

Island Yacht Club - Support Boat Duty

These notes are for guidance and do not form part of the sailing instructions.

The primary purpose of the rescue boat is to help people, not boats. Only tow dinghies once you are absolutely sure that no one else needs your help. If you start a tow, leave the boat if other boats capsize.

Crew to be 2 in number and over the age of 16. Alternatively one may be younger if a holder of an RYA Powerboat Certificate. No passengers allowed except for rescued crew. The boat is slower with more people in. Sailing club members only are allowed to crew, as they are covered by club insurance.

Buoyancy aids must be worn at all times while afloat. Preferably one of the boat crew should wear a wet suit in case they need to help in righting a capsized boat or help a competitor in the water.

If the boat is not in active use the motor should be stopped to save petrol. In all cases, capsizes should be checked, if only to ensure the crew's safety and that the rescue boat is not needed. Whilst attending one capsize, keep a watch out for other capsizes.

Support Boat Safety

Wear the "kill-cord" round your wrist or ankle at all times. If you fall out of the boat you will not be run over with the propeller running! Never leave the driving position when the engine is in gear. Remember that the propeller is a sharp cutting tool that can severely damage people in the water. It must be kept clear of them at all times. Propellers are expensive and should be kept clear of the bottom at all times. This includes launching and moving in and out of the container. **Lift the engine up!**

When driving the boat fast, keep one hand on the throttle level to ensure that you can shut it down fast. Emergency stops are best made by cutting the power and immediately turning through 90 degrees. When the boat is broadside on to its previous course, put the motor into neutral.

The required skill for the rescue boat crew is slow speed manoeuvring. Practice picking up a buoy without hitting it or using reverse gear. Remember that the engine will not help you steer when the throttle is shut right down. Always approach from downwind, heading upwind, to slow the boat down.

When near to people in the water the engine should be turned off to avoid the risk of injury. When recovering sailors from the water it **MUST** be turned off. Never approach head on to swimmers in the water as this is very frightening to swimmers.

When helping a boat in difficulties or capsized bear the following points in mind:

1. It is often enough to be near the boat, with the engine off to offer verbal help and assurance.
2. If further help is needed, you can either hold the capsized boat's mast to avoid total inversion, or hold the hull at the bow.
3. When helping an inverted boat come alongside pointing in the same direction. When the boat is righted to 90 degrees it will be possible to help turn it head to wind. Lifting the mast of a boat will help the crew right it.

Again, the prime reason for the rescue boat is to help people. It is your responsibility to help them, not their boats. If you have to rescue exhausted or cold sailors, help them out of the water, if needed with a rope under their arms, or get into the water to help them out.

Get them back to a warm place as fast as possible but keep them down in the boat out of the wind. In the winter, or even on extremely cold days in the summer, remember that risk of hypothermia and get to people in difficulty fast. Watch them to ensure that exhaustion does not set in.