

Flushing Sailing Club Risk Assessment

April - November

GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT – SAFETY ON THE WATER

INTRODUCTION

1. The Flushing Sailing Club runs a variety of racing events from April to November which involves yachts of all sizes and is usually for up to 70 boats but in Falmouth week can involve 300 + boats this particular event is run under the responsibility of Port of Falmouth Sailing Association who provide a separate risk assessment .
2. The area used is on the South Cornish coast. Offshore races can be any distance along or from this coast covering Western Approaches, the English channel within Plymouth forecast area.
Series and Special Racing is in Falmouth and St Mawes Harbours, Helford River, Carrick Roads and Falmouth Bay .
3. This type of racing is significant for non-participants in that the same waters are used by other leisure and commercial craft, such as fishing boats, divers, cruising boat users, ferries, military and large cruising vessels . There are also areas of moored boats close to the racing areas.
4. The drafts of some of the competitor yachts taking part can be 3 metres plus and there is a wide variety of types of sailing vessels and levels of manoeuvrability. There is a risk of grounding when using enclosed waters with shelving banks and obstructions.
5. There is a risk of collision, which is always present in sailing, between participants, with other users of the waters and moored vessels. The Skippers of the boats racing are on the whole familiar with their vessels and accidents due to misjudgement should be few however there are often new crew on board who have a much lower level of experience or the boat may have a reduced number of crew.
6. There is a risk of injury to the crews of the yachts, most notably in cases of gear breakage, collision or Man-Overboard (MOB).
7. The race area and complexity of courses means that a variety of safety measures need to be considered. The club has a Sailing Sub Committee made up of representatives from the different classes of boat racing and members of the management committee, this committee is responsible for
advising the Management committee of the club on all issues relating to boats on the water. Committee boats are used to run the racing away from the club start when appropriate. For series and special racing the provision of the FSC Sailing Instructions identify actions,

The Race Officers are prepared and prepare for supervising races, all are either members or considered temporary members of the club. They usually carry out duties once a year therefore an experienced or/and qualified person is provided on the committee boats and in the operations room plus a committee member is a backup each month and responsible for supervising these arrangements and ensuring the Race Officer is available and has adequate knowledge and support . RNLI and the Coastguard are situated nearby and could be available in emergencies, for specific events safety boats are provided on the water. The main safety cover for regular racing is provided by competitors on a mutual help basis as the smallest boat would be 7.5 m

8. This paper assesses the likely risks that will be encountered in the race area and defines the measures needed to reduce the risks to an acceptable level.

RACE AREAS

Racing takes place within the Falmouth Bay Area and near Coastal Waters (up to 25NMs) the Carrick Roads, the inner harbour, St Mawes Harbour and Helford river.

Risk Assessment These areas are used by a wide variety of others and are very different in the type of risks involved therefore offer a moderate amount of risk.

Minimising Risk

Courses are prepared in advance giving a variety of possible areas to be used, maps of the area are provided in the Sailing Instructions (SI's) and particular hazards noted, areas which should not be entered are identified and penalties for infringement are stated.

Race Officers are instructed regarding actions to take to obtain information and therefore the areas chosen for a particular race are considered carefully at the start of each race. The Race Officer obtains as much information as possible regarding tide, shipping, weather, commercial vessel movements and alterations to navigational equipment and safety boat provision, this then informs what area is to be used by which classes of boat. Boats can have shortened courses or be finished away from the narrow channels if this is considered appropriate.

The areas which present a higher risk of collision at certain times because of peak usage by a wide variety of craft would have safety boats available to ensure priority is given as needed.

RACE TIMING

Races are run primarily on Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons with occasional special races on Thursday evenings and Sundays. Offshore races are run at two main weekends and the club acts as starter for other clubs on two occasions under their Sailing Instructions.

Risk Assessment

The times of races are well publicised and are for specific periods so the Risk is low

Minimising Risk

Races are notified in the Notice of Race produced by the club and the Sailing Instructions. Additional SI's are produced for special events and where the club is acting as starter for another club their SI's and Notice of Race (NOR) apply. There is provision in the Racing Rules of Sailing and Flushing Sailing Club (FSC) SI's for cancellation or postponement of races should the need arise.

TIDAL INFORMATION

This is significant to all the race participants particularly with regard to the inner harbour and off the main headlands and shallow areas away from the deep channels it also affects the routes boats take to gain maximum speed around a particular course.

Risk Assessment During Spring tides there are many areas which are shallow particularly towards Truro, off St Mawes castle and along that shore, around Black Rock beacon and along the rocky shores under Pendennis .

