



What is a simplified safety management system (SMS)?

All domestic commercial vessels must develop, use and maintain a safety management system (SMS).

An SMS consists of documented policies and procedures on how to keep your vessel, the environment, and all those on board safe.

AMSA recognises that some vessel operations are less complex, so their SMSs don't need to be as complex.

If you are eligible for a simplified SMS, your SMS has a smaller set of requirements to meet. For Class 4 vessels these are:

- Vessel and contact details
- Risk assessment
- Policies and procedures
- Participant numbers, competency, age and health
- Emergency plan
- Briefing hirers
- Inspections & maintenance

This can be a digital or physical document. Using and maintaining your SMS means following your simplified SMS and updating it routinely.

Can I use a simplified SMS?

You can use a simplified SMS if you say **YES** to all of the following.

Vessel requirements	Yes	No
My vessel is class 4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My vessel is less than 7.5 metres long.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My vessel does not carry dangerous goods as cargo.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My vessel is not operated primarily for towage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My vessel does not have any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• berthed accommodation• an inboard engine operating on petrol, or any fuel that has a flashpoint of less than 60 degrees• a net reel, crane, lifting device or deck load that may affect vessel's stability or watertight integrity of the vessel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered **NO** to any of these questions, you cannot use a simplified SMS.

How to build your simplified SMS

This toolkit will walk you through building your simplified SMS section by section. Each section includes an example of what it could look like. These examples are just a guide, you should make sure yours is specific to your operation.



Section 1: Vessel and contact details

In Section 1, you record:

- general information about the vessel
- key roles and responsibilities.

You MUST include	Done
Vessel details: UVI, type of vessel and operation, area of operation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Owner's contact details: name, address, phone number and email address (if any)	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the designated person is not the owner:

You MUST also include	Done
Designated person's details: name, phone number and email address	<input type="checkbox"/>
Designated person's responsibility statement, which covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the roles and responsibilities of the designated person that relate to the safe operation of the vessel. 	<input type="checkbox"/>

A **designated person** is responsible for:

- helping develop, implement and maintain the vessel's safety management system
- monitoring and supporting safe vessel operations
- preventing pollution

VESSEL AND CONTACT DETAILS

EXAMPLE ONLY

Vessel details

Thirty canoes for hire on the smooth waters (Operational area category E) of Bishop's Lake.

Owner / Emergency contact

Ashley Lee

Address: 2 Example Street, Alva Beach, Queensland Australia 4807

Phone: 0123 xxx xxx

Email: ashleylee@xxxxxx.com.au

Designated person

Alex Lee

Phone: 0123 xxx xxx

Email: alexlee@xxxxxx.com.au

Designated person authority statement

As the designated person, Alex is responsible for the following:

- monitoring the safe operation of the canoes and safety of all people on or near canoes,
- ensuring the SMS is implemented and working as intended
- ensuring pollution prevention aspects of canoe operations are implemented and working as intended
- providing support and resources to canoes, including giving advice and guidance on policies and procedures to staff
- alerting the owner to issues raised by hirers and staff that cannot be satisfactorily resolved
- in consultation with staff, review relevant sections of the SMS following any incidents or concerns raised by hirer or staff
- Inducting and training staff, including emergency procedure drills
- providing briefings to the owner as required.

Human powered vessels with a certificate of operation are exempt from having a unique vessel identifier.



Section 2: Risk assessment

A risk assessment is the foundation of your SMS. Once you know the risks, you can make sure you have the right people, policies and procedures to keep your operation safe.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to a risk assessment. It should be tailored to the operations of each vessel.

How to do a risk assessment

1. Identify your risks

Think about your vessel's operations, what could go wrong and potentially cause harm to:

- the vessel
- people on or near the vessel
- the environment around the vessel.

Write down each risk.

2. Control your risks

Write out what actions and controls you'll use to eliminate each risk.

If you can't eliminate it, decide how to minimise the risk.

See next page for the checklists ...



