



## Guidance on Prop Guards

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The RYA recognises that some recognised training centres fit guards to the propellers on their outboard powered craft used for training and rescue duties. However, whilst they may provide some protection to a person in the water, they do present a number of significant disadvantages.

The most important point to make in support of the above is that, assuming good practice is followed by coxswains, there is no advantage in having a prop guard. Such good practice includes the normal procedure of cutting the engine completely when approaching a person in the water and wearing a killcord at all times. These two measures, together with the proper observation of IRPCS rules 5 (lookout) and 6 (safe speed) should avoid injuries to people in the water.

Our experience has also led us to the conclusion that prop guards have certain disadvantages, ranging from dramatic loss of acceleration and top speed, to heavily increased fuel consumption and poor manoeuvrability. We believe the engine manufacturers and distributors will confirm that there is also evidence of engines which have suffered bent prop shafts, shattered gearboxes and even complete failure due to having prop guard-induced damage.

For safety boats there is a clear payoff between getting to an incident quickly and manoeuvring easily, and the extra protection offered by the guard in case of a collision which should have been avoided. In the case of small safety boats with engines of limited size, the addition of a prop guard can have serious impact on the boat's ability to plane, particularly with extra people on board. This then has serious implications in terms of delivering casualties or reaching incidents.

To summarise, it is important to educate coxswains on good practice when driving outboard-powered boats and not rely upon pieces of equipment, which could adversely affect your ability to perform the task. Clubs and other organisations using outboard powered craft are encouraged to use experienced, competent coxswains to minimise the risk of injury from the propeller. The RYA does not require its training centres to fit prop guards.