

**SAFETY**  
ON THE  
**WATER**



sailing

SEA SAFETY GUIDELINES



# Marine Safety Working Group

## Aim

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To use its collective expertise and experience to create and communicate marine safety information and messages to endeavour to reduce accidents and to prevent the loss of life on Irish waters.

## Objectives

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- To establish strong working relationships with other National and Local Organisations to create/promote accident prevention programmes.
- To establish cause and trends in accidents at sea.
- To develop accident prevention programmes.
- To provide a co-ordinated approach to the dissemination of safety information in response to individual enquiries.
- To measure effectiveness of prevention programmes.

[www.safetyonthewater.ie](http://www.safetyonthewater.ie)

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Preparation is the key to safe sailing. The right boat, knowledge of weather conditions, sailing skills, appropriate clothing and safety equipment are essential.

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Once at sea, it's vital that your crew are organised, know what they are doing, understand the 'rules of the road' and what to do if things go wrong.

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## **Emergency** **20**

Knowledge can be the difference between life and death. So familiarise yourself with recovery procedures, distress signals, first aid and rescue techniques.

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## **Useful contacts** **29**

We probably can't answer all your questions in this booklet. So we've included a list of people who may be able to help.

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## **Yacht and Boat Safety Scheme**

For added protection at sea, join the safety identification scheme. It's a free service and you'll find an application form at the back of this guide.



**before you go**

## Get the right yacht for the job

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Be realistic about the size and type of yacht you can handle. Bigger does not necessarily mean better – you can learn more and have just as much fun by starting out with a yacht that is comparatively small.

- Get expert advice when buying. An independent survey by a marine expert will show if the yacht is in good, seaworthy condition and assess the standard of equipment.
- If you hire or charter, make sure the yacht is comprehensively insured with full cover for all crew. Check that the yacht is fully equipped with safety equipment and that all paperwork is in order.
- For more advice on buying or charter, call the ISA on **01 2800239**.

## Master basic skills

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Needless to say, it is recommended that anyone participating in watersports should be able to swim. For information on where to learn, contact Irish Water Safety on **1890 420202** or visit [www.iws.ie](http://www.iws.ie). Before setting out, you and your crew must possess sufficient skill to sail safely. This means acquiring basic knowledge of boat handling, navigation, meteorology, rules of the road, use of safety equipment and maintenance of the yacht and its engine.

The ISA administers a comprehensive training programme for yacht sailors of all abilities, starting with ‘Competent Crew’ and extending to ‘Yachtmaster Ocean’. For information call the ISA on **01 2800239** or visit the ISA website at [www.sailing.ie](http://www.sailing.ie)

## Get free safety advice from the RNLI

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The RNLI provides sea safety advice in a friendly and confidential manner and can arrange to send a trained adviser to discuss your boat’s safety equipment **totally free** of charge. The service is called SEA Check (Safety Equipment Advisory Check) and has provided practical advice to thousands of boat owners. Practical demonstrations, including man overboard, sea survival, flares and use of liferaft, are available from SEA Check.

- For more information, or to arrange a visit, call **freefone 1800 789 589** or register online at [www.rnli.org.uk/seacheck.asp](http://www.rnli.org.uk/seacheck.asp)

## Dressed for action

The crew must stay dry and warm, whatever the weather. All crew members should have access to suitable clothing, which is fully functional and will help protect against hypothermia.

- Base and mid layers should be fleece and fibre pile garments, which trap warm air and provide quick drying comfort.
- The outer layer should preferably be dedicated sailing gear for foul weather use. Chest high trousers and jacket with high collar, hood and storm cuffs will provide a complete barrier against rain, spray and wind. Breathable fabrics, which transmit sweat to the outside, are likely to provide the best performance. Bright colours and retro-reflective strips are strongly recommended. Some jackets have built in lifejackets and harness.
- Thermal headgear can play a major role in helping to conserve body heat.
- Sailing boots must have effective non-slip soles and should pull on and off easily.
- Sailing gloves help protect against rope burn and other possible injuries and protect against the cold.



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## Personal floatation devices & harnesses



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A yacht should have sufficient lifejackets and harnesses for all the crew. This means having suitable personal floatation devices and harnesses which will fit all shapes and sizes including children. It is the skipper's responsibility to show the crew where personal floatation devices and harnesses are stowed, how to don and secure them and when and how to operate them.

- The skipper should identify harness attachment points for moving around the yacht. They should be placed close to the companionway, on either side of the cockpit, so the crew can clip on before coming on deck. Jackstays along the side decks provide a good solution to moving fore and aft without having to unclip.

■ It is recommended and best practice for all the crew to wear a lifejacket or suitable personal floatation device when on deck. Non-swimmers and those with poor swimming ability should wear a lifejacket at all time when afloat. Remember – it is important to use the crotch straps.

■ Lifejackets or suitable personal floatation devices and harnesses should be mandatory in the cockpit and on deck when a yacht is out in poor weather conditions, in restricted visibility, or at night.

