



Hythe Sailing Club

Protocols for drivers providing safety cover for dinghy races.

Safety cover for a dinghy race is an essential health and safety requirement. Those operating safety boats take on a significant responsibility not just for participants in other boats but for themselves, their crew and their boat.

Your responsibility prior to the race

During the week prior to the race you are asked to:

- contact the OOD and confirm that you are able to provide cover. You should also ensure that you have found a safety boat crew as it is a requirement that there are two people in each safety boat that goes afloat
- ensure there is enough fuel available and if not to make contact with Paul Kuyser and let him know

On the day of the race you should:

- Arrive at least one hour prior to the race and discuss the conditions with the OOD and confirm or postpone the race
- Undertake an equipment check and ensure radio contact* with the OOD
- Prepare the marks and anchors**, check the engine starts and launch the safety boat
- Lay the marks in accordance with the proposed course set by the OOD starting with the start mark so that competitors can practice starts
- Know the number of boats taking part
- Maintain both a vigilant watch during the race and regular contact with the OOD especially if there are novice sailors taking part
- Retrieve all marks at the end of the race and recover the safety boat.
- Wash down and flush engine before replacing cover
- Report any problem with the boats to Paul Kuyser so they may be put right
- Ensure all marks are left tidy and ready for use in the area next to the slipway

*Ensure use of the same call signs for each race **Hythe OD** for the shore radio and **Hythe Safety** for the radio afloat.

****Two marks were lost last year and it is important that you ensure they are attached properly to the anchor and the length of the anchor warp is sufficient for the tide**

Here are some top tips that will ensure everyone stays safe so that as a safety boat driver you don't make a bad situation worse.

Failing to prepare is preparing to fail!

Ensure before the safety boat is taken afloat that the safety checks have been completed to ensure the correct equipment is available, is working and that you know how to use it. This includes amongst other things:

- Adequate fuel and a properly secured spare tank
- Checking the oil and warming the engine using the hose feed
- Ensuring the engine tell-tale is working
- Righting and recovery tow lines properly coiled ready for use
- A sharp knife should be instantly available to cut lines in case of entrapment
- A marine radio
- A kill cord and a spare that is readily available on the boat
- Paddles
- A basic first aid kit for compressing wounds
- An anchor

It is a minimum requirement of the club that a safety boat driver has a RYA level 2 Power Boat Certificate and has completed the additional safety boat course.

The club provides courses if there is enough interest. In the case of someone who has relevant experience but has not undertaken the RYA training, they may apply to the sailing secretary to undertake a practical demonstration of their understanding and skills of driving/safety/recovery techniques. It is advisable for safety boat drivers to have a first aid qualification and be aware of resuscitation techniques.

It is a requirement of the club that the nominated driver ensures there is a crew available to support recovery and to help lay marks. Two pairs of hands are better than one and the crew should be able to help pull a person from the water.

Golden rules for safety boat drivers

- Always attach the kill cord around your leg before starting the engine
- After starting the engine check the tell-tale is working
- Check the steering is free and the engine engages in both forward and reverse gears
- When approaching a capsized boat count heads and stay in the helmsman's seat between the person in the water and the propeller
- Once in contact, turn off the engine unless there is a compelling reason not to, such as being on a lee shore
- People matter more than property, so deal with their needs first
- Always communicate your intentions to your crew and those you are helping
- Take care when lifting people and heavy weights over the side of the boat
- If you find someone is unconscious ensure you radio and return to the shore with them immediately providing any emergency aid that is required
- Always wear your personal buoyancy

Top tips to avoid embarrassing mistakes

- Communicate your intentions before manoeuvring and ensure your crew is safe and stable

- Engage brain before anything and then 'steer before gear'
- Observe the collision regs - 'rules of the road'
- Keep a good lookout especially when reversing or planning at speed
- Be aware of the tides, wind and the rate of the change to the weather and the possible effect on dinghies in difficulty
- Prepare the boats properly before undertaking a tow
- Ensure you are familiar with the range of dinghies and catamarans for which you are providing safety cover
- Keep the propeller clear of trailing lines
- Don't rush into a situation, take a moment to observe and notice where the risks are going to be and don't become another casualty
- Ensure you dress for the situation and are able to stay warm, dry and safe from the sun
- You should be prepared to enter the water if necessary
- Ensure you are able to provide effective cover for everyone afloat and don't be afraid to advise the cancellation of the race due to adverse conditions, especially if you feel it is beyond your capability

These notes are taken from the new RYA publication ***Safety Boat Handbook***. It contains up to date useful information and a DVD demonstrating recovery methods for different types of boats. Whilst on most occasions the only task the safety boat driver and crew have to take on is the deployment and recovery of racing marks, or standing by whilst the dinghy crew rights their boat, there will be the occasion when something more serious happens and we must be prepared for this.

The book is available from the RYA code G16. Details may be found at www.rya.org.uk/shop or by phoning 0845 345 0372

February 2008