Urgent Call for Open Water Safety Education in Singapore by SG Project Silent

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Despite Singapore's developed status, comprehensive open water safety education and awareness are critically lacking. Existing resources are underutilized, failing to translate intent into impactful public outreach.

Recent, tragic incidents underscore this failure:

May 2022, Oct 2023

Drownings involving Maritime personnel and a recreational swimmer, highlighting fatal flaws in life vest usage and equipment failure.

Dec 2023, Apr 2025

Singaporeans drowned in regional waters after ignoring warnings and misjudging conditions.

These recurring fatalities demonstrate an urgent need for systemic intervention beyond traditional, linear safety analysis, which fails to address the complexity and unpredictability of open water environments (Goh, Brown, & Spickett, 2010).

The Public is Unprepared: Most citizens do not proactively seek or apply essential water safety knowledge before engaging in open water activities. This lack of preparation directly contradicts the components of water competency, such as coping with risk and knowledge of local hazards (Stallman, et al., 2017).

SG Project Silent's Proactive Solution

SG Project Silent will adopt an evidence-based, systemic approach to drive open water safety education in 2026.

We introduce the Plan, Check, and Go framework, a structured, continuous safety process designed to encourage proactive behavior change.

This aligns with:

1. Systemic Safety Thinking: Moving beyond simple causality to address complex, unpredictable open water risks.
2. Neurological Behaviors Models: The concept mirrors the effective "Think Safe, Play Safe, Stay Safe" slogan (adapted with permission from Sport Singapore) and the WSH Council's "Look, Think, Do" educational reminder.

Plan, Check, and Go provides a simple, scientifically proven framework to embed crucial safety thinking into our community, shifting the focus from reaction to prevention.

The Safety Message

Plan	Check	GO

Planning for Systemic Safety

The article notes that poor safety is often a "by-product of the systemic structure" created "unknowingly" by the joint actions of different parties. This highlights the danger of relying on ad hoc or event-driven reactions.

The Plan phase requires a deliberate, structured approach to anticipating risks, defining procedures, and establishing clear roles before a situation arises. It is a phase before the implementation of open water activities.

In water safety, this means planning for systemic factors like equipment maintenance, staff-to-swimmer ratios, lifeguard training competency, and effective emergency protocols, moving beyond just individual competence.

A knowledge source that is applicable to everyone: newcomers, season users, and maritime shore-based personnel.

Newcomers	Season Users	Maritime Shore-based Personnel
1. Conduct a self-competency check, health readiness, and operator's competency 2. Create (or are aware) of the risk assessment and safety plan 3. Buddy system is a must 4. Communication plan 5. Know the activity road map planned by the organiser/operator	1. Create (or are aware) of the risk assessment and safety plan 2. Buddy system is a must 3. Communication plan 4. Create the activity road map	1. Create (or are aware) of the risk assessment and safety plan 2. Buddy system is a must 3. Communictation plan 4. Create the work activity schedule and plan

**The list can be added, but restricted to 5 or less to prevent information overload that will result in less effectiveness for any safety model or message.*

Monitoring and Systemic Diagnosis

The conclusion states that traditional causal analysis is "less effective in representing the complex interactions" and recommends systems thinking tools like causal loop diagrams to understand the "systemic structure that contributed to the incident".

The Check phase is the mechanism for the recommended systems analysis. It demands continuous monitoring of both system inputs (e.g., training effectiveness, equipment condition) and outcomes (e.g., near-miss data, adherence to procedures). This process allows for the identification of "emerging problems" and the detrimental "amalgamation of the reactions of different parties" before they result in a major incident, preventing the issue seen in the Bellevue case study. The Check phase can be a continuous spectrum of safety attitude, ensuring adequate measurement and resource are being established to reduce risk in the activity or work.

Newcomers	Season Users	Maritime Shore-based Personnel
1. Ensure weather & sea conditions are being checked before engaging in activities 2. Ensure equipment is checked for serviceability before engaging in activities 3. Ensure next of kin or someone is being informed about your duration and the plan of the activity 4. Ensure Personal Floatation Device (PFD) is fitted correctly and worn before engaging in activities 5. Never venture alone	1. Ensure weather & sea conditions are being checked before engaging in activities 2. Ensure equipment is checked for serviceability before engaging in activities 3. Ensure next of kin or someone is being informed about your duration and the plan of the activity 4. Ensure Personal Floatation Device (PFD) is fitted correctly and worn before engaging in activities 5. Never venture alone	1. Ensure weather & sea conditions are being checked before commencing work 2. Ensure equipment is checked for serviceability before commencing work 3. Ensure next of kin or someone is being informed about your duration and the plan of the work 4. Ensure Personal Floatation Device (PFD) is fitted correctly and worn before commencing work 5. Never venture alone

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Effective, Adaptive Intervention

The article advocates for interventions that "improve risk management capacity rather than event-level interventions" and a better understanding to "facilitate the design of more effective safety culture interventions".

The final Go phase is where the systemic learning from the "Plan" and "Check" phases is applied. It ensures that safety measures are adaptive and focused on improving the underlying "systemic structure"—the safety culture and risk management capacity—rather than simply punishing or addressing the immediate symptom of a single event. For water safety, this could mean adjusting operational procedures based on near-miss trend analysis (a systemic factor) rather than just retraining a single lifeguard involved in a minor incident (an event-level intervention). It becomes a personal and shared responsibility. It can also be a proactive attitude at the execution phase of activity and work.

Newcomers	Season Users	Maritime Shore-based Personnel
1. Ensure a communication device (waterproof) is working and secure to your availability	1. Ensure a communication device (waterproof) is working and secure to your availability	1. Ensure a communication device (waterproof) is working and secure to your availability
2. Stay vigilant and alert during the course	2. Stay vigilant and alert during the course	2. Stay vigilant, alert, and apply Safe Work Procedure (SWP) during work
3. Look after each other's well-being and safety	3. Look after each other's well-being and safety	3. Look after each other's well-being and safety
4. When in doubt in an uncertain condition, such as weather change, return back immediately	4. When in doubt in an uncertain condition, such as weather change, return back immediately	4. When in doubt in an uncertain condition/situation, such as weather change, radio supervisor/evacuate immediately

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By institutionalizing a Plan, Check, and Go framework, water safety organizations and individuals move from a reactive, linear safety model to a proactive, systematic-thinking approach, directly addressing the research article's core finding that safety is a systemic property that must be actively managed.

Plan, Check, and Go is encouraged to become a way of life or habit for those who engage in activities in an open water environment. Cultivate a safety mindset that leads a safety lifestyle, be it at work or in recreational activities.

> Anyone can drown, no one should.

References

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Water Safety is a Shared Responsibility

ANYONE CAN DROWN, NO ONE SHOULD. 珍爱生命，预防溺水。SESIAPA SAHAJA BOLEH LEMAS. TIADA SIAPA YANG HARUS.

யார் வேண்டுமானாலும் மூழ்கலாம், யாரும் மூழ்கக்கூடாது.