CITY OF CAPE TOWN

LARGE MARINE ANIMAL STRANDINGS POLICY

APPROVED BY COUNCIL : 26 NOVEMBER 2009

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LARGE MARINE ANIMAL STRANDINGS POLICY FOR THE CITY OF CAPE TOWN

October 2009

A. General Policy Principles

1 Introduction

Although a relatively rare occurrence, the City of Cape Town with over 300km of coastline does experience strandings of large marine animals. These events when they do occur require a collective, coordinated and organised response by various authorities and agencies for effective:

- Rescue attempts for live animals
- Public control and management
- Volunteer control and management
- Environmental protection
- Carcass removal and disposal

This policy and protocol defines the coordinated response by City line functions to these events, details roles and responsibilities for each line function, organises decision making processes and defines how the City's policy fits within the broader national Stranding Policy.

2 Definition of Stranding Categories

This policy and protocol addresses the following large marine animals:

- Whales
- Dolphins
- Large sharks
- Seals

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

1. Category 1: Live whale, dolphin or whale shark stranding
2. Category 2: Injured or sick seals or seal pups
3. Category 3: Large shark species, live or dead
4. Category 4: Whale, dolphin or seal carcass

3 City Line Functions

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

- Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD)
- Disaster Management

- Solid Waste Management
- Sport, Recreation and Amenities
- Communications
- City Law Enforcement Agencies, consisting of:
  - Metro Police
  - City Law Enforcement
  - Traffic Services

4 Integration with National Policy and Framework

The Department of Environmental Affairs' (DEA) Marine and Coastal Management Department is in the process of developing a National Stranding Policy and Framework. The City's policy and protocol will be integrated with the national policy with national standards and approaches as stated in each of the **Stranding Categories** (SECTION B).

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:

- Marine and Coastal Management (MCM)
- The National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI)
- Table Mountain National Park (TMNP)
- CapeNature
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
- South African Navy/Defence Force
- South African Police Service (SAPS)
- Various NGOs and NPOs
- Civil Society Groups

The role of these organisations, authorities and groups will be governed by the national policy and framework, but are included within the City's policy and protocol where relevant and appropriate within each **Stranding Category**.

6 The Public

This policy and protocol outlines a public education and awareness programme that should be implemented in conjunction with the policy. In addition, this policy and protocol must be widely communicated to citizens of Cape Town as part of that public education and awareness programme.

7 Stranding Policy Principles

The City of Cape Town in developing the stranding protocol does so with the following 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

8 Governance

The City of Cape Town 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 City retains the rights to close affected beaches to public access
- City 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 City will ensure ongoing communication through the media in this regard
- City law enforcement officials retain the right to arrest individuals who refuse to cooperate within the closed area

B. Protocol for each Stranding Category

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

A Category 1 stranding occurs when either a single animal or group of animals are found stranded alive. Category 1 strandings can be further separate into Category 1a and Category 1b, detailed below.

1.1 Primary Call Centre

All live stranding events will be communicated to the 107 call centre as the primary call centre. The 107 call centre will alert Disaster Risk Management. Details of the 107 numbers will be advertised at all beaches as the first point of contact for any marine animal strandings. The MCM national hotline will also be displayed.

On notification of a live stranding the following protocol will be put in effect by the Disaster Management Control Centre.

1.2 Communication to line functions

On notification of a live stranding, instructions will be given to the caller on what actions to take, and which actions to avoid. These instructions will be based on the National Response Strategy. 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 A:

- Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD)
- Disaster Risk Management
- Solid Waste Management
- Sport, Recreation and Amenities
- Communications
- City Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), consisting of:
  - Metro Police
  - City Law Enforcement
  - Traffic Services

1.3 Primary decision

On receiving information of a live stranding MCM will be contacted by the Disaster Management Control Centre. Details of the stranding will be communicated to the designated MCM officials, as per Annexure A. Initial information that will be provided to MCM will include:

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

Based on this information, MCM will determine whether it is a category 1a or 1b stranding.

In the case of MCM being contacted before the City Of Cape Town, the designated official(s) at MCM will ensure that the Disaster Management Control centre is informed, and the above information supplied.

2 Category 1a: Single, small animal stranding

A Category 1a stranding occurs when a single, small animal is found stranded alive. Small animals under consideration here include dolphins and juveniles of small whale species. A small/local response team is required.

2.1 Response Team

The small local response team will consist of MCM, ERMD and Solid Waste Management officials and local area law enforcement officials. All other line functions/staff will stand down.

