



## Significant Incident Summary No. 12

### Kayak and stand-up paddle board users swept out to sea

**Date:** 27 March 2026

#### Background

Recently, four members of a family were swept out to sea while using a kayak and stand-up paddle boards provided by a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU). The family members were wearing lifejackets but had no means of contacting emergency services.

One of the family members attempted to return to shore in the kayak to seek help, but damage to the hull of the kayak caused it to take on water and become difficult to manoeuvre. He swam the remaining distance to shore and raised the alarm, prompting a large-scale sea and air search, which led to the family's rescue. At this time they were nearly 14 kilometres out to sea.

#### Contributory factors

- No check-in or alarm-raising procedure was in place to monitor watercraft users and ensure their safe return within an allocated timeframe.
- The equipment inspection and maintenance procedure failed to identify the damaged watercraft and remove it from use.
- The family did not have a phone or emergency signalling devices such as a personal locator beacon (PLB) or emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB).
- The watercraft were used on open water during strong winds.

#### Recommendations

##### PCBUs supplying recreational watercraft should:

- Undertake a risk assessment and implement a system of work that ensures, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of watercraft users.
- Provide watercraft users with safety information, which should include:
  - identified hazards, risks and how to manage them
  - weather patterns and water conditions in the area
  - the designated cruising area of the watercraft.

- Implement check-in and alarm-raising procedures, including expected return times.
- Conduct regular inspections and pre-operational checks to ensure watercraft are maintained and damaged equipment is not available for use.
- Ensure watercraft carry safety, communication and navigation equipment where practicable.
- Not supply watercraft for recreational use in unfavourable weather conditions.

**Users of watercraft should:**

- Carry a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch.
- Check weather forecasts and avoid open-water activities in adverse conditions, such as strong offshore winds.
- Check watercraft are in good condition before use and report any damage to the business or undertaking providing the watercraft.

**References and further information**

**Work Health and Safety Commission and WorkSafe**

- [How to manage work health and safety risks: Code of practice](#)

**Transport WA**

- [Paddle craft](#)