



**LIFESAVING SA**

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**SURF RESCUE UNIT – PRESS RELEASE**

**12<sup>th</sup> December 2007**

In response to the number of drownings on unpatrolled beaches over the past few years, Lifesaving SA has formalised a 24hr Surf Rescue unit made up of voluntary lifeguards from various clubs along the KZN coastline.

Almost all drownings in the KZN region are on beaches where there are no lifeguards or where lifeguards have gone off duty. Calls from the public are received by other emergency services like NSRI, fire dept, and ambulance services who then activate our unit. Our LSA Surf Rescue volunteers are then dispatched to the emergency in their area, using their private vehicles and equipment.

Lifesaving SA volunteers for the surf rescue unit must undergo stringent fitness tests every six months to ensure their safety when responding to calls in isolated areas where back up is not immediately available. “The lifeguards in this unit are a special breed. They are brave and dedicated with a high level of fitness and experience,” says Lifesaving SA’s James Ross.

Over the festive season between 20 to 30 people loose their lives in drownings in KZN alone. The major cause of these unnecessary deaths is irresponsible behaviour. People drown because they swim where there are no lifeguards to assist them when they find themselves in difficulty. Swimming at night and on beaches that are not patrolled by lifeguards is extremely dangerous. We appeal to the public to please stick to the simple rule of “swim where there is a lifeguard”. This weekend, the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> are the busiest days of the year on our countries beaches.

For aquatic emergencies in the Ethekewini area the public can call 031 361 0000.

Yours faithfully  
James Ross  
Surf Rescue Unit / Spokesman  
Lifesaving SA  
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