



Keelboat Safety Forum

Wednesday 1 October 2025



NAUTILUS MARINE
BOAT INSURANCE



1



Keelboat Safety Forum

Presenters

- Phil Darling – National Safety Equipment Auditor
- David Staley – MHYC Sailing Manager, National Race Officer

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2



Keelboat Safety Forum



Agenda

- Session Aims
- MHYC Risk Management Framework
- Safety Afloat
- Avoiding Incidents – Harbour Hazards, Scenarios
- Recovering from Incidents – Groundings, Vessel & Crew Preparation, Man Overboard
- Open Forum Discussion



3



Keelboat Safety Forum



Session Aims

- Inform and educate
- Reduce personal injury
- Reduce property damage
- Increase awareness
- Make safety a priority



4



Risk Management Framework



Accredited MHYC Officials

- Safety Equipment Auditors
- Race Officers

MHYC Documentation

- Sailing Operations Plan
- Incident Management Plan
- Sailing Handbook



5



Risk Management Framework



Other Documentation

- Racing Rules of Sailing
- Australian Sailing Special Regulations
- NSW Marine Safety Regulations
- International Rules for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (COLREGS)
- Transport for NSW Aquatic License Exemption
- Transport for NSW Maritime Incident Reporting Process



6



Risk Management Framework



MHYC Incident Reporting Process

- Website > Keelboat Club Racing Noticeboard > Incident Reporting
- On Shore or On Water Incidents – MHYC Incident Report Form

NSW Maritime Incident Reporting Process

- If the incident has resulted in death or injury, or damage in excess of \$5000 to a vessel or any other property, the report must be forwarded to Transport for NSW (TfNSW) within 24 hours, unless the particulars have already been given to a TfNSW officer
- www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/submit-vessel-incident-reports



7



Risk Management Framework



Safety Equipment Audits and Free Get Checked Days

Communication

- Annual Skippers Briefing
- Other Forums
- Notices & Reminders – Electronic Noticeboard, Email, Series Noticeboard




8

Risk Management Framework

Communication


- Signals
- VHF

↑ •
L Ashore: A notice to competitors has been posted. Afloat: Come within hail or follow this vessel.

↑ •
Y Wear a personal flotation device (see rule 40).

↑ —
V Monitor communication channel for safety instructions (see rule 37).




9

Risk Management Framework

Communication & Coordination with other clubs

- Australian Sailing Sydney Harbour Clubs Coordination Meetings
- Submission to Sydney Harbour Friday Twilight Series Inquiry
- Recommendations included:
 - regular interclub coordination meetings
 - compulsory annual skippers' briefings
 - requiring boats to have VHF radios aboard
 - promoting the widespread use of the Emergency Plus App



10



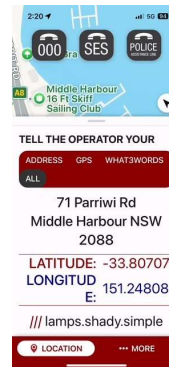
Risk Management Framework



Emergency Plus App

- Free National App
- Provides current address or Lat. & Lon.
- Emergency contact information
- How to perform Emergency CPR
- www.emergencyplus.com.au

Save the App that could save your life.



11



Safety Afloat



Two components:

- Avoiding incidents
Or, if something does happen, then...
- Recovering from incidents



12



Part 1 – Avoiding Incidents



It will never happen to me, will it?

MHYC boats have experienced a number of significant incidents including death, injury and vessel damage.

Actual events during MHYC club races include:

- Clubhouse start – unexpected gybe in shifting winds, 2 crew hit in the head, one overboard face down in the water unconscious
- Rose Bay mark – skipper overboard, dragged backwards through the water by the main sheet at 6 kts
- Fort Denison – vessel aground on western end, major keel and rudder damage



13



Before Racing



The 'Person in Charge' aboard each boat is responsible for ensuring that the boat is properly prepared and that all crew are adequately briefed or trained. The 'Person in Charge' shall ensure that:

- the boat's Safety Equipment Audit Form lodged with the club is current and appropriate for the category of the event in which the boat is racing
- all required Safety Equipment is on board and in good working condition
- all crew members are affiliated with Australian Sailing as members of a club, or have a valid SailPass, and therefore have personal accident insurance
- the boat's crew list is completed or updated by the commencement of each race



14



Before Racing



- appropriately experienced crew is on board to cope with the conditions likely to be experienced
- the crew knows where the Safety and Life Saving Equipment is stowed and how to correctly use it
- all crew are briefed on the boat's Incident Management Plan, including roles and procedures to be followed
- Crew are familiar with the boat's Man Overboard (MOB) procedures
- the boat reports to the Race Committee its intention to start the race (and notifies the race committee if retiring)

MHYC Sailing Handbook p36



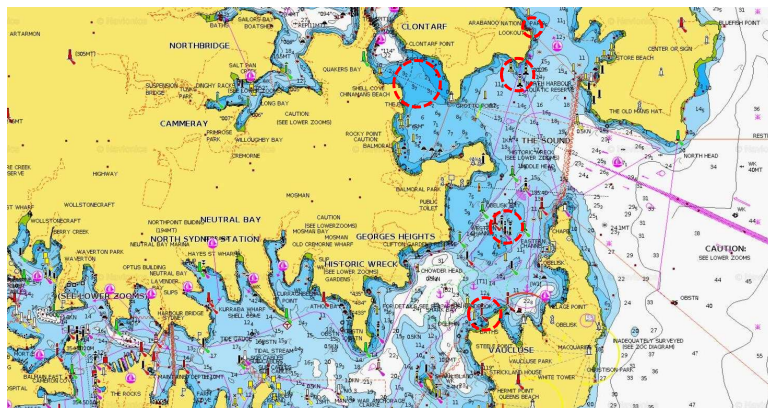
15



Harbour Hazards



Reefs & Shoals



16



Harbour Hazards



Commercial, Military & Recreational Boating Traffic



17



Activated Exclusion Zone



Competitors shall:

- not pass between the bow of any Seagoing Ship and a dedicated NSW Port Authority escort vessel whilst on escort duty.
- maintain a minimum distance of 500 metres from the bow and 30 metres from the side or stern of any Seagoing Ship underway.
- maintain a minimum distance of 200m from the bow, and 30m from the sides or stern of any Ferry underway.