■ Common sense dictates that if you need to wear a lifejacket or a suitable personal floatation device, you should be wearing a harness – and vice versa. The modern style of combined air-inflation lifejacket and harness is easy to wear with minimal restriction of movement.

■ When under power, it is a legal requirement to carry sufficient lifejackets or suitable personal floatation devices for everyone on board, and for anyone under age 16 to wear a lifejacket or suitable PFD when on deck.



## Understanding personal floatation devices

Buoyancy is measured in newtons – 10 newtons equal 1kg of floatation. There are four European standards for lifejackets or buoyancy aids which must all carry the CE mark.



1. Buoyancy aids with 50 newtons are only for use by swimmers in sheltered waters when help is close at hand. Unlike lifejackets, they are not guaranteed to turn a person from a face-down position in the water.



2. The 100 newton lifejacket is for those who may still have to wait for rescue, but are likely to be in sheltered and calm water.

3. The 150 newton lifejacket is for general offshore and rough weather use where a high standard of performance is required.

4. The 275 newton lifejacket is primarily for offshore and extreme conditions and those wearing heavy protective clothing.



Personal floatation devices are available with a choice of foam-only buoyancy, air-only buoyancy or air-foam buoyancy.

■ Inflatable personal floatation devices may be automatically activated on entering the water or can be inflated manually or orally. They must be checked and maintained as recommended by the manufacturer. Spare gas cylinders should be carried.



■ It is recommended that all personal floatation devices are fitted with a whistle, light and retro-reflective strips and should have crotch straps.

## Emergency electronics

### VHF

A VHF radio will enable you to summon help by calling the Coastguard and alerting other vessels on Channel 16. However, the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) will eventually change the use of VHF Ch16 and new VHF radios will be equipped with Digital Selective Calling (DSC), which allows a distress alert to be transmitted at the touch of a button.



### EPIRBs

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) are a feature of the GMDSS system. They transmit a one-way distress signal, which can be activated manually or automatically. For instance, if a yacht sinks an EPIRB fitted with a Hydrostatic Release Unit will float free and automatically transmit a distress signal which relays its exact position to the nearest rescue centre. An active EPIRB also enables lifeboats or helicopters to obtain a direct radio bearing. Ensure your EPIRB is correctly installed and make regular checks of the battery and hydrostatic release.



- For more information about GMDSS, contact the RNLI on [01 2845050](tel:012845050) or [freefone 1800 789589](tel:1800789589), or the ISA on [01 2800239](tel:012800239) or the Maritime Radio Affairs Unit (MRAU) on [01 6782367](tel:016782367).



### Radio licensing

All vessels fitted with radio must have a radio license issued by COMREG. If you fit DSC equipment you will need to obtain a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number. For further information, contact COMREG on [01 8049600](tel:018049600) or the MRAU on [01 6782367](tel:016782367).



### EPIRB registering

It is vital that your EPIRB is registered so that full details of your yacht are known if the EPIRB is activated. Registration is provided free of charge by the Maritime Radio Affairs Unit, which can be contacted on [01 6782367](tel:016782367). Do not transfer your EPIRB to another yacht without informing the Maritime Radio Affairs Unit of necessary changes.



## Training

- Make sure you are properly trained and qualified so you can operate your radio kit effectively. It is strongly recommended that the skipper should attend a recognised Short Range Certificate (SRC) or Long Range Certificate (LRC) course. The Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources administers the Short Range Certificate (SRC). Courses run typically over a two day period and include routine, safety, urgency and distress communications as well as radio voice procedures and techniques. Details available from the ISA on **01 2800239** or [www.sailing.ie](http://www.sailing.ie)



- Make sure your crew knows how to operate your VHF radio or EPIRB. There is a risk of setting off a false distress alert due to lack of training.
- Never rely on the use of a mobile phone to replace marine VHF radio for distress and safety calls. It is not a safe or reliable substitute!



## Around the yacht

- Guard rails should be continuous around the deck and of safe height. One end should be secured with lashings or quick release clips so you can cut or release them to recover a person from the water.
- Treat any slippery areas with non-skid paint or stick-on strips. Pay particular attention to the tops of hatches and sloping coachroof sides.



- Jack stays – use webbing not wire to avoid slipping.
- Check regularly for deterioration.



## The lifebuoy

A horseshoe-shape lifebuoy should be mounted where it can quickly be thrown to a man overboard (MOB) casualty. It should be marked with the yacht's name and retro-reflective tape. It should also be fitted with the following.

- Drogue to prevent drifting.
- Whistle to attract attention.
- Automatic light which either projects a continuous beam or a strobe. Check batteries regularly.
- For offshore, use a day-glo flag on a pole i.e. dan-buoy, which can be seen 2m above the water to help show the position of the MOB.



