

## Safety Boat Briefing Fundamentals

**Before we do a briefing, we should consider why we are doing it and what our responsibilities are.**

### ***Our aim***

Our aim is to ensure that fellow members can enjoy their sailing, knowing that we have done our best to provide them with safety cover which is **appropriate for the expected conditions**.

### ***We can achieve this by:***

- 1 Knowing what weather is expected
- 2 Using our knowledge and experience to decide which boats are required and how skilful the crew/s need to be
- 3 Assessing the abilities of the crews who are available
- 4 Providing advice and training in areas where they may be weak
- 5 Reminding crews of their responsibilities and authority:
  - Attend every capsized within three minutes
  - Care for people before property
  - Remove anyone from the water who is clearly unable to cope with the conditions
- 6 If we think safety might be compromised by the ability of the safety crews or the availability of rescue boats and radios, telling the OOD that he should:
  - seek advice from someone holding the Safety Boat Certificate; or
  - find more experienced crews from among the members present; or
  - consider putting out more safety boats; or
  - consider limiting sailing to experienced sailors only or limiting numbers; or
  - consider closing the water.
- 7 Setting a good example to safety crews by wearing suitable clothing and always using a kill-cord. Remember that:
  - At least one person in each rescue boat should be equipped and willing to enter the water if necessary
  - Outboard motors kill and maim, regularly.

**And remember the five Ps – Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance – it's too late when it all starts going wrong!**

### ***The Boats***

The two 4m RIBs (the Narwhal and the Zodiac) are capable, **in experienced hands**, of operating in most conditions likely to be experienced at Weir Wood. The two 3.5m Avons are capable, **in experienced hands**, of operating in up to F6 winds. When these are along the main axis of the reservoir, ie. SW or NE, the wave size is likely to be dangerous for such short and light boats with limited power. As **rescue** boats in these conditions, they are almost useless.

**As Rescue Boats in less experienced hands**, the **maximum** safe operating limit of the Avons should be regarded as **F4**, and that of the larger boats, **F6**. Make sure you don't expect too much of crews who may not have used a powerboat in the last year, and only then, in calm conditions.

If these conditions or worse are likely to occur during the day, you should seriously consider the various options presented in section 6 above. Keep in mind the fact that the wind is rarely constant and stronger gusts are likely. Everyone will capsize at the same time, so safety boat placement becomes important.

As the windspeed increases, so does the risk of capsize and boat damage. Don't forget that rescue boats also become more difficult to control, and visibility may be reduced.

In more severe conditions, the towing lines provided on the boats are far too short. Longer ropes are available in the garages. Make sure they are in the rescue boats, not in the garages!

### ***Radios***

Communication between safety boats and between safety boat and shore is vital. **A rescue boat without a radio is not a rescue boat**, it's just another boat on the water.

### ***Clothing***

Quite a lot of safety boat crews turn up in waterproofs and yachting boots (posh name for wellies). This is completely inadequate for a winter duty in any but the calmest conditions. We should insist on a wetsuit or drysuit, and wear the same ourselves when giving a briefing.

### ***And finally....***

You **will** be criticised if you recommend restricting sailing or closing the water. There are always those who don't recognise the danger or who are just selfish and reckless. Your actions can not only ensure enjoyment, you may prevent needless personal injury or damage to boats and equipment. At the limit, you may have saved a life. Just keep asking yourself whether you have fulfilled your aim – **Have I provided safety cover which is appropriate for the conditions?**