



SALDANHA BAAI
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LARGE MARINE ANIMAL STRANDING POLICY AND PROTOCOL

ENVLMAS01

ABSTRACT

The Saldanha Bay Municipality has a coastline of 238km. Occasionally, we experience large marine animal stranding along this coastline. This policy will outline the manner in which such an occurrence will be managed in a collective, coordinated and organised response.

Municipal Manager: Mr Heinrich Mettler.....

Date: 10 May 2021



Large Marine Animal Stranding Policy and Protocol

A. General Policy Principles

1. Introduction

The Saldanha Bay Municipality has a coastline of 238km. Of the 7 towns in the municipality, 5 are along the coast, namely Jacobsbaai/Bay, Langebaan, Paternoster, Saldanha and St Helenabaai/Bay. Occasionally, the Saldanha Bay Municipality experiences large marine animal stranding along its coastline. This policy will outline the manner in which such an occurrence will be managed in a collective, coordinated and organised response by various authorities and agencies for effective management of such an event, within the broader national Stranding Policy.

2. Stranding Policy Principles

- Cooperative governance with other authorities to ensure effective, coordinated and organised responses to live stranding events.
- Optimise the possibility of successful rescues in live stranding events through a well informed and organised approach.
- Providing support services to expert decision makers in the case of live stranding events.
- Minimal suffering and trauma to live animals.
- An overarching principle of supporting, endorsing and facilitating humane choices.
- Minimising trauma and stress on the general public.
- Environmental considerations of the broader area will be considered within each stranding event.
- Effective, efficient and appropriate removal of all carcasses within an environmental framework.
- The effective, appropriate and legally compliant disposal of all carcasses.

3. Definition of Stranding Categories

This policy and protocol addresses the following large marine animals:

- Dolphins
- Whales
- Seals
- Sharks

Within these stranding categories the policy and protocol will address the following categories:

1. Category 1: Live whale, dolphin or shark stranding
2. Category 2: Injured or sick seals or seal pups
3. Category 3: Whale, shark, dolphin or seal carcass

4. SBM Line Functions

This policy and protocol will be binding on the following SBM line functions:

- Environmental and Heritage Section (E&H)
- SBM Disaster Management (SBMDM)
- Solid Waste Management
- Fleet and Mechanical Services
- Communications
- Public Safety Services
- Community Services

5. Partners

This policy and protocol recognises that for each of the stranding categories a number of other organisations, authorities and groups will play vital roles within stranding rescue efforts. These include, but not limited to:

- DEFF Oceans and Coasts
- The National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI)
- CapeNature
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
- South African National Defence Force
- South African Police Service (SAPS)
- South African National Parks (SANParks)
- Various NGOs and NPOs
- Civil Society Groups

6. Governance

The Saldanha Bay Municipality will apply the following governance principles in all stranding events to ensure optimum opportunity for successful rescue and/or disposal, while minimising risk of injury to person or persons:

- The SBM retains the rights to close affected beaches to public access.
- Law enforcement agencies will have the authority to prevent public access to the affected area and affected animals and where needed may remove general public and unauthorised individuals from the area.
- The SBM will ensure ongoing communication through the media in this regard.
- Law enforcement agencies retain the right to process individuals accordingly, who refuse to cooperate within the closed area.

B. Protocol for each Stranding Category

1. Category 1: Live whale, dolphin, shark or whale shark stranding

A Category 1 stranding occurs when either a single animal or group of animals are found stranded alive.

1.1. Control Room

All live stranding events will be communicated to the SBMDM as the primary control room. Details of the SBMDM numbers will be advertised at all beaches as the first point of contact for any marine animal stranding. The SBMDM will notify the Joint Operations Centre.

Should a call be received by the Call Centre, the Call Centre staff will notify the SBMDM and if possible, transfer the call.

The call operator who receives the call must request specific details, including:

- Number and estimated size of animals
- Confirmation on whether the animal (s) are alive or dead
- Accurate location of the animals – description of closest significant landmark

On notification of a live stranding the following protocol will be put in effect by the SBMDM Joint Operations Centre (JOC).