## Liferafts

- The liferaft must be regularly serviced in line with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- The number of crew on the yacht should not exceed the capacity of the liferaft.
- The liferaft should be stowed in a position where it is ready for immediate launching. Never stow it below deck or beneath other equipment.
- 1. A hydrostatic release should be used if the liferaft is stowed above deck (two year life span).
  2. If secured against theft in the marina/mooring, remove padlocks and ensure that the hydrostatic release is operational before sailing.
- You should be familiar with the equipment carried in your liferaft.



# Close at hand

## Flares

Day and night distress flares are an essential part of a yacht's safety equipment. They should be stored in a suitable waterproof container.

- Make sure the crew know where the flares are. For safe use, get them to read the instructions printed on the sides – it will be too late on a dark and stormy night!
- All flares must be in-date.
- Out of date flares must be disposed of safely. Misuse of distress flares is illegal. A list of authorised disposal points can be obtained from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on [01 6785444](tel:016785444).
- Never use a parachute or rocket flare in the vicinity of a helicopter.



## First aid

A comprehensive first aid kit and basic first aid knowledge could prove invaluable until professional assistance arrives. It is recommended that at least one crew member should have a current first aid certificate.



- The RNLi produces a video 'First Aid Afloat'. Call them on [01 2845050](tel:012845050) for more information.
- The ISA or Irish Water Safety can provide details of suitable first aid courses that are specifically marine-orientated.



## Fire extinguishers

Fire extinguishers and fire blankets must be checked annually and maintained in line with manufacturers' recommendations. Make sure they are stowed correctly and fully accessible and that every crew member knows when and how to use them. Ask for advice when buying a fire extinguisher for your boat.

### Emergency tools

Spares	Waterproof torch with functioning batteries	Stainless steel knife
Spanners	GRP repair kit	Bolt croppers
Screwdrivers	WD40	Bungs
Pliers		Heavy duty tape

**Regular servicing of all safety equipment is highly recommended**

## The RNLI's engine check list

- The engine plays a vital role in the safety of a yacht. It must start every time and be ready to get you out of trouble in an emergency.
- To help yacht owners ensure their engines are as reliable as possible, the RNLI produces an 'Engine Check List' with comprehensive advice which is available free of charge. To request your copy, freefone the RNLI on [1800 789 589](tel:1800789589). 
- ISA also provide diesel engine training courses. 

## Rules of the road

The primary role of these rules is to prevent collisions. They rely on common sense and good practice to succeed. This is only a brief summary. Complete 'International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea' should be on board every yacht and are available from the ISA. Phone [01 2800239](tel:012800239) for more information. 



### Under sail

- Port tack gives way to starboard tack.
- Windward yacht keeps clear of leeward yacht.

### Under power

- A yacht under power gives way to a yacht under sail.
- Vessels under power approaching head-on should turn to starboard.
- When vessels under power are crossing, give way to vessels crossing from the starboard side.

## Sound signals with a foghorn

- altering course to starboard.
- ● altering course to port.
- ● ● going astern.
- ● ● ● ● your intentions are unclear.

## General rules

- It is the responsibility of the skipper to maintain a good look-out at all times.
- An overtaking yacht must always keep clear.
- There is a risk of collision if the bearing of an approaching vessel remains constant.
- Vessels of less than 20m should not impede vessels using a traffic separation scheme or confined to a narrow channel.
- Give way to vessels fishing, vessels not under command, vessels restricted in their ability to manoeuvre or vessels constrained by their draft.
- Avoid diving vessels that are flying the blue and white A flag – diver down.
- Be aware that divers may also be using a surface marker buoy to indicate their position. Keep clear.

## Night lights for sailors

- A yacht under sail must show green and red side lights and a white stern light. On a yacht of less than 20m, these may be a combination tri-colour light at, or near, the masthead.
- A sailing yacht under power must exhibit an additional white masthead light.
- A sailing yacht of more than 7m must show an all-round white light at anchor.



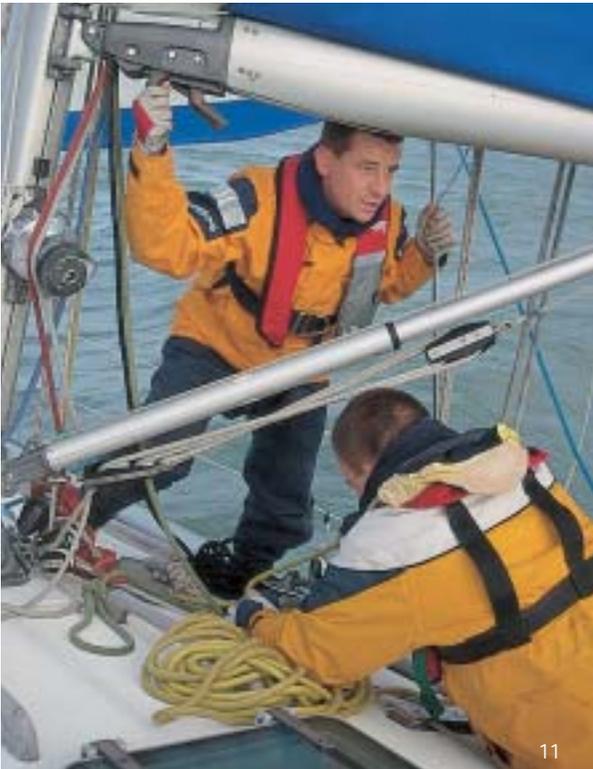
## Planning a trip

Under international regulations you must have a plan before going afloat. You need to consider the weather, tides, limitations of your boat and crew and any navigational hazards en route. Always have a contingency plan and leave details with someone on shore.

