



Safety Advisory Notice

January 2015



RYA SafeTrx

The vessel tracking
and alerting
smartphone app



“...a seriously handy app”

Motorboats Monthly

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Introduction

At the beginning of 2014, the RYA launched its first RYA Safety Advisory Notice. The purpose was to raise awareness of particular safety issues, to help to prevent avoidable accidents and in doing so ultimately to protect lives.

The RYA has a strong track record of providing safety information for recreational boaters and the Safety Advisory Notice highlights concerns that we believe should be given particular attention.

The 2015 edition is not intended to replace the safety advice provided in the first edition, but to supplement it with information on further safety issues that have arisen during the year – either from our own observations or from discussions that we have had with the Government and its agencies.

It is therefore intended to draw attention to these matters, to get boaters thinking about them and above all to consider their own attitudes to them.

Like all such initiatives, the RYA believes that by identifying certain issues and the potential pitfalls, it will help boaters to think about things in a different light and help them to make better decisions both before they set off and when out on the water.

Evidence shows that the vast majority of watersport activities are safe and fun – that's how it should be, but it's also clear that accidents can and do happen. We are confident that everyone who reads the RYA Safety Advisory Notice will be encouraged to think about their own attitudes to safety.

Safe behaviour and established good practice ultimately protect life and equipment and are vital for the enjoyment of leisure boating at every level that it takes place.

Critical safety issues

Personal location devices

The RYA safety advice is:

Consider using personal location devices such as PLB (Personal Locator Beacons) and AIS (Automatic Identification System) man overboard recovery beacons to provide fast effective distress alerting and man overboard location for any kind of vessel.

Put simply, personal location devices could mean the difference between surviving an incident at sea and losing your life, particularly if you have lost communications through damage to your equipment or because you are out of range of terrestrial systems.

A PLB (sometimes referred to as a personal EPIRB) does not rely on a vessel within VHF range to hear your Mayday call, nor does it rely on somebody spotting your flares. It simply requires the beacon to be activated to transmit a distress alert. When activated, a PLB transmits a unique ID and your location to the search and rescue satellite network, typically alerting the rescue services within minutes. Once in your area, the search and rescue services can quickly home in on the built-in homing beacon and some PLBs also have a LED strobe light to aid pinpoint location.

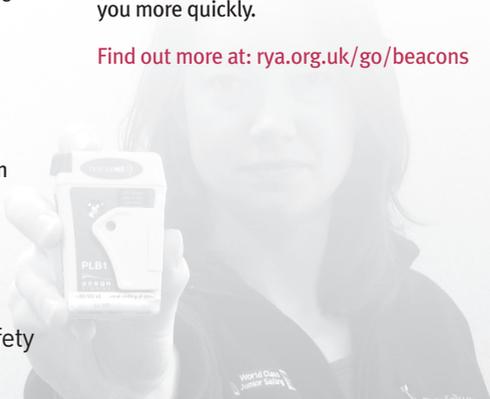
PLBs are now small enough, powerful enough and affordable enough to carry on

you at all times while afloat. For those who regularly navigate outside reliable VHF range, particularly long-range cruising boats, a PLB should be considered an essential piece of equipment rather than a desirable extra.

AIS man overboard devices provide fast location and make it easy for your own vessel (if equipped with an AIS chart plotter) to find someone who has gone over the side without the help of outside agencies. This is particularly useful in higher latitudes or when further from the coast when external assistance will take longer to reach you.

When triggered, an emergency icon signals a man overboard on the AIS chart plotter together with exact location, range and bearing. This assists your own boat in locating you more quickly.

Find out more at: rya.org.uk/go/beacons



Communications

**The RYA safety advice is:
Always keep in touch! A means of calling for help in the event of an on board emergency is essential for all boaters.**

Although a mobile phone may work in near-coastal waters, it is not designed for the marine environment and network coverage may be poor just when you need it most. A maritime radio capable of transmitting and receiving and which will work where you are operating is therefore essential.

It is practical to carry a handheld VHF radio, at the very least, on most boats but it will only operate over a limited range. Fixed VHF is more powerful and may allow communications over a range of up to 20 – 40 miles depending on the installation and conditions. Beyond these ranges, marine MF/HF (SSB) transceivers or marine mobile satellite communications may be necessary.

A modern recreational marine radio equipped with Digital Selective Calling (DSC) enables you to establish initial contact between stations at the push of a button. When used for distress, DSC allows a great deal more information to be transmitted automatically including the identification of the vessel in distress, where it is and the nature of the distress to all DSC stations within range.

