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# Duties of the Safety Officer (SO)

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## 1. Your Role

- 1.1. The SO is responsible for providing safety cover for sailors on the water in conjunction with other duty officers on the day.
- 1.2. The SO will be supported by an Assistant Duty Officer.

## 2. Preparation

- 2.1. It is the responsibility of members to perform the duty allocated or arrange a swap to perform another duty. All officers should confirm their duty on Dutyman or arrange a swap as soon as possible; this significantly reduces the amount of time and effort spent by others to ensure that club members have the support they are expecting on the day.
- 2.2. All sailing duty officers are required to be at the club at least one hour before the sailing is timetabled to begin.
- 2.3. Check the weather forecast and ensure you have appropriate kit including buoyancy aid.
- 2.4. **IN AN EMERGENCY YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO GET WET TO HELP AFFECT A RESCUE; WEAR APPROPRIATE CLOTHING.**

## 3. On Arrival

- 3.1. Get the boathouse/fuel store keys. They are in the key store. The bunch you need is attached to a white buoyancy ring
- 3.2. Unlock the boathouse. Unlock the water gate – you may find that the gate securing chain is connected to a boat securing chain and the whole thing padlocked to a securing ring attached to the building fabric.

## 4. Prepare Safety Boat

- 4.1. Normally there will be two safety boats in the boathouse; please use the boat best suited for the tasks of the day. If both boats in the boathouse are inoperable it will be necessary to launch a boat stored in the Nissen Hut (ensure that the engine is fully tilted up before launching).
- 4.2. Refer to separate starting and operating instructions to be found in each safety boat. Check fuel levels.
- 4.3. Check that the boat is equipped with a paddle, anchor and rope together with a rope for towing. An emergency knife should also be located onboard.

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4.4. Liaise with the SDO/OOD and ADO to ensure that the VHF radios are working.

## 5. Safety Boat Duty

- 5.1. You must ensure that you are on hand to helm the safety boat at all times. It is not normally necessary to cruise around the mere during sailing unless it is extremely windy, in which case subject to the sailors' abilities & types of boats sailing it may be advantageous to be on the water ready.
- 5.2. On Saturdays and Sundays you will be assisted by an Assistant Duty Officer (ADO). Safety should take priority but on a Sunday the ADO will be needed to help the OOD to start and finish the races. While this is happening remain in the vicinity of the Committee Boat (or tie up to it) so the ADO will be on hand to help with a rescue if need be.
- 5.3. All occupants of the safety boat must wear a buoyancy aid.
- 5.4. Where there is no OOD or SDO on duty, the SO can impose restrictions on activities or stop all sailing if conditions are such that it is deemed to be unsafe for members to be on the water. If in doubt discuss with the members at the club during the day; there will probably be somebody there who is more experienced than you who will be more than willing to advise or help out.
  - 5.4.1. Criteria to consider:
    - Weather conditions
    - Number of boats sailing
    - Experience of sailors
    - Number of people who can be asked to help out; e.g. members present but not sailing, could help out in another rescue boat?
- 5.5. All members and visitors are required to wear a buoyancy aid while afloat or on the jetties. Sometimes even the most experienced can forget to put one on. Please keep an eye out for those who may have forgotten and remind them if needed.

## 6. On Departure

- 6.1. Return the boat to where you found it & return equipment to the "as-found" condition.
- 6.2. The boat should be mopped out if dirty.
- 6.3. Ensure that the water gate is closed and likewise secured.
- 6.4. Do not remove any keys or safety kill cords. They must be left in place on the safety boat ready for the next user.
- 6.5. If other members wish to continue sailing after your departure ensure that there is a nominated qualified person to take on the SO role and take on the responsibility of locking up if need be.