2.2 Procedure

On notification of a Category 1a stranding, the Disaster Management Control Centre will instruct local area law enforcement officials to proceed directly to the location, verify the call, and secure the site. On arrival, local law enforcement officials will:

- Communicate directly with members of the small response team
  - Current status
  - Exact location of the animal
  - Whether the animal has been attended to and by whom
  - Access points to the animal
- Administer the recovery position to the animal, (if not yet done), ensure airways are clear and keep the animal wet, in accordance with the National Policy and Response Strategy
- Prevent unauthorised individuals or the public gaining access to the animal
- Await arrival of the response team

If the rescue attempt is unsuccessful, Solid Waste Management will respond in accordance with **Stranding Category 4.**

3 Category 1b: Multiple small animals, single or multiple large animals stranding

A Category 1b stranding occurs when a multiple small animals, a single large animal, or multiple large animals are found stranded alive. Small animals under consideration here include dolphins, whilst large animals include all whale species as well as whale sharks. A full response team is required.

3.1 Response Team

The full response team will consist of officials from the following line functions:

- Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD)
- Disaster Risk Management
- Solid Waste Management
- Sport, Recreation and Amenities
- Communications
- City Law Enforcement Agencies, consisting of:
  - Metro Police
  - City Law Enforcement
  - Traffic Services

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

3.2 Access Control prior to arrival of response team

On notification of a Category 1b stranding, the Disaster Risk Management Control Centre will dispatch local area Law enforcement, Metro police and Traffic Services officials to the location. On arrival the following shall take place:

- A senior law enforcement official will be take control of the site until the SOCC (Site Operation Command Centre) is established.
- Beach 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, law enforcement officials 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).

3.3 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
- Disaster Risk 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).

3.4 Responsibilities of the SOCC

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

- ERMD officials will:
  - determine environmentally appropriate access points for vehicles and equipment
  - identify environmentally sensitive areas to be kept free of people, vehicles and equipment
  - assist MCM with animal management

- Metro police will coordinate overall security management of the site
- City Law Enforcement will be responsible for crowd management and control.
- Traffic Services will manage roads, parking areas, access points and emergency vehicles
- Disaster Risk Management officials will coordinate the SOCC, equipment, reinforcements, supplies (incl. food) and media, and will supply a media liaison to the SOCC.
- Solid waste will provide heavy moving equipment, as well as carcass removal as per Stranding Category 4 in the event that the rescue is unsuccessful.

3.5 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 will be impounded
- Where volunteers are asked to assist, this will be done so in accordance with the national policy and a City or MCM official will be allocated to each volunteer group.

3.6 Traffic Management

- Traffic services will close all roads leading directly to the area
- 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 City officials responding in their official capacity, will be allowed access.

3.7 Emergency Medical Services

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

3.8 Media Liaison

- A member of the SOCC will be nominated to liaise with the media
- The communication officer will provide regular and informative updates to the media
- A general media request will be made through the Disaster Management Centre to all radio stations requesting people not to go to the site and informing the public of road closures

3.9 Volunteer control and management

As per the national policy and coordinated through the SOCC

3.10 Animal handling

As per the national policy and coordinated through the SOCC

3.11 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 MCM as per the national policy

Once a decision to euthanize animals has been made:

- Metro police, SAPS and law enforcement 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

3.12 Carcass Removal

Carcass removal will be carried out in accordance with the protocol as defined in Stranding Category 4.

3.13 Site rehabilitation

- On completion of successful rescue or carcass removal, the SOCC City 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 finances or staff required to rehabilitate, will be the joint responsibility of ERMD, Disaster Risk Management and Sport, Recreation and Amenities

4 Category 2: Injured or sick seals or seal pups

4.1 Response Team

The response team will consist of (a) local area law enforcement official(s), ERMD Biodiversity Management official(s), and SPCA official(s).

4.2 Procedure

On notification of Category 2 stranding, the Disaster Risk Management Control Centre will:

- Dispatch a local law enforcement officer to the location
- Immediately inform ERMD Biodiversity Management officials (as per Annexure A), 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.
- 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 ERMD Biodiversity Management branch or SPCA arrive.

5 Category 3: Large shark species, live or dead

Although a very rare occurrence, occasionally live sharks or shark carcasses will be found on the beach. Although sharks cannot live for more than a few minutes out of water, many sharks are formally protected species, and thus MCM will co-ordinate the response.

5.1 Response Team

The response team will consist of (a) local area law enforcement official(s), and MCM official(s).

