



Checklist for Safety Boat Helmsmen and crews. March 2018

These notes are designed to give basic guidance for club members and others who are taking club safety boats Raven1 & Raven2 or the workboat 'Viking' or any other boat out to accompany a race or other event. There is more to know; most of it will be learned by experience. The [RYA Safety Boat Handbook](#) by Laurence West and Grahame Forshaw will always repay any time you can spend reading it. A copy is kept in the Starting Hut, and another on the library shelf in the clubhouse.

Club Policy is that there will be two people. The Helmsman will be an adult who has completed the club's training and has appropriate experience. The crew must be aged 16+ and will act under the direction of the helmsman.

Being Prepared

All crew must wear a buoyancy aid whilst on the water. Crew should bring whatever personal gear they need – something to drink, warm clothing, waterproofs, comforts – and store it in a locker. One crew member should be prepared to go in the water if necessary – but **ONLY** as a very last resort. You need to discuss this in advance and decide who will do it if it should be needed

Check in: Arrive at least 75 minutes before the race start time. Check in with the Race Officer, find out about the course, the weather conditions, and the crews and boats taking part in the event. Get the kill cords and keys to the boatshed, fuel store, engine etc from the desk drawer in the lobby.

Before launching

- Check the condition of the boat.
- Tilt engine slightly when moving the boat.
- Get sufficient fuel from store and take extra fuel if needed.
- Check the engine oil level. If it needs more, do not overfill.
- Check the engine kill cord is in place, and that it works.
- Make sure the crew has the spare kill cord.
- Check all controls working (steering, throttle etc.)
- Start and run engine with fresh water to check circulation.
- Check radio is working.
- Fully inflate all tubes of each boat.
- Check the **essential kit** is all present: Spare kill cord; survival blanket; first aid kit; pump; oars; boathook; whistle; sharp knife; anchor, line, buoy; throwing and towing lines.

Only launch the boat when you are satisfied all is working correctly, all kit present, the crew are competent and properly briefed.

- Get help to launch and to recover – at least 4 people per boat. It is the joint responsibility of all taking part in the race or other sailing activity to see that the safety boat is properly and safely launched and recovered.
- Launch at least 20minutes before start of the race.

During the Race (or other event)

- The main responsibility of the OOD and the safety boats is the safety of those taking part. The first rule of racing is that each boat or competitor shall give all possible help to any person or vessel in danger.
- Focus on what's going on in the fleet. Avoid unnecessary activities and distractions. Things can happen quickly, and once someone is in the water you may not spot them easily. Scan all around, frequently, and particularly behind you.
- The helmsman should keep one hand on wheel, one on throttle/gear lever.
- The crew should check that helmsman is attached to the kill-cord.
- Communicate your intentions and actions regularly and frequently – to your crew, to other boats, and to the base station. Liaise with the Race Officer to make sure that you are where he expects you to be and knows what you are doing.
- Position one safety boat where you can see most of the fleet. If there is a second boat, it should go to the most hazardous place (e.g. gybe-mark), and see the fleet through. Keep the Race Officer advised about how well the fleet is dealing with the conditions.
- Take account of the different skills of sailors – pay close attention to the least skilled, most vulnerable, and to the slower boats at the back of the fleet.
- If necessary send a tired/cold sailor home.
- You may cancel or shorten a race, in consultation with OOD if weather conditions or events dictate (e.g. wind increases above Force 5/6, or many boats in difficulty)
- **You are there to attend to the safety of people taking part.** People always come first. Boats are expendable. Only attend to recovery of boats and gear if there are no more urgent demands on your time and attention.
- In a rescue or recovery situation, always be aware of the danger presented by the safety-boat's own propeller. **Switch off the engine when at close quarters with a person in the water, if you need to move the boat, use the paddle!**
- Avoid making a wake or wash as far as possible – it's a nuisance and can be dangerous.
- Stay clear of other boats – pay special attention to commercial vessels, especially the sand barges – in general stay clear.

4. After the race

- Haul the safety boat out only when you are in agreement with the Race Officer that all crew have been accounted for and are ashore.
- Tilt engine slightly when moving the boat
- Switch off radio.
- Get help – at least 4 people needed. The participants are there to help.
- Flush engine with fresh water for several minutes.
- Clean out the boat.
- Check all gear is present – report anything missing, lost or broken.
- Slightly deflate tubes.
- Remove all fuel to the store – report on amount of fuel remaining.
- Check with the Race Officer that all is done, and for any feedback on the race.
- Put the boat away in the shed, tidy up, lock up and have a nice cup of tea.

Thank you for your help!