1.2. Communication to line functions

On notification of a live stranding, instructions will be given to the caller by the SBMDM call operator on what actions to take, and which actions to avoid. Once instructions have been given, the following line functions will be notified immediately and placed on standby as per the relevant official contact list in Annexure B:

- Environment and Heritage Section (E&H)
- SBM Disaster Management (SBMDM), via the JOC
- Solid Waste Management
- Communications
- SBM Public Safety Services

1.3. Primary decision

On receiving information of a live stranding DEFF Oceans and Coasts will be contacted by the SBMDM Joint Operations Centre (JOC). Details of the stranding will be communicated to the designated DEFF Oceans and Coasts officials, as per Annexure B. Initial information that will be provided to DEFF Oceans and Coasts will include:

- Estimated number of animals involved in the stranding
- Type of animal – description including size, weight, colour.
- Exact location of stranding

In the case of DEFF Oceans and Coasts being contacted before the Saldanha Bay Municipality, the designated official(s) at DEFF Oceans and Coasts will ensure that the SBMDM Joint Operations Centre (JOC) is informed, and the above information supplied.

1.4. Response Team

The response team will consist of DEFF Oceans and Coasts, E&H, Solid Waste Management officials and local area public safety services.

1.4.1. Procedure

On notification of a Category 1 stranding, the SBMDM Joint Operations Centre (JOC) will instruct local area public safety services to proceed directly to the location, verify the call, and secure the site. On arrival, local public safety services will:

- Communicate directly with members of the response team
 - o Current status
 - o Exact location of the animal
 - o Whether the animal has been attended to and by whom
 - o Access points to the animal
- Administer or have the recovery position administered to the animal, (if not yet done), ensure airways are clear and keep the animal wet, in accordance with the Whale Stranding Sign 10 Key Points (Annexure A)
- Prevent unauthorised individuals or the public gaining access to the animal
- Await arrival of the response team
- Cordon off safe working environment

If the rescue attempt is unsuccessful, Solid Waste Management will respond in accordance with **Stranding Category 3**.

Designated officials from each line function will proceed directly to the stranding location.

On notification of a live stranding, the Solid Waste Department must as a priority dispatch front-end loaders and other required plant and equipment to the scene where necessary and coordinate with Specialised Technical Services: Fleet and Mechanical Services for additional equipment and vehicles.

1.4.2. Access Control prior to arrival of response team

On notification of a Category 1 stranding, the SBMDM Joint Operations Centre (JOC) will dispatch local area public safety services officials to the location. On arrival the following shall take place:

- A senior public safety services official will take control of the site until the SOCC (Site Operation Command Centre) is established.
- Affected area will be closed to the public

- Public will be notified that the beach has been closed to public access
- Entire area to be secured and an enforcement official stationed at all access points, where the geography of the beach allows this
- A clear area around the animals is to be demarcated using emergency tape
- No unauthorised people will be allowed into the demarcated area.
- While waiting for the arrival of the response team, a member of SBM line function and/or a partner/s will ensure that all animals (as far as possible) are placed in the recovery position (informed by the national policy). To achieve this, individual members of the public may be asked to assist (informed by the national policy).

1.4.3. Establishment of a SOCC (Site Operations Command Centre) at the location

- On arrival at the location a central point will be established to form a SOCC.
- One senior member from each line function will form part of the SOCC.
- SBM Disaster Management will coordinate the SOCC.
- The SOCC will take overall command and management of the entire site and the situation.
- SOCC members will provide instruction from the SOCC to their officials within their own line functions and responsibilities.
- Other organisations may be represented on the SOCC as per the national policy, as required (e.g. NSRI, SA Navy, SAPS).

1.4.4. Responsibilities of the SOCC

SBM line functions will be responsible for the following areas and actions from the SOCC.

- E&H officials will:
 - o determine environmentally appropriate access points for vehicles and equipment
 - o identify environmentally sensitive areas to be kept free of people, vehicles and equipment
 - o assist DEFF Oceans and Coasts with animal management
- SBM Public Safety Services will coordinate overall security management of the site.
- Traffic Services will manage roads, parking areas, access points and emergency vehicles.
- SBM Disaster Management officials will coordinate the SOCC, equipment, reinforcements, supplies (incl. food) and media, and will supply a media liaison to the SOCC.
- SBM Disaster Management to provide a central SOCC gazebo and lighting on the beach, if needed. The SOCC to work out of this central space and act as a central coordination point. SBMDM to source and provide as part of their material provision list.

