



21 July 2022

**Press Release: for immediate release**

### **World Drowning Prevention Day 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022, Supervision Saves Lives.**

In 2019 the World Health Organization (WHO) reported approximately 236 000 people drown globally each year with most drownings taking place in low and middle-income countries, particularly those with access to aquatic resources, oceans, dams, and rivers.

According to the WHO statistics, Southern Africa is one of the regions with the highest risk. South African mortality statistics estimate approximately 1500 people die from drowning annually in South Africa, an average of 4 people daily. Two-thirds (66%) of all drownings in South Africa are under the age of 30 years with males being more than twice at risk than females. In South Africa almost 500 deaths or one third of the reported deaths occur under the age of 10 years. In the age group 5 to 12 years the WHO estimates that drowning is the sixth highest cause of unnatural deaths globally. These statistics however do not account for those who have drowned due to floods or violence.

In April 2021, the United Nations declared through the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/75/273 "Global drowning prevention", that the World will raise awareness and attention to the tragic topic of Drowning and the possibilities of Life Saving solutions, with the declaration of the World Drowning Prevention Day to be held annually on 25 July. The WHO has released a list of focus areas for countries and communities to reduce the risk of drownings:

- installing barriers controlling access to water
- providing safe places for pre-school children away from water with capable childcare
- teaching swimming, water safety and safe rescue skills
- training bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation
- setting and enforcing safe boating, shipping, and ferry regulations
- improving flood risk management

In South Africa, the high percentage of drownings amongst the youth can be largely attributed to unsupervised access to water sources for both recreation and other purposes. Together with the use of alcohol or substances by the youth and those supervising them, and the lack of swimming skills, Lifesaving South Africa, who since 1913 been the leading Drowning Prevention body in South Africa, has termed this year's World Drowning Prevention Day programme "Supervision". Through the correct and uninterrupted supervision of youth, children, and toddlers in and around aquatic resources many drownings can be avoided.

Supervision covers areas of:

1. Municipalities employing trained and certified Lifeguards for all municipal aquatic recreation areas.
2. Ensuring that barriers and child proof fencing is placed around recreation areas to control the access to water
3. Ensuring barrels and buckets have lids, water containers are safely stored, and bathtubs are emptied after use

Patron  
Her Serene Highness  
Princess Charlene  
of Monaco

LIFESAVING SOUTH AFRICA

4. Parents and Care Givers are always present when their children are around water:
  - They are sober
  - They stay within an arm's reach of the child when swimming
  - They pay attention and keep watch
  - They are not distracted by their cell phone, book or conversation.
  - They actively pass their responsibility onto another responsible person when they need to step away.
  - They ensure the pool area is safely closed once swimming has ended
  - Know their emergency contacts and calls them when needed.
  - Knows CPR

South Africa, with its 2800km of coastline has over 290 rivers and dams, lakes, ponds and hundreds of unsupervised pools, with vast communities choosing to live close to these water resources not only for recreation, but living and sanitary purposes. These communities are often at risk of drowning due to a lack of local knowledge about the terrain, or poor municipal planning which has allowed homestead developments within historical flood plains with communities often having to cross flowing rivers to access shops, work, or school.

Another growing concern is climate change, affecting the water resources in South Africa. We see water stored in containers, basins, and baths due to drought and water restrictions. The impact of flooding goes hand in hand with areas of drought. Disaster planning has become a critical component in the fight against drowning. Adequate planning is needed in the management of South Africa's failing storm drainage systems and community planning to reduce the impact of climate on these communities.

Much can and is being done by Municipalities and the Government, however, these measures will be more effective in conjunction with appropriate policies and protocols, which currently South Africa has very limited and fractured policies around safe utilization of aquatic resources.

For further information, please contact Lifesaving South Africa on (031)3129251 (office hours), visit [www.lifesaving.co.za](http://www.lifesaving.co.za) or follow Lifesaving South Africa on social media @LifesavingSouthAfrica.

ENDS

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#### **About Lifesaving South Africa:**

Lifesaving South Africa (LSA) is the National Association for Lifesaving and Lifesaving in Sport in South Africa. In

these roles LSA leads, supports and partners with national and international organizations committed to drowning prevention, water safety supervision, emergency response and sport.

- Lifesaving SA (LSA) was established in South Africa in 1913. LSA is a member of the International Lifesaving Federation (ILS), Commonwealth Lifesaving and Royal Lifesaving Society.
- LSA has over 7000 members, with 4000 performing voluntary lifeguard duties operating at 65 coastal (Surf) clubs & 22 inland (Pool). Lifesaving has over 2500 Nippers (aged 8-14 years old).
- Approximately 133,408 rescues have been performed to date, and over 5000 (per annum) first aid cases have been attended to by the voluntary lifeguards.
- LSA trains +-2000 lifeguards per year and has reached over 400 communities through our water safety education programs.
- LSA is a SASCOC affiliated sporting federation.
- LSA won sports federation of the year in 2017 at the SA Sports Awards and is the only sport that requires community service to compete in the sport.
- Lifesaving voluntary lifeguards contributed 125,761 duty hours in 2019/2020.
- Based on Municipality Sunday rate per hour this equates to R24,322,177 value added to the local communities, sporting industries and tourism through voluntary hours given.