

GBC Safety Boat Procedures V4.1 May 2023

Guidance for safety boat drivers and crews

Go/no go decision:

Decide if conditions are safe (weather, wind, sea state) and relate them to the abilities of the sailors. Consult experienced sailors if necessary.

Briefings:

Brief sailors on:

- Sailing area for the day, including instructions to remain in sight of safety boat until all craft launched and underway.
- Weather (wind strength and direction, sea state) and predicted changes
- Tide information (latest time for getting ashore)
- Race instructions and course if relevant
- What safety cover is available (second safety boat required if large numbers expected/long course planned)
- What to do if the safety boat has a problem e.g. engine failure. (*Assist safety boat crew if possible, sail back to slip*)
- Any unusual hazards

Recording decisions

If decision is 'no go' record decision on signing-in sheet

Communications

Use VHF channel 6 for safety boat crew and shore. Use Channel 16 for emergencies. Have a mobile phone as back-up.

PPE

Wear suitable clothing for weather and sea conditions. Disposable gloves for fuelling. Consider sunscreen

Preparation of safety boat

Check availability board in clubhouse for issues relating to safety boat and act on them

Check fuel, equipment (see below), inflation of sponsons.

Have one crew member dressed in dry suit or similar in case someone needs to enter the water.

Equipment

Check the safety boat before use for: kill cord, keys, anchor, hand-held radio, first aid, paddles, boarding ladder, inflator, baler

Boat handling and rescues

- Always, always, always use a kill cord
- Keep your hands on the throttle and wheel at all times when moving
- Always turn the engine off when dealing with persons in the water
- Wherever possible keep your boat speed to a minimum (especially in the harbour area) so that you do not produce unnecessary wake, and make it easier for people to anticipate the safety boat's intentions.
- Communicate with crew when powering up and turning at speed
- If giving 'experience' trips, DO NOT drive to impress! Calm, steady helming in a safe manner is mandatory.
- Know how to avoid and mitigate 'hook' (a violent alteration of course and deceleration of the craft and its occupants)
- Observe the whole fleet: 'see, evaluate, act'
- Give priority to people, not boats.
- Avoid steering directly astern of those who are racing, in case they capsize, fall out or alter course unexpectedly. If it is necessary to come alongside, it is best to do this when a sailing boat has stopped on a close reach and the safety boat can come in on the windward side of the dinghy and hold the shroud to keep them close. Once in place turn the engine off if necessary for ease of communication.
- If approaching a moving dinghy let the helm know your intentions, communicate clearly, approach from the windward side.
- Always have an escape plan up your sleeve, know which way you're going to turn to get out of a situation before things go wrong - sometimes just dropping into neutral will do it!
- Have a working knowledge of the colregs, including sound signals, as Gairloch can be a busy area with fishing, pleasure and tour boats
<https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/COLREG.aspx>
- Above all maintain a good look out around your safety boat at all times!

Reference: RYA Safety boat guidance