- Everyone involved in the stranding emergency will wear a vest identifying them as part of the team, and SOCC decision makers will wear separate coloured vests identifying them as such. The DEFF Incident Controller must be individually identifiable. Any individual without a vest may be removed from the rescue and cordoned off area. DRM to source and provide as part of their material provision list.
- Solid Waste will provide the required plant and equipment and where necessary will call on Specialised Technical Services for assistance as and when needed.
- Solid Waste will coordinate carcass removal as per Stranding Category 3 in the event that the rescue is unsuccessful.

1.4.5. Crowd Management and Control

- The SOCC will nominate a single official to co-ordinate regular communication updates to the public.
- Only this official will communicate to the public beyond standard crowd control needs.
- All members of the public will be managed in a cordial and informative manner.
- The area around the animals will be strictly controlled and kept free of unauthorised people.
- All environmentally sensitive areas will be kept free of the public at all times.
- Unleashed dogs that are found to be in the area will be considered stray and may be impounded.

Where volunteers are asked to assist, this will be done so in accordance with the national policy and a SBM or DEFF Oceans and Coasts official will be allocated to each volunteer group.

1.4.6. Traffic Management

- Traffic services will close all roads leading directly to the area as required.
- All roads leading to the area will be kept free of cars to allow heavy equipment and emergency vehicles access.
- Only official vehicles, and personal vehicles used by officials responding in their official capacity, will be allowed access.
- Heavy Vehicle routes: it is important for communication lines to be open with each driver and for traffic control to actively communicate with the drivers to ensure the shortest and quickest travel route followed.

1.4.7. Second Holding Area

- On direction by the SOCC, Law Enforcement and Traffic Services are to cordon off a "holding area" that will be free of all public vehicles.

- This area may be used where live whales can be cared for until they can be loaded onto a single or multiple flatbed vehicle and all transported to the release or vessel area in a single convoy.

1.4.8. Emergency Medical Services

SBM Disaster Management will ensure that emergency medical services are on site and on standby in the event of injury.

1.4.9. Media Liaison

- The communication officer will provide regular and informative updates to the media.
- A general media request may be made through the SBMDM to all radio stations requesting people not to go to the site and informing the public of road closures.

1.4.10. Volunteer control and management

As per the national policy and coordinated through the SOCC. Public volunteers must be replaced with NSRI or other formal recognised volunteer agencies earlier and as soon as possible to ensure that the rescue area is limited to only those individuals from formal organisations participating in the stranding rescue.

1.4.11. Animal handling (Annexure A)

As per the national policy and coordinated through the SOCC.

1.4.12. Euthanasia decision

Any decision to euthanize animals will be made:

- In consultation with the SOCC;
- If consensus is not reached, the final decision will rest with DEFF Oceans and Coasts as per the national policy.

Once a decision to euthanize animals has been made:

- SAPS and SBM Public Safety Services will ensure that no members of the public are in the vicinity;
- If required, members of the public will be removed;
- Euthanasia will be carried out in accordance with the national policy.

1.4.13. Carcass Removal

Carcass removal will be carried out in accordance with the protocol as defined in Stranding Category 3.

Where possible, carcasses must be covered on the back of Solid Waste vehicles out of sight from the public and especially young children.

1.4.14. Site rehabilitation

- On completion of successful rescue or carcass removal, the SOCC SBM members will define site rehabilitation needs.
- Site rehabilitation will include the removal of all waste, rehabilitation of impacted dune systems, repair of damaged infrastructure and trampled vegetation.
- Site rehabilitation, including the provision of finances or staff required to rehabilitate, will be the joint responsibility of E&H and the SBM Disaster Management.

2. Category 2: Injured or sick seals or seal pups

2.1. Response Team

The response team will consist of local area public safety services official(s), E&H and SPCA official(s).

2.2. Procedure

On notification of Category 2 stranding, the SBMDM Joint Operations Centre (JOC) will:

- Dispatch a local law enforcement officer to the location
- Immediately inform E&H, who will contact the SPCA and co-ordinate the rescue.
- Animal to be removed to an appropriate collection point, where the SPCA will take over, if appropriate
- Log and record the information

On arrival at the location, the law enforcement official will:

- Keep the public away from the animal at all times
- Remain on site until members of the E&H or SPCA arrive

3. Category 3: Whale, dolphin, shark or whale shark carcass

A Category 3 stranding occurs when the carcass of any of the above large marine animals is found on the beach. Although a very rare occurrence, seldomly live sharks or shark carcasses will be found on the beach. Sharks cannot live for more than a few minutes out of water, many sharks are formally protected species therefore DEFF Oceans and Coasts will co-ordinate the response.

