

MOUNTS BAY SAILING CLUB

GENERAL CLUB SAILING & OPEN MEETINGS STANDARD OPERATING POLICY AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

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- RYA Safety Boat Management Manual
- RYA Safeguarding and Child Protection Guidelines
- RYA The Legal Aspects of Race, Training & Event Management

1. Introduction

RRS Rule 4 states that "the responsibility for a boat's decision to participate in a race or to continue racing is hers alone."

It is generally accepted that sailboat racing is an intrinsically dangerous sport. Nevertheless, the Club owes a duty of care to participants in events organised by it. We have a particular duty of care towards young people under the age of 18 and inexperienced sailors.

These operating procedures have been developed as guidelines for good practice in the management of the safety of all those competing in Club events. They are based on tried and tested procedures employed at major events organised and managed by the RYA.

This document sets out the procedures to be used as the basis for managing safety resources in order to reduce the inherent risks associated with sailboat racing to a level that is as low as reasonably practical.

2. Objectives

The Objective of the Safety Fleet is to provide efficient, competent safety cover to allow competitors of all ages and abilities maximum enjoyment whilst minimising the risks to the safety of the sailors and boats.

3. Organisational Structure & Responsibilities

Overall safety management during Club events is the responsibility of the designated Race Officer.

The **Race Officer** has operational responsibility for the safety of all competitors on the course area and has absolute authority to employ all the resources available to them, as they see fit, and to direct the work of all those assisting.

The Race Officer is responsible for the overall management of the safety fleet both on and off the water. It is the Race Officer that makes the decision whether to race or not. In making the decision, the Race Officer will consider the prevailing and forecast weather and sea conditions. The Race Officer may also consider the experience of the likely competitors in the event.

The Race Officer alone will decide if there is sufficient safety cover in place.

If, in the Race Officer's opinion, an individual competitor is a danger to themselves, to other competitors or is requiring a disproportionate amount of safety fleet time to the detriment of overall safety on the course then he may instruct the boat to proceed ashore.

The **Beachmaster** (applicable for Open Meetings only) reports to the Race Officer and has particular responsibility to ensure that the Race Officer is informed of the number of boats launching and that all competitors are accounted for at the end of the day.

The Beachmaster has a particular duty of care towards competitors under the age of 18 and should be fully conversant with the Club's Child Protection policies and guidelines.

At the instigation of the Race Officer, notwithstanding RRS Rule 4, the Beachmaster may advise a boat that the conditions are not safe for it to participate in a particular race or event.

The Beachmaster should be prepared to provide any new or visiting crews with a copy of the Club's Sailing Instructions and provide a safety briefing as appropriate.

Safety boat crews report to the Race Officer and should be conversant with the procedures set down in this document and the safety procedures set out in the RYA Safety Boat Management Manual.

Safety Boat crews are responsible for the safe launch and recovery of safety boats and use of the tractor, paying particular attention to activities on the slipway and interactions with the general public.

Safety Boat crews are responsible for ensuring that their boat is appropriately equipped and launched to ensure that all tasks can be completed in a timely fashion. (See section 6 below.)

Personal buoyancy is to be worn at all times.

Crews should conduct a radio check as they leave the shore.

Each safety boat should take its own bearings and satisfy itself that it can independently navigate its way back to the launch area in the event of poor visibility.

No safety boat may go ashore until released by the Race Officer.

All personnel should aim to be ready to assume their responsibilities at least one hour before the published start time.

4. Radio Call Signs & Procedures

All VHF radio traffic will normally be carried via channel M2.

The Race Officer should conduct a radio check for each safety boat as it leaves the shore.

Standard radio protocols should be observed and radio transmissions should be kept to a minimum to prevent "clutter" on the airwaves.

5. Personnel and Equipment

All safety boats should normally have a minimum of two competent adults aboard, one of whom should be dressed to enter the water to aid a rescue. Safety boats should not be overloaded with crew and should be able to accommodate a minimum of 5 additional sailors. It should be unusual for a safety boat to have more than three crew members.

Essential Equipment which should be carried by all Safety Boats:

1. Adequate fuel
2. Fully functional VHF radio
3. A sound generator (whistle or fog horn)
4. Compass
5. Anchor and warp suitable for the race area
6. Sharp knife, preferably serrated and easily accessible
7. Kill cord which must be used by the driver at all times when underway
8. Paddles and bailer
9. Tow rope (preferably made of floating line) and towing bridle
10. Waterproof first aid kit and survival bag or thermal protective aid
11. Distress Flares:- 2 orange smoke and 2 pinpoint red or 2 day/night flares
12. Spare kill cord

Equipment, which should be carried by at least one Safety Boat on the course:

1. Wire Cutters, to cut away rigging and trapeze wires
2. GPS location equipment

6. Operational Guidelines (applicable for Open Meetings only)

Once the Race Officer is satisfied that the conditions are safe and sufficient safety cover is in place, he should authorise the Beachmaster to allow the competitors to launch.

The Beachmaster should inform the Race Officer of the number of boats competing in each fleet.

It is critical to the safety of the fleet that the Race Officer knows the number of boats afloat at any one time.

At the completion of racing, the safety boats should escort the fleet back to shore and the Beachmaster should advise the Race Officer when the whole fleet has been accounted for.

