



INTERNET ARTICLE

A boat safety awareness demonstration for DWS officials

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A boat ride, especially in calm and cool waters is always a pleasure!

Whilst the pleasure is real, there needs to be critical awareness of what to do in case of emergency. What is of more importance is being able to rescue yourself by swimming to safety in case of the boat capsizing in deep waters.

To get knowledge and safety training tips, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) organised an awareness demonstration drill to empower its Eastern Operations officials at the Midmar Dam recently.

This was after the DWS National Occupational Health and Safety committee (NOHSC) held its quarterly gathering at Eastern Operations: National Water Resource Infrastructure (NWRI): Midmar Dam on the last day of their three-day meeting was held 9 - 22 August 2014.

The demonstration was made by Mr. Desmond Van Rensburg: Control Survey technician, who mentioned that DWS owns a number of boats. "But", said van Rensburg, "few officials are aware of the dangers involved. Before any operations begin, a safety checklist must be used and shall include pretow, towing, prelaunch, launching, retrieving, and post retrieving. An inspection must be done on the boat and the trailer to ensure they are in good working condition. Care must be given during towing, launching and retrieving," said van Rensburg.

He explained that people involved in boat operations must be trained and have a skippers license. They must also be medically fit for such operations; medical examinations must be conducted on an annual basis. A procedure for emergencies must be known by employees and be easily accessible when required.

Van Resburg also emphasized that safety equipment must always be on board. "This must be inspected for defaults and always be in good working order. Some of the safety equipment that is required includes carbon dioxide (CO₂) fire extinguishers, life jackets, first aid kit, spare parts, jumper cables, medical kill switch and tow rope," he said.

One of the highlighted topics was the OPs Points which are part of the Cooperative Inland Waterways Safety Programme (CIWSP). This programme is currently being piloted at Midmar Dam, Boskop Dam, Vanderkloof Dam and Theewaterskloof Dam.

The OPs Point is the point at which the emergency response vessel is operated. This implies that the emergency response vessel will be used to attend to any incidents that occur on the water's surface. An incident is reported through the activation of the UPN System. The UPN System is a system which informs the relevant authorities of any incidents that occur on the water's surface and surrounding state land, by sending an sms to a national number, i.e.*120*34248#. The sms reaches a call centre which responds to the sender immediately. The emergency response vessel can only be operated by the OPs Point Agent and other Assistant OPs Point Agents. The OPs Point Agents work voluntarily and can be anyone who is located close to the dam and has a skipper's licence, such as a DWS official, who is a member of a yacht club based at the dam including a member of the police and so on.

The CIWSP has been developed for DWS by the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) in collaboration with the Department of Transport. It is a safety programme which addresses all safety issues at state dams, from boating safety to water pollution.



water & sanitation

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DWS officials listening to van Rensburg delivering a talk on boat safety awareness.

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