Risk checklist

What you MUST include in your risk assessment	Done
Risks that could harm the vessel, people on or near the vessel, and its environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
When a lifejacket must be worn by any person on board.	<input type="checkbox"/>
How you'll ensure that hirers, participants and any other person operating the vessel are not impaired by drugs or alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>
The boundaries of each vessel's designated cruising area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any navigation hazards in the operating area and ways to manage the risks, including operating at night	<input type="checkbox"/>
The weather patterns in each operating area of the vessel and ways to deal with adverse weather or water conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Potential interactions with other persons using the designated cruising area and ways to manage them	<input type="checkbox"/>
The minimum separation distances between vessels	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any restrictions on speed and direction to be observed by the hirer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any additional safety precautions to be observed appropriate for the operations of the vessel	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kind of marine safety equipment to be provided on the vessel taking into account its suitability for the waters in which the vessel will operate and the skill levels of the hirer and participants	<input type="checkbox"/>
A pollution mitigation strategy (e.g. preventing or cleaning up fuel spills, or waste management)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Vessels used for a tour must also include:

What you MUST include	Done
The maximum ratio of hirers and participants to tour leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrangements for communication between the tour leader and the hirer and participants	<input type="checkbox"/>

Vessels used to tow skiers or people using a towing apparatus must also include:

What you MUST include	Done
An assessment of the risks of these towing activities	<input type="checkbox"/>

Takeaway vessels must also include an assessment of the risks and hazards of:

What you MUST include	Done
Multiple cruising areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transporting the vessel on a trailer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loading and unloading the vessel onto a trailer	<input type="checkbox"/>
The hirer and participants' competence to deal with the points above	<input type="checkbox"/>

RISK ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE ONLY – YOUR RISKS AND CONTROLS WILL DEPEND ON YOUR OPERATION

Risks	Controls
Adverse weather conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check weather forecasts and updates• Local knowledge• Sheltered operational area• Safety boat ready if needed• Lifejacket worn at all times• Dry bags available for mobile phones• Paddle tethering devices to be used• And ...
Drug and alcohol use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zero tolerance to use of drugs or alcohol• Hirers complete declaration• Assess hirers' capability and fitness• And ...
Capsize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inspect and maintain watertight integrity• Adverse weather policy• Sheltered non-tidal lake• Lifejackets worn at all times• Safety boat on standby to assist• And ...
Lost or broken paddle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of tethering devices• Weekly conditioning check of paddles and tethering devices• Demonstration and competency check for how to use paddles correctly• And ...
Exposed rocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signs clearly identifying out of bounds area• Hirer's briefing• Staff member on lookout• And ...
Launching and retrieval of canoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch site consists of soft sand at water's edge• Water is shallow• Staff member to assist all hirers and participants and remain with canoe until safely underway• And ...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add items

Be sure to include risks and controls for your vessel specific operations (e.g. jet skis, takeaway vessels, etc)



Section 3. Policies and procedures

You MUST include	Done
Pre-operating checks before the hirer or participant takes control of the vessel. This must include checking the vessel has all safety equipment on board.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedures for key tasks and who's responsible for them	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lifejacket policy, which must account for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the risks identified in your risk assessment making sure lifejackets are readily available 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drug and alcohol policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other policies and procedures that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> control the risks from your risk assessment are specific to your vessel and operation 	<input type="checkbox"/>

Personal watercraft (PWC) e.g. jet skis must also include policies that ensure:

You MUST include	Done
PWCs are not taken outside of designated cruising area or pen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hirers and participants operating PWCs in a pen are supervised by owner, or tour leader	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hirers and participants on a tour are supervised by the tour leader	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hirers and participants have the skills and abilities necessary to operate a PWC safely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hirers and participants declare any medical conditions that may affect their ability to safely undertake the activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
If operating in a pen or tour: hirers and each operator must be at least 16 years old.	<input type="checkbox"/>
If operating outside of a pen or tour: hirers and participants must meet the State or Territory's recreational licensing requirements, unless exempted under State or Territory law	<input type="checkbox"/>
Each hirer and participant are provided with an appropriately sized lifejacket	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any pillion passenger under 16 years old is on board with a hirer who is at least 16	<input type="checkbox"/>

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

EXAMPLE ONLY

Drug and alcohol policy

- Zero tolerance to the use of non-prescription drugs or alcohol for both staff and hirers/participants
- Requirement to advise staff at time of booking of any known medical conditions that could jeopardise safety when operating canoes
- Staff have authority to refuse hire where a person appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- And...

