

County of Maui Ocean Safety

Rescue/PWC Risk Technician Course

by Eric Akiskalian
www.towsurfer.com

“When Archie Kalepa from Ocean Safety and Rescue of Maui County invited me to come over and take their two-week PWC Risk Management and Ocean Rescue Course, I was not only very excited but also very honored to do so. The opportunity to train with some of the very best watermen including having Brian Keaulana assist with the classroom portion of the course with a focus on Risk Management and Risk Assessment, was an opportunity of a lifetime for me, as it would be for any other fortunate individual.”

Archie A. Kalepa and Brian, along with others have been making the waters of Hawaii a safer place for over a decade. They and a handful of others have developed a rescue technique incorporating jet skis equipped with rescue sleds. Archie became a local hero when he and his partner, Ken Delima, saved fifteen people and one dog during Hurricane Iniki. This helped to prove the effectiveness of the new rescue technique, and helped earn him the prestigious Eddie Aikau Waterman Award. They have gone on to create a certification program to train other lifeguards, and have shared their knowledge with the pioneers of tow surfing in turn developing a symbiotic relationship with the knowledge flowing both ways.

Brian L. Keaulana has become one of the most qualified and respected teachers of ocean survival of all time. When Hollywood or other big name productions are in need of ocean safety expertise, they call upon Brian and his team to fill all rolls. It's no wonder when one thinks of heavy ocean rescues, they think of the Hawaiian blend and how Brian and his crew have become the elite and the most experienced watermen and PWC Operators in the world.

“Fear is from emotion; never let your emotion control your action. Never deny your fear. If you have someone who is out in the environment and is fearful, this person stands a good chance of serious injury or death.” (Brian)

My thoughts of what I was going to physically and mentally endure within this two-week period were of uncertainty and the hopes of obtaining greater experience for ocean safety and PWC Risk Management and Assessment. As a surfer myself with 32 years ocean experience and one who is challenging himself to pursue larger waves, it has become my personal overall goal to surround myself and learn from the very best in today's world of extreme surfing.

The two main reasons why I accepted the invitation from Archie to come and train with his ocean safety officers, was to better understand my personal limitations and surroundings while in a very static environment. Secondly, to share with you how powerful and instrumental the Maui Ocean Safety Officers are to all those that step foot in their waters.

What is a Risk Technician?

This two-week course was designed for individuals with the desire to learn. One who has a basic understanding for their physical range by knowing their abilities and their limitations, thus making prudent decisions using a risk management system, strategies, brainstorming

and identifying resources for an Incident Command System by using either low or high tech resources.

After going through the physical training and understanding the risk management process, you learn basic and creative survival techniques. The major goal is to integrate your knowledge, ability, and technology with your ocean environment.

Brian Keaulana says, "Archie was the first guy who came over from Maui to find out about the skis and the training. He took what he learned from us back to Maui and has been doing an unreal job with ocean safety and risk management. I have full respect for what he is doing to teach others and he comes with a lot of very powerful experience."



The intention is to create **Safety in a Dynamic Environment**. When going into the ocean, most people feel safe around well-trained and experienced professionals. That same professional cannot help but to wonder whom would provide safety for him/her in these dynamic ocean environments. Archie and Brian have developed their own safety mechanism, as well as creating one for others, with the overall objective of teaching people how to survive and in turn teaching others to endure safety for us as well as those around us. By using their knowledge, experience, resources, and technologies, risk factors can be minimized and prevented giving us quantity and quality of **"LIFE."**

This course comes complete with highly qualified and trained watermen and one very tenacious and committed women name Kekai Williams who has become the first ever PWC Risk Technician and Certified women in the state of Hawaii. Also joining us were firemen, experienced PWC operators and rescuers. Our goal was to work together as a team with positive attitudes, desire and the willingness to succeed.

With the recent implementation of the 911 service applied and hooked up to the Ocean Safety and Rescue of Maui County, this means that they are now a part of the ICS during the first call of an incident. The objective of this system is to maintain credible emergency management, by integrating effective action plans.

"I think things are going to start changing! We have recently finalized getting Ocean Safety hooked up with the 911 system, which will be the first ever for the state of Hawaii. Lifeguards in Hawaii are regarded as some of the most skilled watermen in the world and people in our own backyard are finally starting to realize how important our skills and techniques are." (Archie Kalepa)

Next time you have the chance, try pushing a 700 lb. Yamaha Waverunner on a dolly in soft sand for 170 feet in under 60 seconds. Archie went first and set the standard of strength at 47 seconds. When my time came I was thoroughly exhausted just watching everybody strive for the under 60 second mark. For some it came very easy, for a few others, it was very demanding but yet a true test of strength and endurance. When my time came, I gave it all that I had and passed my first endurance test in 51 seconds. Needless to say, that exercise alone took everything out of me and I was virtually worthless for the remaining drills. By the end of day one, all I could do is bend over and feel my stomach begin to turn inside out and

my head spin round and round as sweat rolled off my body in the scorching sun. Feeling faint and dizzy, my body turned into a bag of chills and I knew I had pushed myself harder than I have in almost 15 years and I needed to lie down. For the rest of the very physically prepared and trained individuals, they not only passed, but flew past the next remaining drills with the attitude of preparation and confidence.

“It has become very obvious to me that this course will become one of the most challenging and difficult physical commitments I have made in my 42 years of life.”

I was quickly humbled by my lack of endurance level for what followed in the days ahead. After extensive weight training, heavy sprints in the sand, punching bag training, 5-10 mile Indian runs, 2 mile Indian swims, 2 mile free swims, a 5 mile ocean ski swim, PWC training and rescue drills in the surf, Yoga, 200-400 pushups and sit ups every day and hours of classroom training in Risk Management, Logistics and Incident Command System, besides a bruised ego, a very sore body and a reality check on oneself, I survived the two weeks and received a blessing from all.

My gratitude and thanks goes to Archie Kalepa, Ocean Safety Officer/County of Maui and Brian Keaulana, Ocean Safety Officer/City and County of Honolulu for this awesome experience, and opportunity of a lifetime that will be remembered always. I also want to thank Archie for his hospitality and true Aloha spirit during my stay with him and his wife Alicia.



(Ed. note: There is also a long list of thanks and expressions of respect to many others –please see www.towsurfer.com)

You may contact Archie Kalepa at ArchieK@towsurfer.com, Brian Keaulana at <mailto:BrianK@towsurfer.com> (or) send your comments and questions to Training@towsurfer.com (c) 2002 copyright – Towsurfer.com / Eric Akiskalia