Minimising Risk

Tidal Information is widely available in booklet form in the FSC club , the operations room and on the committee boat. It is also sent out to competitors and members at the start of each season. The Race Officer takes this into consideration when setting courses.

WEATHER LIMITATIONS

When the wind increases above certain levels and visibility deteriorates the quality and enjoyment of racing generally suffers well before the conditions create a major safety hazard. There are also times when there is no wind and boats could drift into hazards. Fog can also drop rapidly in the area and present considerable hazard particularly to boats with no engines. These levels vary between the standard of yacht crews and the types of boat racing. The Race Officer will assess the conditions and their impact on race quality, enjoyment and safety with regard to postponement, abandonment or cancellation of racing also with the knowledge that a mark laying RIB on the water is not designated a safety boat and could not cover all the race areas.

Risk Assessment Squalls and high winds offer high levels of risk to sailing boats and must be considered together with the types of boats likely to be on the water, and other relevant information. Also the drift of boats sent near a shore at calm times. Fog dropping suddenly must give rise to a decision which is the safer, to halt racing or continue and shorten the race as soon as possible. The RIB regularly available is primarily for mark laying and the expectation is that the type of boats sailing will be able to assist each other.

Minimising Risk The Race Officer obtains information on weather applicable to a time and area for racing. The coastguard and general sources are used

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for this. This affects the decision to race and there is provision in the FSC SI's and other SI's prepared, for cancellation of different classes of boats and to send them into different areas using different courses of various lengths. There is also provision to shorten racing and finish boats more quickly than originally planned keeping them away from obstructions. Safety for offshore racing is ISAF category 4 and FSC SI rule 21 lists safety equipment required for all competitors including radio, the R/O considers showing Y flag for use of lifejackets and cancelling classes where a safety boat could be needed ie open boats. Boats sent out of sight of the committee boat are within radio contact and the RO must be assured that the boats in those fleets can cope with the conditions and assist each other.

COLLISION

Types of risk

(a) Racing yacht and racing yacht:

Most yachts taking part in these races will be helmed by experienced sailors, who not only know their own boats' performance, but also the performance of other boats taking part. They should know the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (IRPCS) and rules of yacht racing and obey them. Most yachts will have as part of their crews experienced yacht sailors who know the area well, however, some of the crews will be novice and not completely familiar with all the areas or with the strength of its tidal streams and the hazards around the areas sailed. Collisions occur occasionally in yacht racing, particularly where one yacht is restricted in its movement. Therefore there is a risk of a collision between two or more racing yachts, albeit a small one.

Risk Assessment

A miscalculation of the depth of water close to the shores, the Black Rock beacon, Pendennis Headland, and the sand banks thus demanding a rapid change of course to avoid grounding.

A miscalculation of the strength of the stream near a mark, again demanding a rapid change of course.

Incorrect perception of another yachts actions.

Crews not maintaining a proper lookout.

Miscalculation when approaching other moored boats in the finishing channel

Close sailing at the start of a race and at the finish in confined spaces particularly off the club.

Minimising the Risks:

The International Regulations for prevention of Collisions at sea, the Racing Rules of sailing for the year and the FSC SI's give clear guidance regarding these areas. Tidal tables are available and competitors encouraged to use them. Courses are set with depth and tidal flow in mind during the course of the race.

Training opportunities are offered by the club and action taken if it becomes apparent that a boat is regularly sailing under crewed or if an incident occurs

A long start line is advised and starting away from the club line is used if large numbers of boats are starting together and cannot manoeuvre easily. Also

splitting the boats into different classes to reduce numbers on the start line .

A safety boat is made available to warn if there are a large number of craft racing in confined waters

A finish line is available in open water and the provision to shorten courses away from the confined channels

A log book recording is kept of each race and incidents are considered at the end of the year to inform plans for the following year.

b) Racing yacht and casual cruiser:

Falmouth Bay and Carrick Roads as well as the inner harbour are popular areas for sailing and it is expected that there will be boats cruising which have

no particular interest in the racing. Therefore a boat casually transiting from A to B may get entwined in the racing fleet by accident; however, most

cruising yachts will avoid the trauma of interfering with a racing fleet. While such boats should have knowledge of the IRPCS

rules and what action to take, it is possible that not all will.

Risk Assessment: Competitors are responsible to maintain a good look out and take appropriate avoiding action as per IRPCS. The risk is assessed as

very low.

Minimising the Risks

The inner harbour area when used by large fleets e.g. during Flushing Village Regatta will have a safety boat available for direction of craft.