### Weather check

Always check the weather forecast before you go and be prepared to change your plans. Services of particular relevance might include:

- Weatherdial – 1550 123 855
- Weatherfax – 1570 131 838
- Teletext
- Irish Coast Guard Weather forecasts – announced on VHF channel 16 with the Coast Guard radio station’s working channel normally used for broadcasts.
- National and local radio and TV.



### Organising the crew

Ensure the crew is sufficiently experienced for any sailing trip, particularly if it involves an overnight passage. Be aware of their limitations and try not to expect too much from them.

- Give the crew specific duties and organise a watch system if required.
- Plan to provide a regular supply of food that is warming, nourishing and easily prepared.
- Ensure the crew is properly equipped with protective clothing, lifejackets and harnesses.

## Organising the yacht

Be aware of the limitations of your yacht. Do not over estimate its speed or ability to deal with difficult conditions. It is better to be pessimistic when estimating the duration of a trip.

- Accept that you may be slowed by foul tide or poor weather.
- Check all relevant charts, tide tables and pilots. Take those that are required on board.
- Work out alternative strategies that include putting into safe havens en route.
- Leave details of a planned trip with a reliable person on shore. This should include destination and route, expected times of departure and arrival, description of yacht and contact names for all people on board and keep shore contact advised of any changes.



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## Yacht and Boat Safety Scheme

The Yacht and Boat Safety Scheme, administered by the Irish Coast Guard, provides vital information in an emergency.

See the back page for more information and the registration form.



## Practical tip from the Marine Safety Working Group

*Remember, if the weather looks unfavourable, do not let work or school influence your judgement. If you or your crew have to get back for Monday morning, make alternative travel arrangements and collect the boat later.*

# under way



## Radio sense

Maintain a good radio watch when at sea, using the recommended channels for distress, calling and ship movements.



- Keep information about correct radio distress procedures and your call sign adjacent to the radio.
- The Marine Safety Working Group produces an ‘Emergency Radio Procedures’ sticker which is free of charge – Call the RNLI on [freefone 1800 789 589](tel:1800789589), or call the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on [1850 392 392](tel:1850392392).



## Mal de mer!

Seasickness strikes down many a sailor, particularly those who have little to do. Its effects are dangerous if the crew becomes too incapacitated to work the yacht:

- Seasickness medication works for some people and should be taken well before the trip. Check the instructions for possible side effects, which may include drowsiness.
- Don't get cold and miserable. Dress up warmly and stay comfortable. Best of all, go below and get your head down, covered by a sleeping bag in a cosy berth. Warmth and a horizontal position will often do you a world of good.
- Get someone to help if you need to be sick. Hanging over the side is potentially dangerous – the safest and easiest solution may be to use a bucket in the cockpit.
- Don't continue on an empty stomach. Dry toast, bread or plain biscuits are all good fill-ups. You must drink water to offset dehydration.
- Don't think about feeling sick! Find something to do or ask to take a spell steering the yacht.



## Drink & drugs

Be sensible about drinking alcohol – it will impair your judgement. It is an offence to use any boat under power while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Consider it as irresponsible for a skipper and crew to be in charge of a yacht, even under sail, as it is to drive a car under the influence of alcohol. Beware of the side effects of any medication that may impair judgement and reduce the effectiveness of the person concerned.

## Fire brigade!

Make regular checks on gas bottles and fuel containers to ensure no flammable vapours escape into the bilge. The active gas bottle must always be turned off when not in use. Take extra care if anyone on board is a smoker. The engine compartment and cabin should be ventilated regularly especially before going afloat. Check fire extinguisher pressure and expiry date. See page 26 for more information.

## Remember

### Don't drag!

A length of chain adds weight and greatly improves the holding capability of an anchor. The amount of chain and rope should be at least five times the depth of water.

### Make a noise!

The crew should keep a fully charged foghorn to hand. Apart from use in fog, it could be invaluable for attracting attention. Keep a spare canister on board.

### Be seen!

A radar reflector is required under international regulations and will help your yacht to be 'seen' by the radar of larger vessels, particularly in reduced visibility. But don't rely on it alone: keep a good lookout as well!

### If in doubt...

- Never press on with a trip regardless. ■ Be realistic about the situation.
- Be prepared to change your plans and make for a safe haven in good time.
- If things go wrong and you're not sure you can handle it, you must call for help – **don't leave it too late.**



## Practical tip from the Marine Safety Working Group

*If you are sailing as a couple during the winter, at night or in bad weather and one of you falls in because you are not clipped on, your chances of survival are slim. There are a number of commercial man overboard recovery aids available on the open market worth investigating, which are easy to rig, use and could make recovery by one person possible.*

## Man overboard!

Practice man overboard (MOB) drill regularly. This can be achieved by using a fender and bucket as your casualty. It will also keep the crew amused! See page 24 for more information on how to practice the drill.



