FV-16 | Working Around Water Policy

APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE
Reviewed November 2026

Scope

All land-based Fishcare activities near water.

Purpose and hazards

Prevent drowning, falls, immersion, cold or heat injury and equipment incidents. A familiar site is not automatically safe. This policy does not authorise boating, wading or water rescue.

Planning and equipment

Assess banks, jetties, rails, depth, currents, tides, swell, slippery surfaces, flooding, water quality, overhead lines, access, weather and participant needs before every session and when conditions change. Set a safe working boundary and casting zones; avoid unstable edges and strong flows. Do not use a fixed four-foot distance as the sole risk control.

Have a charged phone or reliable alternative, exact location and access details, a first aid kit, competent first aid coverage, drinking water and suitable land-based rescue equipment (such as a reaching pole and throw line or ring) readily available. Check condition and explain use. Lifejackets must fit the user, be serviceable and comply with applicable law and the assessed activity risk.

Supervision and operation

Allocate sufficient adults to monitor the water edge and participants, including additional support based on age, disability, behaviour, mobility and conditions. A person watching the edge must be able to summon help immediately and must not be distracted by incompatible duties. Never conduct participant activities alone.

Brief everyone on boundaries, no water entry, safe casting, what to do if someone falls in and who is responsible for a child's supervision. Schools and carers retain agreed responsibilities; Fishcare still acts on hazards and concerns. Use closed non-slip footwear, sun protection, weather-appropriate clothing and lifejackets where required by law or risk assessment. Stop or relocate if controls are inadequate.

Emergency response

Call 000 and give the precise location. From a stable safe position, use a reach or throw rescue method only if safe and within training. Do not jump or wade in, ask a child to rescue someone or create a second casualty. Keep others back, summon trained rescue services and provide first aid/CPR within training when the

person is safely recovered. Preserve the incident site as required without delaying rescue or preventing further harm.

Specific environments and review

Fishcare does not normally deliver exposed rock-fishing activities. Any proposed exception requires EO approval, specialist assessment and legal compliance; wearing a lifejacket is required at designated Victorian high-risk rock-fishing locations and Fishcare requires one for any approved rock-fishing activity. Confirm current locations with VFA. Boating needs separate approval and compliance with Safe Transport Victoria rules.

Record the assessment, briefing, equipment checks and incidents or near misses. Report immediately under the Safety and Incident Policy and review controls before reuse of the site.

Activity staffing cross-reference

Apply the Hazard Management Policy and Activity Risk Assessment: the 5:1 participant-to-Fishcare-volunteer ratio applies as an organisational maximum for ordinary clinics, with more support where risks or participant needs require it. No lone participant delivery is permitted. Agree teachers' and carers' separate duties; they do not automatically count as assigned Fishcare volunteers.

References and review

Reviewed November 2026. Review again in November 2027, or earlier after a relevant legal, service or risk change.

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic): incident notification
https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/notifiable-incidents-under-occupational-health-and-safety-act-2004

Victorian Fisheries Authority: rock fishing safety
https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/rock-fishing-safety