

be water safe 

national challenge 2026

rovers

 guidelines



"Drowning is not always obvious. It can happen silently and quickly, often in the time it takes to check a text or apply sunscreen."

— National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) —



be prepared

Rovers, here's your next great adventure - one that begins with water!

SCOUTS South Africa has adopted '**Be Water Safe**' as the **National Challenge for 2026!**

The National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) reports that South Africa experiences approximately **1,484 drownings every year**. This makes water safety one of the most important life skills for all young people.

Water is life, it sustains us, connects us, and shapes our communities. Yet across South Africa, we face rising challenges: drowning incidents, unsafe rivers, pollution, invasive plants, and the closure of municipal pools. As Rovers, we have the skills, energy, and leadership to make a real difference.

Daily Scouts around the world contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs through the Scouts for SDGs initiative. SDGs are a call to action to end inequality and poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that everyone has access to health, justice, and prosperity. This initiative is the world's largest coordinated youth programme that enables young people to take local actions that contribute to solving global challenges. (<https://sdgs.scout.org/>).

Embracing '**Be Water Safe**' drives the SDGs in several ways. The SDGs that the programme addresses include:

- **SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being: *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.*** Promoting safety, preventing injuries, and reducing drowning deaths.
- **SDG 4: Quality Education: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*** Building lifelong skills and knowledge in water safety.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.*** Preparing young people to respond to floods and water-related disasters safely.



This '**Be Water Safe**' challenge calls on every Rover to act through:

- **Awareness:** Learn about the importance of water safety, conservation, and management.
- **Preparedness:** Develop your personal readiness and leadership.
- **Service & Responsibility:** Turn knowledge into impact.

The **Be Water Safe National Challenge** is supported by the **Jaryd Payne Foundation**. The water safety skills that Rovers gain through the Challenge are in memory of Jaryd and honour his love of the outdoors and playing football with friends.

SCOUTS South Africa also thanks the **NSRI** for their continued support in making this challenge possible.



the challenge:

To complete the **National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe**, Rovers must complete the requirements, listed under **Awareness, Preparedness** and **Service** below.

1. task one: awareness

Rovers must demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of water safety, conservation, and management through active learning and education. Complete one of the requirements listed below.

Requirements:

1. Attend or complete a Scout recognised **Water Awareness Course** (online or physical) or complete the **Water Smart Online Water Safety Modules 1 – 4** (<https://lifesaving.co.za/watersmart/>).
 - Water safety around rivers, dams, and other natural bodies of water.
 - Water ecology and hygiene practices.
2. Find out what the role of the **Regional Water Activity Committee** is, and how different bodies of water are classified from an activity point of view.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of **water infrastructure basics**, including:
 - Maintenance of water supply systems, pipes, and treatment plants.
 - The importance of preventing leaks and contamination in water systems.
 - The safety precautions around municipal water infrastructures.
4. Complete a **Sportsman Award** related to a water sport.

2. task two: preparedness

Rovers must develop skills and practical readiness to respond to water-related challenges and support safe, sustainable water use. Complete one of the requirements listed below.

Requirements:

1. Attend a recognised **Water License Course** or equivalent skill-based course to learn a new water-related competency (e.g., lifesaving, swimming instruction, water rescue, or environmental monitoring).
2. If already water-charge qualified, serve as a **Tutor** or **Session Leader** (complete the **Tutor Training Award**, requirements 2 to 4) for the next Water Awareness or Water License course.
3. Demonstrate preparedness by:
 - Organise or assist in a **District** or **Regional** water-based event.
 - Volunteering as a **Badge Examiner** (Swimming Scout craft or interest badge) or **event coordinator** for a water-related badge or activity.



3. task three: service

Rovers must apply their awareness and preparedness to tangible community service and environmental impact initiatives. Complete requirement 1 below, which is mandatory, and then one of the other requirements listed below.

Requirements:

1. Plan and assist in running at least one Den/Pack/Troop meeting based on their branch specific 'Be Water Safe programmes-on-a-plate'. Partner with a nearby Scout Group to complete this task.

This interactive Den/Pack/Troop meeting programme introduces Meerkats/Cubs/ Scouts to key water safety principles through games, practical activities, and discussions.

2. Partner with local municipal or community authorities (Civics Award) to:
Provide analysis on challenges facing local water systems, including issues such as municipal pool closures and water-system safety, and plan a service project or community engagement activities related to these issues.
3. Contribute practical solutions, advocacy, or volunteer hours to support community water access.
4. Work as part of a team or lead a team doing a community service project for 10 hours or more dedicated to water-related causes (e.g. environmental restoration, pool maintenance, safety instruction). *This can count towards the 30 hours required to obtain a Messengers of Peace badge. (You can count the hours used to assist Meerkats/Cubs/Scouts with their projects).*
5. Complete The Project Award related to water safety.



registration

Rover Scouters must register their Crew for participation in the [National Challenge 2026 - Be Water Safe](#) by **15 February 2026** using the official online registration form by clicking on the link [HERE](#) . (Ctrl + Click to follow link). It's simple, quick and will only take 2 minutes!

deadline

- 💧 All 'Be Water Safe' Challenge activities must be completed by 30 November 2026.
- 💧 All entries are to be submitted online, or to your Regional Team Coordinator: Rover Programme, by 15 December 2026.

national challenge 2026 badge

- 💧 Rovers who complete all [Be Water Safe Challenge](#) activities will receive the [National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe](#) badge.
- 💧 Crews will receive a [National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe Certificate](#).

safe from harm



While completing the tasks for the [National Challenge 2026 – Be Water Safe](#), Scouting members must not be placed in hazardous or dangerous situations under any circumstances. All activities must comply with the SCOUTS South Africa Safe from Harm Framework and be supervised by responsible adults. Participation should provide meaningful learning or service experiences while ensuring the safety, well-being, and enjoyment of all Scouting members.

activity permits

All activities require the correct [SCOUTS South Africa Activity Permits](#) and [parental consent forms](#). Please ensure that all necessary permissions, parent/guardian consent forms, and SCOUTS South Africa Activity Permits are obtained before undertaking any Community Service Projects with Meerkats, Cubs or Scouts.

share your impact – be a water safety champion

You can also help raise public awareness by taking advantage of the PR opportunities offered by the [National Challenge 2026](#). With parental consent, share your [Be Water Safe](#) activities and photos on social media to inspire others. Please also share your stories with pr@scouts.org.za, so we can share some of them on our SCOUTS SA social media channels!

Suggested hashtags: #BeWaterSafe #NationalChallenge2026 #scoutssouthafrica #scoutssa #scouts #Skills4Life #YouthEmpowerment #Scouts4SDGs #jarydpayne