- Instruct a crew member to watch the person in the water and point continuously.

- Recovering the casualty may be the hardest part of the whole MOB procedure.



- Ensure that the crew are wearing lifejackets on deck when practising MOB drills.



emergency

## Calling for help

If you are in distress and immediate assistance is required, a DSC distress alert should be sent before the MAYDAY procedure. This distress alert will activate all alarms in any DSC radios within range and alert any radio operators to listen on the distress working channel for the subsequent MAYDAY call. The DSC alert also contains your identification number (MMSI) and a valid position.

Do not rely solely on the DSC alert. It should be immediately followed by emergency radio procedures on VHF Channel 16.



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## Emergency radio procedures

It is vital that radio procedures are clear and effective in an emergency. To help yacht owners ensure they will know what to do if the worst happens, the Marine Safety Working group produces an 'Emergency Radio Procedures' sticker which is available free of charge. To request your copy, freefone the RNLI on [1800 789 589](tel:1800789589), or call the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on [1850 392 392](tel:1850392392).



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### Firing flares

- It is vital to aim parachute flares well clear of the mast, rigging and sails. Fire them slightly downwind so they achieve maximum height.
- Familiarise yourself with the firing instructions.
- Do not fire parachute flares if a helicopter is close by.
- Fire all flares to leeward/downwind so that smoke and debris is blown away.
- The RNLI SEA Check service can provide flare demonstrations for yacht clubs. Please call [freefone 1800 789 589](tel:1800789589).

International regulations require you to have access to an illustrated table of the recognised lifesaving signals so you can communicate with the search and rescue services or other boats if you are in trouble.



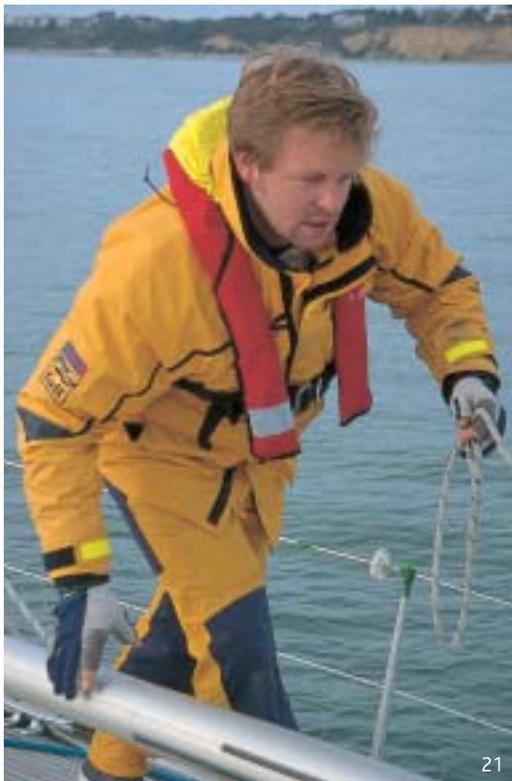
## Practical tip from the Marine Safety Working Group

*Always be vigilant of other crew members when running downwind. Inexperienced crew may not be aware of the dangers of broaching and gybing, especially if they are on the helm. Make sure people keep their heads down when aft of the mast.*

## Man overboard

### Prevention is better than cure!

Ensure all actions and safety precautions have been taken to prevent someone falling overboard.



- Practice MOB drills by day and by night in all weather and sea conditions using a bucket and fender (see pages 19 and 24).
- Always wear a lifejacket and a harness that is correctly clipped on when going on deck at night or in foul weather.
- Taking a 'leak' over the side is potentially dangerous. If you can't face using the heads, a 'bucket-and-chuck-it' is far safer.
- Make sure you are holding on to secure fixings on the yacht at all times. One for you and one for the boat.

### Held by a harness

If the person overboard is still secured by a harness, stop the yacht immediately and recover them using the lifeline. You may need to cut the guardrail lines to get them back on board.



