

# USFA



## USFA Pre-Launch, Travel & Retrieval Vessel (Boating) Guide

# Purpose



The purpose of this guide is to provide the standard requirements for boating activities under the auspices of the USFA. This guide also aims to help existing and new members of the club to understand the basic safety requirements of boating and hence be able to provide assistance in boating practices that benefit all persons that prepare, launch, travel and retrieve boats including their seaworthiness.

# Scope



The content of this guide applies to all people who carry out boating activities during our spearfishing competitions. This includes persons who Skipper boats and those who are deemed passengers (spearfishing persons). This guide should be read in conjunction with the NSW Roads and Maritime boating requirements such as those described in the NSW Transport Maritime Boating Handbook - December 2012.

# The Boat Ramp - Boat Preparation



For most of us the diving day usually begins and ends at the boat ramp. Good boat preparation is vital for the safety of the boat and crew and success of the days outing. Your health and fitness is also important.

Remember the combination of wind waves and weather can multiply the effects of alcohol and collectively are known as 'boater fatigue'. Persons with 'boater fatigue' are at a greater risk of drowning should they fall into the water. Note: The blood alcohol limits are the same on the water as on our roads. A person in charge of a vessel must keep under the 0.05 blood alcohol limit and for commercial vessel operators and persons under the age of 18, the lower blood alcohol limit of 0.02 applies.



# Meet & Greet the Skipper



- \* If you have not arranged for a boat ride beforehand now is the time. When a Skipper arrives approach him/her and politely ask if “there is any room for another diver on the boat.” If there is, it’s now your priority to assist the Skipper in preparing the boat unless otherwise directed.
- \* Only when the boat is prepared and/or the Skipper directs otherwise, is it time to sort out your gear and its location in the boat.
- \* Spear guns shafts should have the tips protected with rubber, corks, etc.
- \* Spear guns should be stowed in the guns rack where fitted.
- \* Spear gear such as lines, floats, weight belts and flashers should be stowed up front or in bins located at the back of the boat.
- \* Divers should be dressed in their wet suits and booties prior to launch.

# Boat Tie-Down Strap



- \* While mainly used for travelling the boat by land the timing of removal at the ramp is important. Boat tie down straps are applied to the back of the boat commonly known as the transom. Some have pads placed to ensure the boat is not scratched.
- \* These straps (ratchet or buckle type) are specially made for this application and are connected from the trailer to the ski hooks at the transom of the boat. Many Skippers only remove the strap when they are on the ramp and this is especially so if the ramp is very steep and the boat is large and heavy.
- \* Check with your Skipper as to when he would like the strap removed.

# Boat Bungs (Plugs)



One of best ways to sink a boat is to forget to put the boat bungs in meaning the boat (hull) is not watertight and that sinking feeling is not long away.

All boat bungs must be fitted to ensure a water tight hull before placing the boat in the water. It does no harm to double and even triple check that the bungs are in place.

A boat bung provides a means of removing excess water that may build up during the outing and are removed (when the boat is retrieved and on the trailer) to allow the water to run out when returning to the ramp.

# General Considerations



- \* Enough food and fresh drinking water for the amount of hours on the water.
- \* Have your boat and fishing licence on you.
- \* All gear stowed and ready to encounter the sea conditions.
- \* Know the location of lifejackets. (Type 1 Lifejacket Also known as a Level 150 or Level 100 PFD)
- \* Location of flares, fire extinguisher, row oars, V Flag, EPIRB etc.
- \* The location and means of securing the anchor.

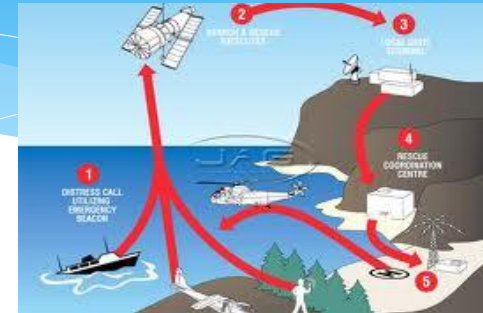
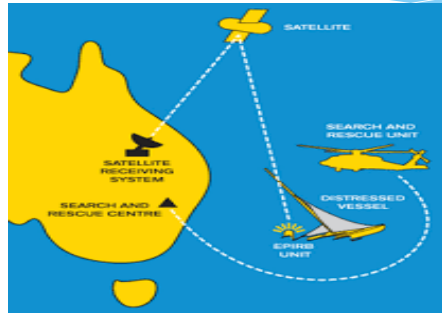


