an average of one drowning every two days.

What were they doing when they drowned?

- Unsurprisingly, the most common activity conducted immediately prior to drowning was swimming or wading (46 per cent or n=29).
- Ten people drowned in rips, which continue to be one of the biggest killers around the Australian coastline.
- Rock fishing/fishing continues to be a high-risk pastime with 24 per cent (n=15) of people engaged in this activity prior to death.

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[1] 'The Social and Economic Value of Surf Life Saving In Australia', The Allen Consulting Group, October 2006