## 7. When a Boat Capsizes

- 7.1. Most people cope very well when they capsize, after all it is part of sailing. However do not assume that all is well.
- 7.2. Even the most experienced sailors can get into difficulties during a capsize or during recovery. You MUST go to a capsized boat as soon as possible after it has capsized to ensure that all is well.
- 7.3. Do not assist unless asked, racing competitors usually wish to finish a race. However keep a careful eye on what is happening, people use up a lot of energy very quickly, particularly if the water is cold.
- 7.4. If you consider that people are becoming too tired or cold you should encourage them to receive help. Young children should be taken onto the safety boat if you are at all concerned about their welfare; they get cold very

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quickly because of their lower body mass. Take anyone who is visibly cold - shivering - ashore and leave the dinghy until later.

- 7.5. The inadequately dressed sailor, not wearing a wet suit in cold or near freezing water is at considerable risk. The figures are - 4 minutes in freezing water before chill sets in - 20 minutes in a wet suit.
- 7.6. Remember as you come alongside that the propeller on the back is potentially lethal. When approaching someone in the water do so by travelling up wind, slow down and turn the engine off as soon as you are in contact with the person to be taken on board unless there is a risk of being blown aground. If upwind of the dinghy, do not drift down onto them.
- 7.7. In the event of several capsizes (which very often happens in a squall) you will need to assess who needs your help most. In this situation you must visit each capsize and ask if everyone is all right. Use your judgement to ascertain whether it might be wiser to pick up those who are in the water and leave the boat until later, so that you get to other capsizes quickly.
- 7.8. **Your priority is the safety of people not the recovery of boats.**

## 8. Inversion – Trapped Crew

Occasionally a dinghy will fully invert and in certain circumstances crew can become trapped underneath the up turned boat. If this happens it is essential with a two handed dinghy and advisable with a singlehanded dinghy to have two people in the safety boat. If no ADO is available, then a second appropriately dressed club member prepared to enter the water is required.

### Action

- Assess the situation; count heads. Establish contact with dinghy crew.
- Use whatever means are to hand to create the air gap or right the boat. Centreboard, Paddle, Oar or Safety Line attached to a shroud. (Full details of how to do this are below)
- Do not leave the safety boat. Go or radio for help if your efforts are unsuccessful.
- Recover the crew to the shore at the earliest opportunity. Abandon the capsized boat.

### Assess the situation

On seeing or alerted to a dinghy inversion taking place the safety boat crew should attempt to count heads, whilst making best speed to the inverted dinghy. On arrival, the safety crew must ascertain the whereabouts of all of the dinghy crew.

### Create an air gap / right the boat

Where it is evident or suspected that one or more of the crew are trapped beneath the boat the most effective rescue of a trapped sailor(s) is to create an air gap between the water surface and the inverted dinghy. Where unable to do so bring the boat to the capsize or upright position as quickly as possible.

#### Methods (smaller single handed dinghies)

##### Bow – Bow.

- Position the bow of the safety boat to the bow of the inverted dinghy.
- On contact kill the engine.
- Using the dinghy's painter lift the bow of the inverted dinghy onto the safety boat foredeck or sponson. This creates an air gap underneath the upturned hull.

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### **Leverage method.**

- Approaching the inverted dinghy at 90 degrees, go straight for the centreboard.
- On contact with the dinghy kill the engine.
- Position the safety boat alongside the inverted dinghy.
- From the rescue boat push down on the near gunwhale with a foot (whilst the other is left within the rescue boat), and pull hard on the dagger/centreboard towards you.
- Where the dagger/centreboard is missing, leverage can be obtained by inserting an oar from the safety boat into the dagger/centreboard slot of the upturned boat, but if this method is used, only apply weight to the oar outside the confines of the rescue boat to ensure the end of the oar is outside the boat when the capsized boat rights, but the oar is still within the centreboard case. Remember to maintain voice contact throughout, with the crew of the capsized boat.