### Practical tip from the Marine Safety Working Group

*Recovery of a man overboard is not an easy task at the best of times, even on the lifeboat with special equipment and trained crew it can take time.*

*Be careful if you do decide to pick them up on the leeward side, foul weather gear can act like a drogue in the water and, with a bit of wind, the leeway on the yacht will soon run them over and push them under the boat. It is often safer to pick them up on the windward side if it is blowing and keep them alongside with either a boat hook or line.*

## Left behind

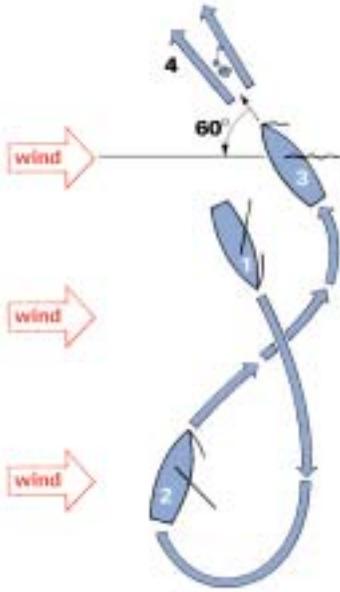
If the person is not secured by a harness, the following are guidelines for keeping them in sight and retrieving them with minimum delay – **remember that cold water can rapidly kill.**

- Immediately throw the lifebuoy and its attachments overboard and raise the alarm by shouting “**Man overboard!**”
- Heave to.
- Instruct a crew member to watch the person in the water and point continuously.
- Alert the emergency services and let them know what’s happened.
- Start your recovery manoeuvre. You may have to lower sails and start the engine – beware of loose lines fouling the propeller.



- If possible, note your position. Most nav aids have a MOB function that may prove vital if contact is lost. The MOB records where the person fell overboard but does not allow for drift on wind and tide.
- If you are the only person left on the yacht, do not leave the deck as you may become disorientated and lose sight of the casualty.
- During darkness a white parachute flare can be used to illuminate the area and pick up the retro-reflective tape on the casualty’s clothing.
- If you recover the MOB, inform the emergency services immediately.
- BIM have produced a CD Rom on sea survival – contact [01 2845144](tel:012845144).
- A leaflet on hypothermia is available from Irish Water Safety on [1890 420202](tel:1890420202).

## MOB action – without an engine



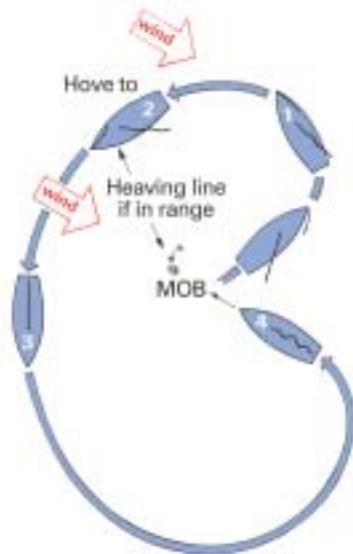
A simple way to make the recovery, which requires practice to ensure it succeeds.

1. Steer yacht into an ‘apparent’ beam reach (burgee across the yacht). Allow sea room to manoeuvre and get organised to recover the casualty.
2. Tack and sail on the opposite beam reach so the casualty is now on the weather bow.
3. Approach on a close reach, easing the sheets in the final stages. Remember that leeway will increase as the yacht slows down.
4. It is often easier to come alongside to windward of the casualty.

## MOB action – with an engine

The aim is to stay as close as possible to the casualty:

1. Turn into the wind and tack, leaving the headsail cleated so the yacht stops hove-to.
  2. If in range, throw a heaving line to the casualty and haul alongside.
  3. If not within range, start the engine, lower or furl the headsail.
  4. Sheet the mainsail amidships.
- Before engaging gear, ensure there are no lines that could foul the propeller.
  - Motor to leeward of the casualty and approach head to wind.



## What can the casualty do?

- Remain as calm as possible.
- Look for the lifebuoy that may be floating close by.
- The greatest threat to survival is the cold. Cross your legs and hold your arms tightly together to restrict movement and prevent cold water flushing through and help to prevent loss of heat. Tighten up wrist, ankle and neck fastenings.
- Use the light and whistle on the lifejacket to attract attention.
- In most cases, you should not attempt to swim for the yacht as this will promote rapid heat loss and exhaustion.
- In rough conditions, turn your back to the waves to keep airways clear of spray.

## Recovering the casualty

This may be the hardest part of the whole MOB procedure:

- If you have a boarding ladder and the casualty is able to help themselves, this may be the safest and most obvious method.
- Beware of stem boarding ladders in rough seas.
- The casualty may well be suffering from shock and hypothermia. Be prepared to administer immediate first aid. Assess if the casualty needs professional medical attention.
- Lifting gear will need to be improvised if the casualty is exhausted or unconscious. A short strop with a block and tackle rigged on the end of a halyard will make it easier to get a casualty on board. A sling using ropes or a small sail can be made to roll the casualty up out of the water.



## Fire on board

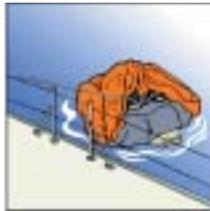
If you have a fire on board:

- Do not enter any smoke filled space.
- Get everyone on deck and take all the fire extinguishers with you.
- Try to extinguish the fire where possible.
- Reduce the supply of air by sealing vents and hatches.
- Alter course downwind if possible.
- Move both the crew and liferaft as far as possible from the seat of the fire.
- Notify the emergency services.
- Put on your lifejackets.

## Launching a liferaft



A liferaft should never be launched until it is intended to abandon the yacht.