A marine radio is however more than just a means of requesting assistance or telling someone what your intended passage is.

It is useful for receiving Maritime Safety Information voice broadcasts, which include weather information. An HF/SSB transceiver not only enables contact with other vessels and shore stations but, with the addition of a modem, it can also be used to send and receive emails.

Licensing

A ship radio licence is required for marine radios and an appropriate maritime radio operator certificate is required to operate the equipment.

Find out more at: rya.org.uk/go/keepintouch and rya.org.uk/go/licensing

RYA SafeTrx

If you cruise in areas where mobile phone reception is available, particularly in dinghies and other small craft, you may find the RYA's SafeTrx App useful to supplement your other communication equipment. This Smartphone App for both Android & Apple iOS devices monitors your boat journeys and alerts emergency contacts set up by you should you fail to return on time.

Find out more at: rya.org.uk/go/SafeTrxApp

Lifejacket and liferaft servicing

**The RYA safety advice is:
Regularly service lifejackets and liferafts according to the manufacturer's instructions at an approved service agent.**

Wearing lifejackets is now commonplace and many more boats are carrying liferafts. This can only be a good thing; however, if you expect them to work properly when needed then you need to maintain them.

The RYA strongly recommends that lifejackets and liferafts are serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions by a service agent that has been formally approved by the manufacturer. This ensures that appropriately trained staff, capable of performing the work, will have the correct service manuals and instructions and the correct materials and replacement parts. Many service agents will allow you to be present when your liferaft is being serviced so that you can familiarise yourself with the boarding arrangements and the equipment it has.

You should take a good look at all of your life saving equipment on a regular basis

to check it for obvious signs of damage or deterioration. If it appears damaged, replace it or have it checked. Gas bottles in lifejackets should be checked to ensure they are screwed in firmly because they can work loose. Remember that some of the equipment stowed within a liferaft has a limited life span.

The RYA recommends that owners become familiar with the use of all of their safety equipment – not just lifejackets and liferafts, but particularly those that seldom see the light of day. For example, practice hoisting your storm sails and make sure horseshoe lifebuoys are untangled and ready for use.

Find out more at:
rya.org.uk/go/loveyourliferaft



Running aground

The RYA safety advice is:

After any grounding¹ a proper inspection should be carried out as soon as possible. If there is any doubt about the seaworthiness of the boat, it should not be used until it has been thoroughly inspected.

Despite all our efforts to avoid making contact with the seabed, there are many reasons why a craft can run aground from basic human error to engine failure on a lee shore. In addition, not all shallow areas or submerged hazards may be marked or accurately charted. Clearly if the boat stops suddenly, crew may be thrown forward causing injury. The first step is to check the welfare of the crew; the second is to check the boat for damage. Finally, there may be damage that is not immediately evident but may become apparent subsequently.

If you are moving slowly when you run aground or ground on something soft like mud and hull damage looks to be minimal, you may simply be able to reverse under power – although this may not be possible in a motor boat. As you start to move, check thoroughly from bow to stern looking for any signs of obvious damage and to make sure you are not taking on water from any damage caused by the grounding. It has been known for boaters to get off a grounding only to find that the boat starts to sink because something has penetrated the hull.

Running aground at speed or onto rock or compacted sand etc. can lead to heavy damage to the hull or a keel to hull attachment.

Such damage might not be immediately obvious to the untrained eye, however the impact loads can cause delamination and severely weaken the structure resulting in water ingress, loss of the vessel's structural integrity and instability.

A heavy impact can induce structural stresses and loads beyond the design capability of the boat which can eventually lead to a major failure. Fin keel sailing boats with bulb attachments are particularly susceptible to structural damage at the hull to keel interface. Particular attention should be paid to getting keel bolts and supporting structure properly surveyed following a significant grounding to ensure the boat is still seaworthy.

You should be aware that the long term cumulative effects of a number of seemingly insignificant groundings can be just as serious as a single major impact from which damage is immediately obvious. The consequences from either a single major grounding or multiple minor groundings can be serious. Ultimately these might lead to loss of watertight integrity of the hull or the catastrophic loss of a sailing boat's keel, leading to capsizing.

¹Unless your boat is of a type specifically designed to take the ground and the grounding has been planned and controlled.

Weather forecasts

The RYA safety advice is:

Checking the weather forecast before putting to sea is an obligation under SOLAS². It is advisable to obtain weather forecasts from several different sources.

When planning a passage, it is the weather that determines where the prudent boater goes, when they go or if they go at all. When considering the forecast in relation to your intended passage, you should think about the wind direction and speed, the sea state and the capabilities of your boat and crew. The forecast is a vital safety tool for all boaters whether you are in a dinghy or an ocean going yacht.