Lifejacket wear

- Lifejackets to be worn at all times when on water
- Lifejackets to be inspected prior to and at end of each day's operations
- Lifejackets to be serviced in accordance with manufacturer's specifications
- Lifejackets to be replaced when damaged
- Lifejackets to be cleaned and dried and then stowed away following inspection at end of each day's operations
- And...

Hirer induction

- Staff members performing inductions are trained and deemed competent for this task
- Complete safety briefing
- Identify any concerns/safety issues
- Ensure competency of hirer
- Once satisfied assist hirers and participants with fitting lifejackets
- Assist with launching and retrieval of canoes
- And...

Staff training

- All staff to hold a minimum of Coxswain Grade 3 NC to operate safety boat
- All staff to hold valid first aid certificate HLTAID011 Provide first aid
- Staff trained and assessed to perform hirer induction
- Staff trained to inspect canoes and safety equipment for signs of damage and wear
- And...

Ensure you include policies and procedures that are specific to your operation (e.g. jet skis, takeaway vessels, sailboats etc.)



Section 4. Participant assessment

This section is your policy for who can hire your vessel, and how you'll check that each hirer and participant can safely take part.

Items you MUST include	Done
Assess what special skills, abilities, and level of medical fitness each hirer or participant would need to have based on the activities your vessel will be used for.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write out the maximum number, minimum competency, minimum age and minimum medical requirements of the hirer and any participant. To do this, think about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the minimum number of persons required to safely operate the vessel the maximum number of persons the vessel is allowed to carry the amount of space available for persons on board the kind of safety equipment on board the load and stability limitations the area in which the vessel operates the operational risk. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write how you will make sure the person who will be primarily responsible for operating the vessel is competent to operate the vessel.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write how you will make sure the hirer and any participants have the skills and abilities necessary to operate the vessel safely, over the term of the agreement, considering the vessel's size, type, propulsion power and intended areas of operation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Write how you will make sure the hirer and any participants meet the recreational boating operator licencing requirements, as applicable, in the state or territory of operation.	<input type="checkbox"/>

The maximum number of people on board cannot be more than 12 or the maximum number of people permitted by its Certificate of Survey or Non-Survey Approval.

PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE ONLY

The following is the policy of BL Canoe Hire:

The hirer and participants:

- Be at least 15 years of age (if being accompanied by children below the age of 15, the hirer must be at least 18 years old)
- Hirers and participants must wear a lifejacket at all times.
- Hirers will be required to demonstrate competency to safely board, paddle and steer canoe to the satisfaction of a staff member prior to commencement of hire
- Hirers and participants must advise the staff member at time of booking of any known medical conditions that may affect their ability to safely operate a canoe or could jeopardise the health and safety of the hirer, a participant or a member of staff
- Hirers must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs and BL Canoe Hire reserves the right to refuse a hire to any person believed to be affected by drugs or alcohol
- And...

The canoe:

- All canoes have the capacity for a maximum of 2 people who are to remain seated at all times. No pets are permitted on board at any time
- Each canoe contains safety equipment consisting of a torch, bailer and tethering devices for paddles
- Lifejackets are provided at time of hire. Where a hirer/participant wants to use their own lifejacket, it must, at a minimum, meet the same standards as those provided by BL Canoe Hire.
- Canoes and safety equipment, are maintained in accordance with the maintenance schedule
- And...