Ensure that the liferaft is tied to the yacht. An inflated raft cannot be towed or held alongside for any length of time in a seaway without being damaged.



It should be boarded by crew as quickly as possible, then cut free from the yacht.

Climbing into a liferaft should always be considered a last resort. Unless the yacht is on fire or is clearly sinking fast, it is better to postpone this until the last possible moment. A yacht is likely to be easier for the rescue services to locate and the crew will suffer less from exposure.

- The static line must be secured to the yacht before the liferaft is thrown overboard! You may need to pull out about 8m of static line before the liferaft inflates.
- Heavier crew members should transfer into the liferaft first to help promote stability and help other crew on board.
- Emergency equipment such as an EPIRB, hand-held VHF, flares, first aid kit, water and thermal protective aids must be taken if not already in the liferaft. These can be provided in a grab bag which is stored in an easily accessible locker on the boat.
- Know your liferaft. Ask the service agent if you and your crew can be present when the liferaft is inflated for service. It is useful to see how it inflates and where the gear is stowed.
- Get training. Details of Personal Survival Techniques courses can be obtained from the ISA on 01 2800239.

## Getting a tow

- A good set of bolt cutters is essential to cut away rigging after a dismasting.
- Have a plan for securing the tow line to your yacht when it is passed by the lifeboat. Practice this as a routine drill.
- As a lifeboat approaches, the coxswain will inform you of his intentions. Advise him of hazards such as ropes or sails in the water. Follow his instructions – he is the expert.
- Do not secure the tow line around the base of a deck-stepped mast or to fittings that are not strong enough for the job. If in doubt, back up the tow line using additional ropes led to sheet winches or other strong points on deck.
- Avoid using knots or loops that cannot be released under load. Where possible provide protection to prevent chafe of the tow rope, such as running it through the bow fair lead.
- Some yachts will tow better using a bridle rather than a single line. You may be passed a small canvas drogue for streaming astern, particularly if you have lost your rudder.
- If you accept a tow from a commercial or private vessel, it is wise to check if any fee is expected. There is no ‘salvage’ fee when you are towed by a lifeboat, but a voluntary contribution to the RNLI is always very welcome!



## Helicopter rescue

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- Use a red hand-held or orange smoke flare as a signal to the helicopter if requested. Do not fire parachute flares or mini flares when the helicopter is close by.
- Once contact has been made, the pilot will tell you his intentions. Follow his instructions – he is the expert.
- Make sure you understand the pilot's instructions as you will not be able to hear your radio when the helicopter is overhead.
- Winching normally takes place from the stern of the vessel. Ensure there is a clear area and that loose gear and debris is secured or cleared away. Beware that the helicopter down-draught can be very strong.
- If possible keep the vessel as steady as you can. You will be given instructions regarding course and speed if you have power available.
- Allow the winch wire to earth in the water before grabbing it. Ensure it does not snag on anything, Never secure it to the yacht.
- If the Hi-Line technique is to be used, have a bucket to hand to collect lose line on deck.



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## REMEMBER!

The emergency services are here to help, but would rather do so before you get into trouble! **Free** safety advice is always available – **freephone 1800 789 589** and talk to an expert.

# Useful contacts – as referred to throughout the booklet



## General

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### Lifeboats

**Royal National Lifeboat Institution**  
15 Windsor Terrace, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Telephone: (01) 2845050 email: [lifeboatsireland@rnli.org.uk](mailto:lifeboatsireland@rnli.org.uk) [www.lifeboats.org.uk](http://www.lifeboats.org.uk)



**Irish Water Safety**  
The Long Walk, Galway

Telephone: 1890 420202 (LoCall) email: [info@iws.ie](mailto:info@iws.ie) [www.iws.ie](http://www.iws.ie)



**Irish Coast Guard**  
Leeson Lane, Dublin 2

Telephone: (01) 6782000 email: [admin@irishcoastguard.ie](mailto:admin@irishcoastguard.ie) [www.marine.gov.ie](http://www.marine.gov.ie)

In an emergency, call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard.

## Training courses

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**Irish Sailing Association**  
3 Park Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Telephone: (01) 2800239 email: [info@sailing.ie](mailto:info@sailing.ie) [www.sailing.ie](http://www.sailing.ie)

## EPIRB registration

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**Maritime Radio Affairs Unit (M.R.A.U)**  
Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2

Telephone: (01) 6782367 [www.marine.gov.ie](http://www.marine.gov.ie)

## Radio licensing

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**Commission for Communication Regulation (COMREG)**  
Abbey Court, Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

Telephone: (01) 8049600

# Marine Safety Working Group

The aim of the Marine Safety Working Group is to promote water safety. The group is made up of a number of organisations representing statutory bodies, search & rescue organisations and water users.

## Who we are:

### Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources

Leeson Lane, Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6782000  
[www.marine.gov.ie](http://www.marine.gov.ie)



### Irish Coast Guard

Leeson Lane, Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6782000  
In an emergency call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard.