### **Methods (larger double handed dinghies)**

#### **Towing the boat up.**

- Approach at 90 degrees to the inverted hull for the centreboard.
- On contact kill the engine.
- The safety boat crew whilst taking the tow line with them steps onto the nearside gunwhale and attempts to right the dinghy to the capsize position by pulling on the centreboard.
- Where unsuccessful, the safety boat crew quickly lies across the hull and attaches the tow line to the far shroud, preferably using the snap hook directly or around the shroud and attaching it to the towline.
- Before stepping onto the inverted hull knock or shout through the centreboard slot to gain a response of what you intend to do, as the additional weight on the upturned hull will cause the capsized boat to settle deeper. With the line secured to the shroud, the safety boat crew returns to the nearside gunwhale making sure that the tow line returns behind the exposed centreboard.
- The safety boat coxswain leaves at least 5 metres of slack before making fast to the front cleat on the safety boat.
- The coxswain starts the engine and reverses gently away at 90 degrees to the upturned hull. Voice contact is maintained by the safety boat crew with the crew of the capsized boat throughout this procedure.
- Once the tow line is taut, and the safety boat crew on the gunwhale is ready, a controlled reverse power can be applied. The safety boat crew once again attempts to right the inverted dinghy, this time having the assistance of safety boat under power. Going astern, provides greater directional stability when the tow line goes taut. Be very mindful that as the dinghy rotates from the inverted to the capsize position that the trapped crew may suddenly pop up to the surface nearby. Creating this short distance between the two boats mitigates the risk of contact between the engine and people in the water.
- If unimpeded (i.e. mast not stuck in the mud) the inverted dinghy should rotate to the capsize position. The safety boat crew uses their weight to maintain this position whilst the safety boat coxswain manoeuvres the safety boat to the bow of the now capsized dinghy to assist with its righting.

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**Spinning with Power** Note: This method may possibly cause damage to the sailing dinghy or powerboat. This method should be regarded only as a last resort. Where possible a fender should be used between the safety boat and the inverted hull.

- Recover the dinghy crew then use the power of the safety boat to rotate the dinghy.
- Position the safety boat at the bow of the inverted dinghy and at 90 degrees to it.
- The safety boat crew passes their painter around the forestay wire and makes it fast in their boat.
- When completed the safety boat coxswain powers forward keeping the safety boat at 90 degrees to the dinghy. This turning effect will cause the dinghy to right towards the safety boat.
- As the forestay becomes visible power can be taken off and the safety boat crew takes hold of it to prevent the dinghy re-inverting.
- Before righting the dinghy the safety boat coxswain may need to move the dinghy to a head-to-wind position. Righting can be performed by moving along the forestay lifting at the same time.

### **Once the boat has been righted**

Either fully, or partially, the rescue boat crew must undertake an assessment of the crew to determine what further aid is needed, returning the crew to shore quickly if injured, or suffering from the effects of immersion.

- Continue use of the radio to alert others to the situation.
- The tow line can be released from the rescue boat front cleat at this point, and the capsized boat should be left adrift in this circumstance or dealt with by a second safety boat team.

### **Dinghy Crew Entanglement**

- Where the safety boat crew encounter a dinghy crew trapped in a sheet then the use of a sharp knife is the quickest method to release the individual. All safety boats carry a knife for such an eventuality.

### **Dinghy Abandonment**

- Where the safety boat crew decide that it is urgent to return the dinghy crew to shore thereby abandoning the dinghy then a radio call whilst en-route to shore to other safety boats indicating that the crew is safe is be made.

## **9. First Aid & Medical Support**

- 9.1. Once ashore other people will probably take over. Either First Aiders or Doctors.
- 9.2. Usually a shivering capsized victim can be revived by a hot shower, dry clothes and a hot cup of tea.
- 9.3. In the event of more serious incident or injury and in the absence of a first aider contact either 111 or 999 for advice and follow the club serious incident procedure if need be. This is available in the clubhouse and [here on the club website](#). Please Familiarise yourself with it. A step by step guide is at the club next to the telephone for use in an emergency.