3.1. Response Team

The response team will consist of E&H official(s), Solid Waste Management official(s) and Public Safety Services officials.

3.2. Procedure

On receiving a report of a whale, dolphin, shark or whale shark carcass the following line functions (as per the contact schedule) will be notified:

- Solid Waste Management
- E&H
- Local public safety services
 - Inform the Director of Research: Shark Spotting Programme

On notification, officials from E&H and Solid Waste will proceed directly to the site. Once on site, E&H and Solid Waste will convene and jointly undertake the following:

- Inform DEFF Oceans and Coasts and assess whether they want to collect carcass or any tissue samples etc prior to disposal
- Collectively decide on the most effective method of removal/disposal, considering:
 - o Ease of access
 - o Environmental impact
 - o Site rehabilitation
 - o Cost effectiveness
- Determine whether additional law enforcement assistance is needed for area control and traffic control, and if so, contact the SBMDM Joint Operations Centre (JOC) to coordinate this.
- Carcasses will be disposed of in accordance with existing Solid Waste Management policies.
- Seal carcasses will be removed in accordance with existing Solid Waste Management procedures.
- Successful removal and disposal of the animal will only be considered completed once the location has been rehabilitated and returned to its original state.

4. Record Keeping and Policy Monitoring

A record will be kept for all categories of stranding listed in this policy and protocol. All information will be collated, kept as records and maintained as part of the SBM's Coastal Monitoring Programme.

For each event the following information will be recorded:

- Date, time and place
- Species, number of animals
- Cause of stranding (where known)
- Outcome of event

- Effectiveness of response
- Lessons learned

Annexure A

The Whale Stranding Sign 10 Key Points

1. Identify the animal (can be common name or class/order/family/genus/species within taxonomy)
2. Dead or Alive- is the animal breathing?
3. Body Condition
4. Health
5. Time of Stranding/or refloat attempts
6. Handling the animal
7. Further action
 - Refloating
 - Rehabilitation
 - Euthanasia

Handling the Animal

Warnings

Dead animals may contain harmful bacteria. Use gloves at all times. Being in possession of cetacean parts is illegal. Dealing with the public harvesting the animal will be dependent on the situation and staff from the local authorities being present.

Seals are known to carry zoonotic diseases with various bacteria and viruses causing symptoms such as severe sinusitis, headaches, lethargy, diarrhoea, fevers and other general flu symptoms in humans. Brucella species have also been implicated in causing abortions. It is thus recommended that pregnant females do not handle seals

Further action

Further action either on beach or off the beach may be required. There are three available options;

- a. Removal

removal refers to moving the animal to a facility or better location for further autopsies or data collection

- b. Disposal refers to moving the animal to another location, both on and off site. Disposal includes, removal of animal off beach burying the animal or towing the animal out to sea.

DEFF- Interest in Pups

The DEFF would be very interested to know of the presence of foreign seals i.e. Elephant seals, Leopard seals, sub-Antarctic fur seals, Crabeater seals. Some occur more frequent than others. It is therefore important to be vigilant of their possible presence.

Annexure B

Marine Animal Stranding Contact List

Line Function	Contact Person	Contact details
DEFF: Oceans and Coast	Deon Kotze Trevor Coetzee	072 477 7170 074 323 5797
SBM: Environmental and Heritage Management	Nazeema Duarte Lutendo Musetsho	081 0247311 022 7016803
SBM: Solid Waste Management	David Wright Abubaker Nackerdien	082 3465656 074 8014321
SBM: Communications	Ethne Lawrence	083 2371303
SBM: Traffic Services	James Jonkers	060 855 3555
SBM: Law Enforcement	Virgil Bester	073 7480201
SPCA	Office Hours	022 2890998
	After Hours/Weekends/Public holidays	082 4147153
NSRI	Mike Shaw	083 2521086
SBM Disaster Management		022 701 6835
Emergency		112