### Irish Water Safety

The Long Walk, Galway  
Tel: 1890 420202 (LoCall)  
[www.iws.ie](http://www.iws.ie)



### Irish Sailing Association

3 Park Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin  
Tel: (01) 2800239  
[www.sailing.ie](http://www.sailing.ie)



### Royal National Lifeboat Institution

15 Windsor Terrace, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin  
Tel: (01) 2845050  
[www.lifeboats.org.uk](http://www.lifeboats.org.uk)



### Bord Iascaigh Mhara

PO Box 12, Crofton Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin  
Tel: (01) 2845144  
[www.bim.ie](http://www.bim.ie)



### Health & Safety Authority

10 Hogan Place, Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6147000  
[www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)



### Waterways Ireland

20 Darling Street, Enniskillen, BT74 7EW, Northern Ireland  
Tel: 048-66323004 (from R.O.I.)  
028-66323004 (from N.I.)

## What we do:

The government department responsible for safety of life at sea & prevention of pollution from ships.

Responsible for co-ordination & implementation of marine search and rescue operations, pollution control & marine radio communications in Irish waters.

Irish Water Safety is the statutory body established to promote water safety in Ireland. We offer courses nationwide that develop skills in swimming, survival and rescue. We recommend that all members of the public learn swimming and lifesaving skills.

We are the governing body representing sailing, windsurfing, powerboating and personal watercraft in Ireland. We offer a range of training courses for all types of recreational boaters through our network of affiliated clubs and "Recognised Teaching Establishments".

We are a registered charity that saves lives at sea. This is achieved by providing a fleet of lifeboats, with 24-hour cover and crewed by well-trained volunteers. In addition, we work with other national organisations to promote sea safety. We are funded by voluntary donations.

We are the principal development agency for the Irish seafood industry and promote safe working practices for the industry which involves Fisheries training for both new entrants and practitioners, developing codes of practice, production of training materials and trials of preventative measures against risk on board fishing vessels.

The Health and Safety Authority promotes and enforces good standards in workplace safety. Working with employer and worker representatives, it seeks to ensure that those in control of workplaces adopt safe working practices, as required by law.

Waterways Ireland is a North/South body responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of inland navigable waterways, principally for recreation purposes. The body has its headquarters in Enniskillen, with regional offices in Scariff, Carrick-on-Shannon and Dublin.

# Irish Coast Guard Services



## Maritime Rescue Centres and Coast Radio Stations

Dublin MRCC  
Irish Coast Guard  
Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6620922  
Fax: (01) 6620795

Valentia MRSC  
Valentia Island  
Co. Kerry  
Tel: (066) 9476109  
Fax: (066) 9476289

Malin Head MRSC  
Malin Head  
Co. Donegal  
Tel: (074) 9370103  
Fax: (074) 9370221

## How to join the Yacht and Boat Safety Scheme – it's free and could help save your life.

- Complete the enclosed questionnaire in ink and send it to the Irish Coast Guard, Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2.
- Enclose a recent photograph of your craft, if you have one.
- Please fill in the information on the section to the left of the form, cut it off and give it to someone ashore who is concerned with your safety.
- If the ownership, name of craft, an address given or the craft's appearance (colour etc.) changes in any way, please inform the Irish Coast Guard.
- This card is valid for three years. If it is not renewed within that time, it will be considered invalid and removed from our records.

Name of craft:

Address of the  
Maritime Rescue  
Centre which holds  
details of this craft:

Dublin MRCC  
Irish Coast Guard  
Headquarters  
Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 6620922  
Fax: (01) 6620795

**If you are worried  
about the safety  
of this craft, please  
contact the Irish  
Coast Guard**

**In an emergency, dial  
999/112 and ask for  
the Coast Guard**

IRISH COAST GUARD  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, MARINE AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
LEESON LANE  
DUBLIN 2



AFFIX STAMP

## YACHT AND BOAT SAFETY SCHEME

Name of Craft: How and where is the name displayed: Type of craft: Sailing or fishing number: Colour of craft: Hull above water: below water: Superstructure: Sail: Spinnaker: Length:                      feet:                      metres: Details of any special identification features: Usual base: Usual mooring: Usual activity (eg fishing, racing etc): Usual sea areas:		Details of owner: Name: Address:  Tel. No: Signature: Date:  Details of Shore Contact: Name: Address:  Tel. No:  Name of club or Association:	
Type of rig: Speed and endurance under power: Details of radio: HF MF Trans/Rec: VHF Channels and call sign: MMSI No: Other equipment:		Type of distress signals carried: Dinghy type: Colour: Life raft type: Serial No: Are life jackets carried?	

Also available in the Safety on the Water range

Our range of **FREE** Safety on the Water booklets give  
the essential safety information that you need  
– whatever you do on the water.

### Sports and subjects include:

- Dinghy sailing
- Motor boating
- Power boating
- Windsurfing
  - Diving
- Sea angling

To order any of these booklets, or to find out more about free water safety advice, contact any of the organisations listed on page 29



Department of Communications,  
Marine and Natural Resources

