

SAFETY INFORMATION NOTICE

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Best Practices and Safety Management at Small Boat Regattas

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Issue

There are inherent risks in the sport of sailing and in order to mitigate this, a great deal of safety related advice available to clubs and organising authorities for the conduct of races and regattas. This notice is provided to draw the available information and advice together and allow clubs to review their own organisation and measure it against leading practices.

Background

Safety should be paramount at all small boat club races and regattas. A club as the organising authority has the primary responsibility for ensuring safety at these events. This requires careful and detailed planning and diligent execution of the plans. Plans will require adaptation for the prevailing circumstances and available resources and if risks become unacceptable racing should be postponed or abandoned.

Notice

Some of the fundamental aspects of a well-run and safe races and regatta should include:

- ✓ Planning
 - Safety should be an integral part of the race management and documentation
 - Put in place a Risk Management Plan and periodically brief your race officials, volunteers and competitors on its contents. On the day of racing the race officials' and race management volunteers' briefing should address the safety the Plan.
 - Put in place an Incident Management Plan and from time to time run practice days working through possible scenarios
 - As part of these make sure communication is a strong component; before and during racing, and in case of an incident
 - Race Documents and any notices from the Organising Authority will need to articulate safety related matters clearly for competitors
 - Have checklists for all key operations and roles
- ✓ Decision Making Protocols
 - The roles of the people in charge of making safety related decisions on the club's behalf should be clearly defined and understood; the Race Officer, Officer of the Day, a designated Safety Officer

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- The reasons and thresholds for deciding to postpone or abandon racing, either prior to leaving shore, before racing whilst afloat, or during racing should also be clearly defined and widely understood.
- Reasons may take into account factors such as poor visibility, strong wind, competitor tiredness, temperature, having sufficient of resources including safety boats for the conditions.
- ✓ Personnel
 - Map out the roles needed to be filled ashore and afloat, and those needed pre-race and on the day
 - Volunteers need to be fit enough to perform the roles they will fill, and have appropriate training, skills and experience. Check that skills and appropriate accreditation or certification are covered for:
 - Marine Radio Operators Certificate of Proficiency for radio operation
 - YA Powerboat Handling and Safety Boat Operator for powerboat operation,
 - Senior First Aid certificate for first aid, and
 - Minimum of Club level Race Officer accreditation for Race Officials and race management volunteers
- ✓ Powerboats
 - Make sure the ratio is right. As a starting point, for the lowest level of unskilled beginners it is recommended to have one safety boat for every six competing boats.
 - Class Associations can be a good source of advice on safety boat ratios and types.
 - It is recommended that clubs collaborate on sharing of power boat resources, and that clubs with teams visiting major events provide a power boat to help support that event.
 - The boats used need to be appropriate size and type for the course area, and able to support the small boat classes being sailed
 - Equipment on board needs to be complete and in good repair. Make sure there is a checklist of things that the operator can use before going onto the water. This checklist should reflect the minimum state legislative requirements and the following:
 - Paddles or oars
 - Bucket or bailer
 - Bridle secured to towing eyes
 - Towline
 - Spare starting cord and minimal tool kit
 - Waterproof First aid kit containing (minimum) 2 large wound dressings, 2 medium wound dressings and triangular bandages
 - Anchor sufficient for safety boat and any towed craft
 - Chain and warp as appropriate to area
 - Distress flares – 2 orange smoke and 2 pinpoint red, or 2 day/night flares
 - Sharp knife, preferably serrated
 - Spare Kill cord
 - V- Sheet
 - VHF radio (if operating offshore)
- ✓ Communication
 - Make sure the radio equipment is going to cover the course area, is in good repair, can be used in spray or rain and there are adequate charging facilities
 - Have good protocols; be aware of ongoing communications, be short and clear, respect others and make sure you use low power or high power transmission as appropriate

- Make good use of email and SMS text messaging before racing to keep information flowing to volunteers and competitors alike. P.A. systems are a great way of making announcements at the club.
- Make sure formal notices and amendments are posted on the designated notice board
- Be aware of the limitations of closed channels and mobile phone calls. Using open communication such as VHF ensures broadcast, transparency and gets the message to a wide audience.

✓ Competition

- Choose a course type and location appropriate for the classes sailed and skill level of competitors. This may include separating courses for different skill levels and boats of significantly different speed.
- Other environmental factors such as the sea state, temperature and tide, or even those man-made such as shipping movements, need to be taken into account when determining where to sail
- Identify escape zones where competitors can take refuge or go ashore to effect repairs. Show these on maps made available to competitors and volunteers.
- Check competitors' boats and safety equipment to ensure more than just compliance, but that they are in good repair and fit for racing.

✓ Need More information?

- Go to <http://www.yachting.org.au/sport-services/safety/club-risk-and-safety-management/supporting-resources/> for links to where supporting resources and information relating to safety at clubs