Getting a weather forecast is only the start. To understand the bigger picture, you will need to consider what the forecasters are predicting, what the actual weather conditions are, and what has already happened. You should take advantage of the considerable experience that forecasters have in predicting conditions at a local level over short periods.

It is prudent to look at more than one forecast from several different sources. There is no one stop shop or short cut to building a picture that enables you to decide whether or not to go boating. Remember that a forecast is only an indication of what is likely to happen.

Check the forecast regularly to assess the forecasters' certainty in their predictions. Weather systems do not always develop in the way that the computer models calculate. Nowadays five day forecasts are reasonably accurate but you should treat the last two days of any five day forecast with some caution.

The five day forecast is useful to help you to decide on which day to leave port and if the weather is going to hold until you reach your destination; there is no point in setting off and running into bad weather on the way. However, if that is a possibility, the forecast will help you choose ports of refuge and to avoid being in an inhospitable port or anchorage in weather that you do not want to go out in.

With any forecast, make sure you are aware of when it was issued and for what period it is valid.

Find out more at: rya.org.uk/go/weather

²Safety Of Life At Sea Chapter V Regulation 34 - Safe navigation and avoidance of dangerous situations

Plan your day

The RYA safety advice is:

Think about what might cause injury to you and your crew and decide whether you are taking sensible steps to prevent it. Think about the whole day, not just a specific activity.

You have decided where you are going, the weather and tides are favourable and you are good to go. The crew have been briefed on their tasks and how to be safe on the water.

When you are keen to get going it can seem like a chore to plan a trip, particularly a short one, however, not only is passage planning a requirement under SOLAS³, it will help you to consider all options, gather the information you need, think about an alternative plan should things change and above all avoid dangerous situations. The amount of time spent planning is directly related to the trip you are making, but is always a worthwhile investment. Proper preparation and planning will help your trip go without a hitch and enable you to relax and enjoy the day.

However, planning should never just be about the specific detail of the trip itself. Almost certainly the trip has a purpose such as anchoring in a secluded bay, a visit to a new harbour or somewhere you have not been before or simply to meet up with friends. You should therefore think as much about what happens when you arrive as you do about getting there. Whatever it is you are doing may well involve other activities that have the potential to create a hazard and cause harm.

It is not unusual for the most safety conscious boater at sea to underestimate the risk associated with a routine activity such as getting to and from their boat in a tender, for example by carrying rather than wearing their lifejacket.

Keep an eye on young children that might be on board and what they are doing particularly at times when you might be distracted such as tidying up after a day out on the water. A seemingly innocent activity such as walking up and down a pontoon to fish or visit friends on another boat may end in tragedy if a child falls into the water unnoticed.

There are potential hazards when launching and recovering small powerboats. Slipways may be steep or slippery, trailer brakes might not hold and there may be obstructions in the water.

You will no doubt be familiar with a variety of similar situations but the overarching message is clear, safety does not happen by accident.

Find out more at: rya.org.uk/go/SOLAS

³Safety Of Life At Sea Chapter V Regulation 34 - Safe navigation and avoidance of dangerous situations



The RYA has a built an enviable reputation as the national body for all forms of recreational and competitive boating

It represents dinghy and yacht racing, motor and sail cruising, RIBs and sportsboats, powerboat racing, windsurfing, inland cruising and personal watercraft. The RYA manages the British sailing team which has enjoyed considerable world class and Olympic success.

We set and maintain an international standard for recreational boat training. RYA training courses form the basis for the small craft training of lifeboat crews, police officers and the Royal Navy, small commercial craft and are also adopted as a template for training in many other countries throughout the world. Approximately a quarter of a million people take an RYA course each year.

The RYA ethos is one of proficiency and self-reliance which is by and large shared by the vast majority of boaters. It is learned through

our world class training and is supported by our publications, comprehensive guidance and definitive safety advice.

Overall the UK's boating community, approximately 2.8m people, has a high standard of safety on the water compared to other boating nations and we want to keep it that way.

Our safety advice is aimed at helping boaters to avoid trouble in the first place by getting them to think about themselves, their boat and their crew rather than simply prescribing a list of what equipment to carry when things go wrong.



Your safety on the water

01

Look after yourself:

you are your best piece of safety equipment

02

Have a plan:

be prepared

03

Keep in touch:

have a suitable means of communication
on board

04

Know your limits:

don't go beyond your experience and ability

Don't ruin a good
day on the water

Be safe:
Enjoy more



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