MHYC Sailing Handbook p39



18



Vessel & Crew Preparation



Hull, Rig & Sails

- Is there water in the bilge?
- Are the sea cocks operational?
- Have we checked the rig? Checked or tightened all shackles?
- Are the sails in good condition? Any un-repaired tears or weaknesses?



19



Vessel & Crew Preparation



Anchoring

- If all else fails – stops a bad situation getting worse
- Must be assembled and ready to deploy
- Can the crew get it deployed quickly enough?
- Is it secured at the bitter end?
- Have you checked it in practice?



20



Vessel & Crew Preparation



Emergency Equipment

- Cat 7 (in-harbour) or Cat 4 (offshore) or as required by the sailing instructions
- Requirement to have equipment on board, in good condition and ready to use
- Make sure the crew and yourself can use it properly
 - radio (which channel?)
 - flares
 - anchor, MOB gear, first aid kit, and more ...
- The regulation gear is just the minimum – your boat and your crew may need or want more



21



Vessel & Crew Preparation



Crew Familiarisation and Training

- For existing and new crew – have the occasional training day
 - MOB
 - Anchoring
 - Reefing and storm sails
 - Water ingress
 - Abandon ship/calling for help
 - Fire
 - Medical emergencies
 - Where the gear is kept
- And don't forget to brief new crew/guests



22



Part 2 – Recovering from Incidents



What you need

- Readiness (a mental state) – be prepared for the unexpected
- The right gear – special regs requirements are just the start
- Training – crew readiness:
 - MOB
 - Other possibilities (fire, collision, ...)



23



Groundings & Keel Inspections



What if we touch the bottom?

- We may (or may not) have done damage – but how do we know?
- Even “soft” groundings (in sand or mud) may have caused damage to the keel, keel bolts or scantlings
- There have been a number of serious incidents where keels have become detached over the years:
 - LCE Showtime (Ker 40 - Jan 2020) – returning from Hobart
 - Nexba (Farr X2 30ft March 2022) – off Wollongong
 - Runaway (Sayer 11m June 2024) – off Lady Elliot Island
 - Quite a few other production makes – often near coastal



24



Groundings & Keel Inspections



For Categories 1–3, this is a Special Regulations requirement

- SR 3.02.5: Evidence of a structural inspection in accordance with 3.02.4 within 24 months before the start of the race or after a grounding whichever is the later.
- SR 3.02.6: Inspection after Grounding – an appropriately qualified person shall conduct an internal and external inspection after each unintentional grounding.

SR 3.02.4 and Appendix C give an outline of requirements

- External out-of-water check by a qualified person
- Check all keel bolts & re-tighten if necessary
- Check for visible stress cracks



25



Groundings & Keel Inspections



For Categories 4–7

- MHYC recommends that the “Model Keel and Rudder Inspection Procedure” in Appendix C3 be used as a guide.



26



Man Overboard!



More common than you think

Can be fatal

- Feb 2023 Lincoln Week Cat 6 event – MOB drowned during pre-start



27



Man Overboard



Procedure

- Preparation – Equipment and Training
- Awareness – Recognise they are gone
- Locate
- Return to MOB
- Retrieval (Get them out of the water)
- Check and treat – are they OK? Do they need first aid or medical/hospital treatment?



28



Man Overboard



Preparation

- Have the right equipment
- Have a procedure and practice it with the crew
- What if you (the skipper) goes over?



29



Man Overboard



Awareness

- Shout and point
- Roll call after an incident
- Buddy system?
- BUT – stay calm don't panic



30



Man Overboard



Locate

- Point & Shout (if you can see them – don't lose sight)
- MOB button on your GPS (position to return to)
- Lifering or Danbouy to mark position
- Williamson turn? (motor boat technique – but it does work)
- Search pattern (and call for help – Mayday if necessary)
- At night – hope they have a light or at least reflective gear



31



Man Overboard



Return

- Stop as fast as possible
- Headsail/spinnaker down
- Centre the main
- Engine on (even if you don't need it – but be careful of lines in the water)
- Return as quickly as you can
- BUT – keep someone watching the MOB
- AND – stay aware of other vessels and hazards
- AND – keep the rest of the crew safe on board



32



Man Overboard



Retrieval

- Return upwind
- Stop next to them (Windward? Leeward?) OR drift down sideways
- If conscious – get a line to them (Lifesling? Throwline?)
- If unconscious – someone needs to go in with them – but don't lose them too! (tie to the boat)
- Get them on board – somehow! (means will vary)



33



Man Overboard



Check and Treat

- Are they OK?
- Why did they go over? Any injuries from that?
- Do they need first aid? Do you need to get them to medical or hospital treatment?
- Watch out for secondary drowning
- Sources of help
 - other boats
 - Marine Rescue
 - MHYC (VHF 72)
- OR – is everything OK and you can just continue?



34



Man Overboard



Final Words

- Can be very serious
- Best treatment is prevention – keep everyone on board!





35




Open Forum






36

Save the App that could save your life.



emergencyplus

37




Thankyou!

Please stay safe on the water 😊



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38