# Marine Radio



- \* Operation of VHF radio and knowledge of distress frequency including location and call sign of nearest Marine Rescue.
- \* Marine radios are compulsory for all vessels operating more than two nautical miles out to sea, and are recommended for anyone proceeding offshore.
- \* They provide a means of advising shore stations of your itinerary, checking boating weather and navigational warnings and making distress calls which can be picked up by other vessels in the area or by shore stations.
- \* Know the location and how to use the radio in the case of an emergency.

# Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB)



- \* An Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) is compulsory for all CCSL boats operating more than two nautical miles from the shore.
- \* EPIRB are accessible in all our boats but stowed to avoid inadvertent activation.
- \* Our EPIRB's transmit on 406 MHz when coming in contact with water and should be launched when a boat is compromised such as on fire or sinking as it alerts search and rescue services of the situation and location of the boat.
- \* Know the location of EPIRB.

# First Aid Kits and First Aiders



- \* It makes good sense to carry a complete first aid kit aboard, appropriate to the size of the boat and the number of passengers.
- \* Having a number of fully trained first aiders on board is also the best position should someone be injured.
- \* Know the location of the first aid kit.
- \* If you are not a trained first aider consider it for the benefit for yourself and others.

# Other Important Safety Gear



- \* **Compass and Chart;** Any boat being operated offshore is required to have a compass. Even if your boat is fitted with satellite navigation equipment, a good marine compass will indicate the course back to shore if the electronic equipment fails, or rain, fog or sea haze obliterates the land from view. An appropriate chart or map that identifies prominent shore marks and offshore reefs and shoals is also required on all vessels offshore.
- \* **Fire Extinguisher:** Must be appropriate for the type of fuel carried on board the vessel.
- \* **Bilge Pump:** Know the location and operation of bilge pumps and location of bailing bucket
- \* **Flares;** Flares signal that you are in trouble and provide an exact location for searching aircraft or vessels. Ignite them only when rescuers are in view and can spot your position).
- \* **Paddles / Oars;** Required if the motor breaks down.
- \* **“V” Sheet”** is an orange-red coloured sheet (1.8 x 1.2 metres) with a large black V printed in the middle. V sheets are required to be carried by all vessels operating on open (ocean) waters. They can be spread over the deck of a boat to indicate that you are in trouble.

# Launching a Boat from a Ramp



- \* Ask the boat owner/Skipper as to the intended method of launching the boat and what your role will be.
- \* Usually a car queuing system of launch/retrieval is in place so be mindful of other boaties and your place in the queue.
- \* Never race the car and boat down a ramp and then hit the brakes to launch the boat. Ramps can be slippery and plenty of cars have gone in the water of this issue.
- \* Never walk behind the trailer when is reversing down the ramp.
- \* Always walks down a boat ramp never run.
- \* Make contact with the driver to ensure it is safe to go behind the car to start the launch.
- \* Always have a line from the bow of the boat so that if it goes into deep water off the trailer you won't have to swim out to it.
- \* Try not to get the trailer axle into water in an effort to preserve bearings.
- \* Remove the safety chain and commence the launch process by winding out the winch rope or webbing.