Bishop's Lake:

- The area incorporating Bishop's Lake is sheltered on three sides by bushland that provides shelter from majority of weather events.
- A navigation hazard (Mick's Rock) is located 200m south-west of the designed canoe launch area. This area is restricted due to jagged rocks located on or just below the waterline and is appropriately signposted.
- Visibility of the entire lake is good, and a staff member remains on lookout at all times when a canoe is on the water.
- And...



Section 5: Emergency plan

Your emergency plan helps prevent injuries, save lives, and reduce damage to your vessel and the environment.

Set up your emergency plan

Write down what to do in each of these emergencies if relevant:

Items to provide	Done
Fire	<input type="checkbox"/>
A person overboard or unaccountably missing	<input type="checkbox"/>
An injury or other medical emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Master incapacitated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loss of steering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loss of propulsion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vessel collision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vessel grounding	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vessel flooding	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oil or fuel spill	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adverse weather or water conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other circumstance identified by your risk assessment that may require an emergency response.	<input type="checkbox"/>

You must, if practical:

To do	Done
Make a laminated copy of the emergency safety procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>
Display that copy clearly and prominently on board	<input type="checkbox"/>

For example, it may not be practical to display a laminated copy of your emergency safety procedure on a canoe, kayak or personal watercraft.

The emergency safety procedure may be either written or a diagram.

EMERGENCY PLAN

EXAMPLE ONLY

Adverse weather <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff to monitor weather (BOM and visual)• Canoes to return to launch site when instructed• Safety boat on standby to assist where needed• And...	Person overboard <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lifejackets are worn at all times• If possible, swim to and reboard• Safety boat on standby to assist where needed• And...
Personal injury or medical emergency <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hirer completes medical declaration• No alcohol or drugs permitted• Safety boat on standby to assist where needed• And...	Hirer incapacitated <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hirer completes medical declaration• No alcohol or drugs permitted• Safety boat on standby to assist where needed• And...
Loss of steering/propulsion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training in correct use of paddles• Tethering devices used at all times• Use of hand signals to attract attention of safety boat crew• And...	Collision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum separation distance to be maintained by hirer at all times• Low speed of canoes• Enclosed waterway with no other vessels permitted• Daylight operations only• And...
Grounding <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prohibited areas where grounding could occur are sign posted, and hirers instructed not to enter• Staff to launch and assist with retrieval of canoes.• Safety boat on standby to assist where needed• And...	Vessel flooding or capsize <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hulls inspected for damage at end of each hire• Regular maintenance program• Prohibited areas where hull damage could occur are sign posted, and hirers instructed not to enter• Hirers instructed how to right canoes and reboard• Safety boat on standby to assist where needed• And...

For other types of vessels (e.g. has an engine, carries a gas bottle, etc.), you need to include procedures for fire and oil or fuel spills in the emergency plan.



Section 6. Hirer briefing and record

Hirer briefing

You must provide a briefing to each hirer and participant before they take control of the vessel.

Your briefing MUST include	Done
Identified risks and controls (see your risk assessment)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lifejacket wearing requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drug and alcohol policy.	<input type="checkbox"/>

If any hirers or participants aren't present for the briefing:

- someone who is present must agree to brief all other people who might operate the vessel. This must cover everything in your standard briefing.