The FSC SI's have provision for halting racing if problems are identified

Information regarding all racing is passed to the coastguard and Harbour authorities at the start of the season and the harbour patrol boat often oversees

any racing which might affect leisure users e.g. Oyster Festival Work boat race

(c) Racing yacht and commercial vessels and Divers:

Falmouth is a port with extensive commercial, some naval and ferry traffic and is also popular with divers.

The ferry operators are extremely experienced and understand yacht racing. Commercial and other vessels are generally restricted to deep-water channels

and it is impracticable for yacht racing to avoid sharing these areas. Divers are occasional visitors to the area and may not be aware with regard to

yachts.

Risk Assessment: With careful co-ordination with the pilots and Harbour Masters Office, and good communication between the different groups the risk

of this sort of collision is assessed as very low.

Minimising the risk: The FSC SI's have clear instructions to competitors regarding behaviour when commercial shipping is in transit stating the penalties that will be applied if they do not adhere to these.

There is also advice with regard to sailing in the vicinity of diving boats and a training session provided during the winter at intervals to ensure communication between divers and sailors. Courses have been planned so that marks known to be used by divers are not also used during racing.

Courses are also available for specific areas of Carrick Roads when it is known that commercial shipping will be on the move.

A white flag is flown at the club or on the committee boat as warning when information is received regarding shipping movements.

PERSONAL INJURY

Personal injury to a crew member due to gear failure, collision or a misjudgement in boat handling are the most prevalent causes in yacht racing. Due to the water temperature at any time of year an man overboard (MOB) has a risk of hypothermia

Risk Assessment: The risks of personal injury in racing is assessed as no higher than in other racing scenarios, particularly if notice is taken of the weather constraints. The greatest danger will arise from collisions, MOB, gear failure or handling misjudgement. In general, a collision, accidental gybe or rig failure could create a moderate to high risk of personal injury, especially with the complication of an MOB.

Minimising the risks: The risks are minimised by good race management practices and the deterrent effect of a the Race Protest Committee.

The race committee considers all problems experienced or identified during the previous year and use these to prepare information for the following year. A log book entry is made for every race Good communication between committee boat and club house using two radio channels open at all times means that action can be taken quickly, ambulances arranged etc.

The RNLI are close to most of the racing areas and have a small vessel which can offer rescue in the estuary or bay waters should this be required in an emergency. The coastguard offer advice to the club regarding action to take in the event of injury and are also very close to the race areas.

Owners complete a declaration form when they enter stating that insurance is in place and they understand their responsibilities.

The SI's state what safety equipment is necessary

BOAT DAMAGE

The potential for damage from collision or equipment failure are low to moderate the boats are stretched to their limit whilst racing and will probably suffer more failures than in less taxing conditions.

Risk Assessment: The majority of competitors taking part in this racing will be experienced and will be familiar with the types of risk identified here they will expect certain damage as part of the risks they take when they participate

Minimising the risks: The risks can be minimised by good race management practices and the deterrent effect of a strong Race Protest Committee.

Owners have to sign a declaration before racing stating that their insurance cover is in place and they take responsibility for their racing

COMPETITOR ACCOUNTING

The accounting of all yachts and crew in these type of events is significant in case weather conditions deteriorate or there is personal damage .

Risk Assessment Low to moderate risk as the boats are all equipped with the necessary safety equipment

Minimising the risk Spotters at the start of a race list the sail numbers of all yachts starting and the number of boats on the start line. The finishing officers also list all finishers and if there is any discrepancy they have a contact number available on the entry forms, there is provision to disqualify a yacht if they do not report retirement and their positions if they have failed to finish. On offshore races there is a requirement to give a contact number during the race where all those on board are known. The coastguard are notified of the number of boats participating, boats must notify of retirement or report in to a given telephone number when they arrive at their destination .

ACCESS

Access to and from boats is primarily within the inner harbour areas and is individual to skippers and their boats, the size of the boats means that all are either on moorings or in marinas.

Risk Assessment

Low risk as the areas are all reasonably protected however there are commercial and other leisure users in the same waters.

Minimising the risk

A launch is provided by the club to ferry people to and from their boats, the Royal Cornwall Yacht Club launch is also available to their members and crew who compete.

Contact Numbers

Flushing Sailing Club 01326 374043	Club mobile 07812489536	VHF channel 72 and 16
M1 (37)	Pilot 01326 211395	07836661668
Marinas channel 80	Harbour Commissioners VHF channel 12,14	01326
312285	Ambulance 999	
Police 999 0845 777444		Coast Guard 01326 317575
RO mobile		
(KP 03.03.10)		