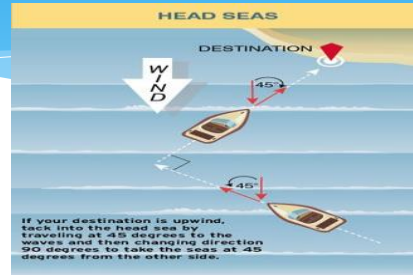


# Travel on Water – To & From Dive Spots & Ramp



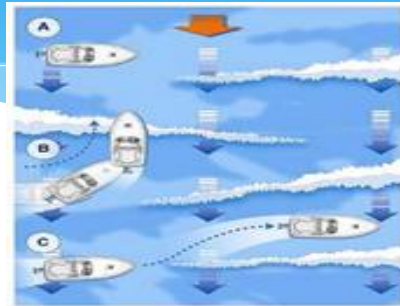
- \* Make sure all ropes are inside the boat and not trailing in the water where they can be caught in the propeller.
- \* Check that the area is clear of traffic before moving away, taking note of any speed limits or 'no wash' signs that may be in the area.
- \* Be careful not to create excessive wash when passing people or passive craft or moored boats to avoid rocking them about.
- \* Always wear the kill-switch lanyard which is positioned on the controls when driving a vessel under power. Note: The lanyard is attached to your arm and stops the engine if you fall overboard or lose control of the steering.
- \* Boats don't have brakes, so give your-self plenty of time to stop the boat.
- \* When steering a boat with a wheel, get to know the feel of the wheel and the rudder position before you set off.
- \* A safe speed cannot be expressed as a maximum or minimum number of knots because it varies with circumstances and conditions. The Skipper must continually assess the safety of the vessel's speed.

# Travel - Head Seas



- \* Generally, the best way to tackle bigger waves is to take them bow on or about 30 degrees off each bow.
- \* Too much power will result in the boat leaping over the crests and crashing down into troughs. This slamming action is not good for either the boat or the people on board.
- \* Too little power may mean that the waves break onto or over the vessel.
- \* Control the speed and direction steered to achieve the most comfortable and safest ride.

# Travel - Following Seas



Travelling with a following sea (the craft is running in the direction of the wind) has the greatest potential for disaster, with broaching sideways and swamping/capsize a real possibility. So remember the following tips:

- \* To make progress in these conditions, trim the bow up and ride the wave, staying behind the crest.
- \* As it breaks, care is needed not to power through the breaking wave too early. As the wave breaks, you may need to ease the power in the confused water to avoid the prop losing grip and speed.
- \* A good look out must be kept behind at all times to avoid the chasing waves catching you up. Alternatively, pick a calm patch to turn into the sea and look for another port.
- \* Watch the boat speed as you may need to ease the throttle, then power through to sit on the back of the next wave. The conditions you experience may be magnified or reduced by the combination of wind, stream and the local environment.

# Bars Crossings – General



- \* Do not attempt to cross any bar without experience and/or local knowledge. Follow the Skipper instructions as he/her and you should:
- \* Spend considerable time watching the bar conditions in all combinations of weather and tide.
- \* Cross the bar with other experienced skippers before trying it yourself.
- \* Obtain an up to-date weather forecast (especially wind conditions).
- \* If unfamiliar with the bar, obtain local advice, (e.g. Marine Rescue NSW).
- \* Check the vessel – especially steering and throttle controls, watertight hatches and drains. The vessel must be seaworthy, suitable for the conditions and able to take some impact from waves.
- \* Ensure that all loose items can be stowed away in lockers or tied down to prevent movement.
- \* Check that all watertight hatches can be closed and sealed properly, drain holes are free and bilge pumps work.
- \* Secure all loose gear and equipment. Brief your passengers/crew about the dangers / put on a lifejacket.
- \* Check all watertight hatches are closed and secured but not locked.

# Bar Crossing - Going Out



- \* When crossing coastal bars, you should not lose your nerve in the white water. Once committed, keep going.
- \* The outgoing vessel must meet the incoming wave energy.
- \* Do not hit waves at high speed.
- \* Do not allow waves to break onto your vessel.
- \* Idle towards the breaking waves watching for any lulls.
- \* If a flat spot occurs speed up & run through it.
- \* If the waves keep rolling in, motor to the break zone.
- \* Apply more power and run to the next wave, heading for the lowest part (the saddle) if possible because this is the last part to break.
- \* Trying to turn around in the middle of a bar entrance can be disastrous. Try to take waves as close to head on as possible.
- \* Back off the power just before meeting the next swell.
- \* Pass slowly through the wave and accelerate again to the next wave and repeat the process until through the break zone.