5.2 Procedure

On notification of a Category 3 stranding, the Disaster Risk Management Control Centre will:
- Dispatch a local law enforcement officer to the site
- Inform MCM
- Inform the Director of Research: Shark Spotting Programme

On arrival, the law enforcement officer will:

- Keep the public away from the animal at all times
- Remain on site until members of MCM arrive
- The animal and the site will be handed over to MCM on arrival

In the event that MCM does not want the shark carcass for research purposes, MCM will contact Solid Waste Management for removal of the animal to an appropriate disposal site in accordance with Stranding Category 4.

6 Category 4: Whale, dolphin, or whale shark carcass

A Category 4 stranding occurs when the carcass of any of the above large marine animals is found on the beach.

6.1 Response Team

The response team will consist of (a) local area law enforcement official(s), ERMD official(s), and Solid Waste Management official(s).

6.2 Procedure

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

- Solid Waste Management
- ERMD
- Local City Law Enforcement

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

- Inform MCM 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:
  - Ease of access
  - Environmental impact
  - Site rehabilitation
  - Cost effectiveness
- Determine whether additional law enforcement assistance is needed for area control and traffic control, and if so, contact the Disaster Risk Management Control Centre 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.

7. Record Keeping and Policy Monitoring

A record will be kept for all categories of strandings listed in this policy and protocol. All information will be collated, kept as records and maintained as part of the City's Coastal Monitoring Programme. The responsibility for record keeping and policy monitoring will be the City's Coastal Coordinators (Mr Darryl Colenbrander and Mr Sakhile Tsotsobe).

For each event the following information will be recorded:

- Date, time and place
- Species, number of animals
- Cause of stranding (where known)
- Did the response by the City comply with this Council Policy and Protocol
- Outcome of event
- Effectiveness of response
- Lessons learned

C. Public Awareness and Communication

1 Introduction

A public awareness and communication initiative should be undertaken – suggested as a joint initiative between the City and MCM. This initiative should:

- Inform the public of the national policy
- Inform the public of the City's policy and protocol

There is also a need to clearly and effectively communicate with the public in the event of a marine mammal stranding in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both the public and the animals, as the public is often the first responders. As the response differs based on the type of stranding which has occurred, it is necessary for communication to be based around the appropriate actions to be taken in each of the four scenarios below.

Communication should include the following: designated signage on marine animal strandings and/or additional information added to existing signage; a pamphlet and website giving details on the species which frequently occur on the City's coast, how to determine the appropriate action to take and which actions to avoid, and which agencies to phone.

2 Category 1: Live whale, dolphin and whale shark strandings

Communication should include the following:
- Signage indicating the 107 call centre as the number to phone in the case of a live animal stranding. MCM national hotline number to also be provided.
- Pamphlet and website detailing what actions are appropriate for the public to take, and a list of actions to avoid, including supportive care that can be offered before first responders arrive, safety precautions, and the importance of not attempting to move or return the animal to the water.

3 Category 2: Injured or sick seals or seal pups

Communication should include the following:
- Signage indicating the 107 call centre as the number to phone in the case of an injured or sick animal
- Pamphlet and website detailing what actions are appropriate for the public to take, and a list of actions to avoid, as well as information on how to determine whether seals are sick and in need of treatment, and when it is normal for seals to be on the beach.

4 Category 3: Large shark species, alive or dead

Communication should include the following:

- Signage indicating the number at MCM to phone in the case of live or dead large shark
- Pamphlet and website detailing what actions are appropriate for the public to take, and a list of actions to avoid.

5 Category 4: Whale, dolphin, or whale shark carcass

Communication should include the following:
- Signage indicating the 107 call centre as the number to phone in the case of a dead animal
- Pamphlet and website detailing what actions to take in this case, and the need to avoid contact and interference with the carcass.

Annexure A: Marine Animal Stranding Contact List

Line Function	Contact Person	Contact details
Environmental Resource Management	Gregg Oelofse Howard Gold Darryl Colenbrander	083 940 8143 0846309153 0848200603
Biodiversity Branch	Bongani Mnisi Benjamin Lourens	0835917791 0836502010
Sport, Recreation and Amenities	Sakhile Tsotsobe	0741850123
Solid Waste Management	Claire McKinnon Eddie Abrahams	0826006648 0842200049
Disaster Risk Management	Disaster Operations Centre	021 597 5000 080 911 4357 080 112 4357
Traffic Services	Henry Swift Jan Koen	0846205566 0788027373
Metro Police	Command Centre	021 596 1999
Law Enforcement	Declan Ross	084 622 2515