Vessel hire record

You MUST have	Done
A written record of each hire	<input type="checkbox"/>

HIRER BRIEFING AND RECORD

EXAMPLE ONLY

Hirer safety briefing	
Safety matters	Completed
The hirer, who must be a competent swimmer and at least 15 years of age, is responsible for the safe operation of the canoe at all times. Children under the age of 15 must be accompanied by an adult.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The hirer is to ensure the canoe is operated in accordance with instructions provided. This includes being able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the attending staff member the ability to safely operate the canoe.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The hirer can only operate the canoe within the confines of Bishop's Lake	<input type="checkbox"/>
The canoes for hire are all suitable to carry a maximum of two persons. No additional people or any animals are permitted.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Due to the possibility of sudden strong winds and inclement weather occurring, the hirer must upon instruction from staff of BL Canoe Hire, immediately proceed to the launch area as shown by staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The hirer must pass other canoes and identified navigation hazards at a distance of 20 metres to avoid any risk of collision. When operating in groups, maintain sufficient distance to allow for paddling and turning.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>There is one known navigational hazard within Bishop's Lake.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mick's Rocks is located 200 metres south-west of the launch point Although a large part of the rocks is always clearly visible during daylight hours, the area around the rocks is very shallow with jagged rocks just under the water's surface <p>Canoes are prohibited from operating within 20 metres of Mick's Rocks to prevent damage to the canoe and injury to the hirer and participants. The area is clearly marked for this purpose.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Each hirer is provided with a lifejacket for use during the hire. Lifejackets must always be worn. A staff member will demonstrate how to wear and use the lifejacket in an emergency prior to the hire commencing.	<input type="checkbox"/>
BL Canoe Hire has a zero-tolerance policy to drugs and alcohol use when hiring canoes. Any person deemed to be under the influence will not be permitted to hire or participate in the use of canoes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aside from lifejackets, each canoe comes with a torch, bailer and tethering devices for paddles. Please ensure these remain in the canoe unless needed. Dry bags are available for use to protect mobile phones, keys etc. from water damage. Lockers are also available to store valuable items.	<input type="checkbox"/>
To ensure the Bishop's Lake environment remains pristine, hirers are not permitted to take food, food packaging, cigarettes or other such items onto the lake. Water or other non-alcoholic beverages may be taken; however, the use of cans and glass bottles is prohibited.	<input type="checkbox"/>
BL Canoe Hire maintains a safety boat to assist hirers that may get into trouble when on the water. A staff member remains on lookout for any signs of trouble; however, hirers can assist by waving two hands in the air to attract attention if needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The hirer agrees to brief all other hirers and participants who may operate the canoe about the matters provided in the briefing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signature of hirer..... Date / / Signature of briefer.....Date / /	



Section 7. Maintenance

This section covers inspections and maintenance for your:

- vessel
- machinery
- equipment.

How to set up your inspection and servicing plans

1. Set up your inspection plan

You MUST include	Done
A schedule for when you will inspect specific equipment, machinery, and your vessel.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who can conduct your inspections. This must be the owner or another person with sufficient experience and knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A record of inspections where you can record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• each inspection• any issues/hazards found• corrections made.	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Set up your servicing plan

You MUST include	Done
When your machinery and equipment will need to be serviced, based on the manufacturer's instructions.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your record can include any customer complaint or feedback about hazards they've found.

MAINTENANCE

EXAMPLE ONLY

Inspection plan

Inspections must be conducted by Ashley Lee or Alex Lee

Any deficiencies and corrections will be recorded in the record of inspections book.

When	Item
End of each hire	Visual check of canoes (hull, seating, paddles and safety gear). Lifejackets checked, cleaned and dried.
First Monday of every month	Safety equipment (lifejackets, torch, bailer, tethering devices for paddles) – in date (where applicable) and good condition.

Servicing plan

When	Item
July	Lifejackets – service

Record of inspections

Inspection date	Deficiency	Correction
08/07/25	Lifejackets need to be serviced	Serviced by Jan's Nautical Shop and documentation filed. <i>Alex Lee</i>



Section 8. Review

After you've made your SMS, you'll need to do regular reviews. This means checking that your risk assessment and procedures are working to keep your operation safe.

What to put in your SMS

Set up your review record.

You MUST include	Done
A place where you can record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of the review• Signature or initials of the person who did the review	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your review record can be at the end of each reviewed section, or at the end of the SMS.

When you need to review

You need to review your **risk assessment**:

- if you plan to start a different operation
- after a marine incident
- if the master believes the risks have changed

You need to review your **procedures, including your emergency plan**:

- every 12 months
- if you find a new or increased risk when you review your risk assessment.