If the Beachmaster finds that one or more boats are unaccounted for the Race Officer should be informed immediately so that, if necessary, safety boats can be directed back to the course area to start a search.

If the missing boat(s) cannot be accounted for the Race Officer will decide the next course of action.

7. Procedure to get boats to the race area (applicable for Open Meetings only)

The launching of the fleet should be supervised by at least one safety boat which should be prepared to render assistance as required.

Special attention should be paid to ensuring that competitors remain clear of known hazards including Hogus Rocks and, at certain states of the tide, the Causeway.

8. Procedure to get boats back to the shore (applicable for Open Meetings only)

Once racing has finished for the day (or the Race Officer has signalled that racing has been abandoned) the fleet can be expected to head back to the launch area.

The safety fleet should spread itself along the route back to the launch area paying particular attention to any identified hazards on route.

A "sweeper" should remain in the course area until all the boats have finished and follow the fleet back to shore.

Particular attention should be paid to the return to shore of any boats containing young people or inexperienced sailors. Ideally these boats should be supervised. If necessary, they should be advised to wait until a safety boat can be released to accompany them back to shore. If such a competitor insists on sailing in unaccompanied, the Race Officer and Beachmaster should be informed so that their progress can be monitored.

9. Procedure for retiring boats

The Race Officer should be advised of any boats retiring or leaving the race area.

Particular attention should be paid to the return to shore of any boats containing young people or inexperienced sailors. Ideally these boats should be supervised. If necessary, they should be advised to wait until a safety boat can be released to accompany them back to shore. If such a competitor insists on sailing in unaccompanied the Race Officer should be informed so that their progress can be monitored.

10. Fog Guidelines

If fog arrives prior to the start of a race – the Race Officer may postpone racing and request the Safety Fleet to implement the "Fog Guidelines". Competitors are informed by the Safety Boats to stay close to the start line.

If fog arrives during a race – the Race Officer may decide to shorten or abandon racing and request the Safety Fleet to implement the "Fog Guidelines". Fleets are informed by the Safety Boats either at the finish or on each leg of the course to stop, stay close together near a known reference point such as a mark or safety boat. Safety boats count the number of competitor boats near them and report to the Race Officer.

If the total number does not equal the total of the boats that went afloat, the Race Officer may authorise individual safety boats to commence a search.

The Race Officer makes the decision whether to tow home or not. If not towing, send the fleet ashore in small groups keeping in sight of the accompanying safety boat. If a boat capsizes the group should stop while the boat is righted. If towing, the boats should be instructed to drop their sails if possible and take the tows.

If a competitor cannot see a safety boat or reference point, they should STOP, stay with any other boats that they can see and attract attention.

11. Strong Wind Guidelines

If strong winds arrive prior to the start of a race – the Race Officer may postpone racing and request the safety fleet to implement the “Strong Wind Guidelines”. Boats are informed by the safety boats to stay close to the RIBs and to lie to or heave to.

If strong winds arrive during a race – the Race Officer may decide to shorten or abandon racing and request the Safety Fleet to implement the “Strong Wind Guidelines”. Boats should be informed by the Safety Boats either at the finish or on each leg of the course to stop, stay close together and either proceed slowly ashore staying close to the RIBs or to lie to or heave to and await further instructions.

The safety fleet should either form a corridor to escort the boats ashore or gather competitors together in groups and once sensible groups are formed, supervise the competitors as they sail ashore. Each safety boat should be asked to escort approximately 10 boats in a group.

In the event of a capsize, either a nearby safety boat should stand by or the group should stop until the boat is righted and ready to sail again or another safety boat takes over supervising the capsized boat.

12. Emergency Situations

An “Emergency Situation” may arise in the event of a serious injury to a competitor, safety boat crew, entrapment in a capsize situation, serious damage to a boat or a competitor not being accounted for.

The first boat on the scene should inform the Race Officer of the situation at the earliest opportunity.

The Race Officer should immediately assess the situation and decide on the appropriate course of action.

All other safety boats are to continue to provide safety cover in the normal manner.

The casualty should be taken ashore to a designated Emergency Drop-off Point specified by the Race Officer.

Emergency Drop-off Points include:

On the beach in front of the launching slipway (Kings Road Slipway, Marazion - postcode TR17 0EL) – be aware that if someone is seriously injured or if the sea conditions are not favourable this may not be the most appropriate place to try and transfer the casualty from boat to shore.

Penzance Harbour (Penzance Sailing Club - postcode TR18 2LL)

In no circumstances should the casualty be abandoned at the drop-off point. It is the safety boat crews’ responsibility to hand over the casualty to a competent person.

The Race Officer should be kept informed of all actions at every stage of the operation. The Race Officer should keep a written record of all actions taken including times etc.

The Race Officer should consider whether it is safe or appropriate for racing to continue and, if necessary, shorten or abandon the race and instruct the remaining safety boats to escort the fleet ashore.

An emergency is only closed when the situation has been resolved, the danger has been removed or the casualty evacuated to the safety of the shore.

An Emergency Situation Report should be completed by the Race Officer and delivered to the Sailing Secretary at the earliest opportunity.

In the event of a fatality or serious accident, racing should be immediately curtailed in the timeliest fashion. Once ashore, the Commodore, Vice Commodore or The Sailing Secretary should be immediately informed. Under no circumstances should anyone communicate with the Press or report the incident via any form of social media.

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