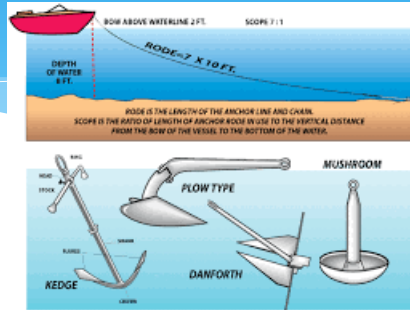


# Bar Crossing - Coming In



- \* Be aware the conditions may have changed. If dangerous, consider alternatives.
- \* Wait for conditions to abate.
- \* Wait for change of tide.
- \* Seek alternate safe harbour.
- \* The vessel should travel at the same speed as the waves.
- \* The aim is to travel in on the back of a swell, staying ahead of waves breaking behind the vessel.

# Raising & Lowering an Anchor



- \* Have anchor and chain neatly laid out on deck and enough scope for the intended depth.
- \* Do not let the chain touch the hull when throwing or retrieving the anchor.
- \* Wait for the Skippers go ahead before throwing the anchor.
- \* Always anchor by the bow not the stern and learn how to secure and check an anchor for hold strength.
- \* Wait for the boat to settle & see how she sits as more rope may be needed in rough weather/strong wind.
- \* Slowly move the boat to a position directly over the anchor, pulling in the line as you go. If you are anchored on a sand bottom you can snub the line on a cleat and power backwards slowly to pull the anchor out of the bottom.
- \* You'll need to know about how much rope to use, since this will affect where the boat will lie once the anchor is stuck, but plan on about an 8-to-1 ratio of rope to water depth.
- \* When in the water check the position of the anchor on the bottom and raise any concerns with the Skipper if in doubt.

# Being a Designated Assistant Skipper



- \* From time to time the Skipper may designate an assistant to assist in a boat's duties such as handling the boat, anchoring issues, excessive sea conditions, excessive wind or current, skipper injured or needing assistance.
- \* If called upon to take control of the boat the following information is important:
- \* Ask the Skipper for a de-brief (theory and practice) prior to launch and read this guide.
- \* Take control of the boat in low gear and travel the boat in different directions.
- \* If safe to do so, open up the throttle and get a feel for the boat under power while maintaining safe speed for the conditions.
- \* Know what to do if the engine does not start.
- \* Know what the safety pin in the control is for and how it works.
- \* Preferably, take a boating course and get your licence.

# Diving From & Returning to a Boat



- \* Always stop or idle the motor to drop off and retrieve divers. If you have to pick drop off and retrieve divers with the motor going then always have the engine in neutral, always look behind you before operating the engine and always visually account for all diver/locations. Note: Be aware of your surroundings as your undivided attention is crucial.
- \* Have all your gear ready and gun unloaded for the dive.
- \* If you are the first diver in the boat you are the last out of the boat at the next dive. This keep the gear from becoming entangled.
- \* Always maintain a visual sighting of the location of the boat when it is anchored up.
- \* Always try and swim up-current of the anchored boat as you may get tired and swimming with the current back to the boat is easier than swimming against the current.
- \* If you are in the water and need assistance then raise your arm or gun in the air to signify this to the boatie.
- \* Always hand you speargun to the boatie handle end (handle) first and not the shaft tip.
- \* Always try to replace the rubber safety cap to the gun.
- \* When diving headlands, swim well clear of any shallow reef and have your gear ready and gun unloaded and get in the boat with a sense of urgency.

# Returning to the Boat Ramp



- \* If you are retrieving with waves, wash, or current affecting the boat ramp, get assistance to hold the boat in line for the retrieval.
- \* Always assist in either holding the boat or manning the winch.
- \* Make sure the trailer safety chain is secured to bow of boat before attempting to drive the up the ramp.
- \* Drive of the ramp at safe speed.
- \* When safe to do so, remove the bunds.
- \* Attached the boat tie down straps.
- \* Remove all dive gear and offer to assist cleaning the boat.
- \* Tip the Skipper for fuel money. If unsure of the amount ask the Skipper what is the amount required for fuel (your share).
- \* Thank the Skipper for the day and enjoy your fresh fish.