



SAFETY BULLETIN

Incident
#4-2026

VESSEL BEACH LANDING AND GROUNDING OPERATIONS

ISSUE DATE: 04 June 2026

Subject: *Vessel Beach Landing and Grounding Drills*

Recent Incident: A recent vessel beach landing training activity conducted outside an approved operational and training framework resulted in a serious injury to a volunteer member and significant damage to a Marine Rescue NSW (MRNSW) vessel.

During the incident, the operation of the vessel resulted in both engines stalling. The vessel then broached and subsequently became grounded abeam on the shoreline, resulting in both personnel injury and vessel damage.

Issue: A review identified contributing factors including inadequate risk assessments, breakdowns in communication, and deviations from established procedures and vessel operating limitations.

This incident reinforces the importance of ensuring all vessel activities are appropriately authorised, risk assessed, and conducted in accordance with MRNSW procedures and safety management systems.

There is no MRNSW training requirement for physically beaching, grounding or conducting “touch and go” manoeuvres of a vessel to advance MRNSW crew or coxswain qualifications.

Beaching landing or grounding activities outside of defined operational circumstances introduce unnecessary risk to personnel, vessels and operational capability.

Reference materials:

National Marine Orders, Standing Operating Procedures (SOP's), Local Operating Procedures (LOP's), Vessel Safety Management System (SMS), Operational Risk Assessments and vessel information books.

Actions:

- MRNSW vessels which are specifically designed for beaching activities are the only vessels authorised for such activities.
- Beaching landing of a vessel not designed for the purpose shall only be conducted in the case of emergency evacuation, safety of life or; if the vessel is disabled and the safest emergency option is to beach/ground the vessel.
- ORA (Take 5) risk assessments must always be undertaken and agreed upon by all crew and be recorded in the vessel log book.



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- Beaching landing a purpose-built vessel especially in training is to be conducted only in manageable conditions, such as calm waters, benign weather conditions, suitable substrate, deep water access where possible and where vessel control can be maintained at all times.

Actions to be followed to avoid similar incident:

- 1. Grounding drills are to be simulated only.*
- 2. Local Operation Procedures (LOP's) shall be established for units who require regular beaching landing procedures.*
- 3. Risk assessments to be completed, authorised and documented prior to beaching landing activity.*
 - a. Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) can be established for a common activity.*
- 4. Pre-determined triggers for terminating any exercise shall be established and communicated.*
- 5. Situation reports to shore-based command.*
- 6. No Beaching landing activities on MRNSW vessels unless they are designed for purpose, with the exception of safety of life*
- 7. Prohibition of beaching landing activities for any MRNSW vessel 8.5m (Class 30) and over unless designed for purpose. With the exception of safety of life.*
- 8. Beaching landing activities on purpose-built vessels shall only occur in controlled circumstances.*
 - a. Master must establish and maintain clear communications at all times.*
 - b. Depth and contour assessment conducted prior to beaching.*
 - c. Conditions are favourable.*
 - d. Helmsman must maintain positive control of the vessel.*
 - e. Helmsman must be competent in engine re-starting procedures.*
 - f. Crew roles must be established.*
 - i. A lookout must be posted to watch for changes in conditions.*
 - ii. All crew to follow direction of the vessel master.*
- 9. The Master carries the ultimate responsibility for the safety of the crew and vessel.*
- 10. Do not operate outside of the vessel capability, SMS, SOP's and LOP's.*



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Additional or Related Safety Considerations

- The majority MRNSW vessels are primarily designed for offshore or deep-water operations. Only selected vessels are designed and equipped for shallow water or beach landing capability.
- Activities conducted outside vessel design capability significantly increase risk to personnel, equipment, and operational readiness.
- Masters are reminded of their statutory obligations under national maritime legislation. Unsafe operation that results in injury or damage may be subject to regulatory review.

For further information: Contact: Kelvin Parkin, MRNSW Zone Commander – Central.

Notation: **For the purposes of this bulletin a Beaching landing covers the term of “Touch and Go”.*