



**Guidance for Major Incident Procedures at RYA  
Affiliated Clubs and Recognised Training Centres**

incorporating

**EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

TG 14-15

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## Introduction

This planning document contains useful information, advice and guidance concerning the response to an emergency or crisis arising at an RYA recognised training centre or RYA affiliated club.

The procedures are designed to be used in the event of a serious accident or incident and are a requirement of the RYA Recognition Guidance Notes.

### Definition of a Major Incident

A Major Incident is an event where there is loss of life, a serious injury, or there is substantial damage to property and/or the environment.

The following would be examples of serious incidents or accidents:

- An incident leading to a fatality, serious or multiple fractures, amputation or other serious injury
- Any situation that presents a serious risk to RYA reputation/brand
- Major damage to vessels afloat or property ashore
- Loss of contact with group or individual, overdue groups or individuals
- Other circumstances in which a group or individual might be at serious risk of harm
- Serious illness of an individual or group
- Any adverse situation in which the media are or may be involved

In the event of any major incident, your first priority is the safety of the participants, volunteers and instructors, but once ashore you are going to have to deal with the authorities and potentially the media. You should immediately contact the emergency services as appropriate.

It is the responsibility of each establishment to determine a suitable and appropriate **Emergency Action Plan** designed for their own specific operating environments.

You can use the Sample Emergency Checklist on pages 4-5 as a basis for determining your own Emergency Action Plan for use during a major incident.

**Note:** Incidents may sometimes occur which those involved may not consider to be serious. However, to the inexperienced observer or as a result of statements or information released from Search and Rescue (SAR) authorities, a perception of seriousness may be created. In the event that SAR authorities become involved or media attention being attracted, it is good practice to be prepared to deal with an incident under the media spotlight.

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## MAJOR INCIDENT PROCEDURES

### **Incident Co-ordinator**

An Incident Co-ordinator will have overall control and responsibility and will co-opt other members as necessary to deal with the incident such as securing the incident area, rendering first aid, preventing further injury or damage and taking appropriate photographs. The Incident Co-ordinator will ensure that a Flag Officer, Centre Principal or Chief Instructor is informed of the incident as soon as possible.

### **Incident Control Room**

Where possible ensure that an incident control room is set up on a suitable part of the site where there are functioning mobile and landline telephones, radio communications, and access to the internet and email available.

### **In the Immediate Aftermath**

- Get a statement from competent witnesses as well as recording their names and contact details
- Remove the key witnesses to a place you can talk to them away from onlookers
- Explain that statements are being taken to obtain an accurate account of the incident, as these may be required for insurance, or other purposes
- Notes need to be taken and agreed by the witness

### **Securing Evidence**

- Photograph the incident location, boats, equipment etc.
- Keep and secure any relevant equipment e.g. clothing, buoyancy aids, lifejackets, logbooks etc.
- Secure any boats and equipment

### **Emergency Services**

In the event of Emergency Services becoming involved, they will take control of the incident response and be responsible for situations relevant to them e.g. Police (fatalities, abduction of and search for lost children), Coastguard (marine rescue), Fire and Rescue Service (fire/rescue incidents), and Ambulance (casualty treatment). In the event of a major multi-agency incident, a Lead Agency will be appointed, usually the Police, to ensure a coordinated response.

### **Site organisation**

- If necessary restrict entrance or exit to and from the site by closing gates and either locking them or positioning a member of staff to act as gate keeper
- Identify a separate gathering area for relatives of any injured persons
- Arrange for a supply of hot/cold drinks and or food
- Keep media away from gathering area for relatives
- If possible, have a separate briefing area for the media where they can be addressed by the club or training centre representative

### **Safeguarding and welfare**

The RYA's policies and guidelines for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults should be adapted to suit the requirements of your training centre, club or class association. If your club or centre is contacted by the Police or Children's Services concerning information received or a complaint made by or about a member, volunteer or employee, you are advised to contact the RYA Safeguarding Manager as soon as possible for further guidance and support.

## **Dealing with Relatives or Aggrieved Parties**

It is important to be sympathetic with these people, without admitting liability. Remain calm and say that every effort is being made to mitigate the effects and that the appropriate authorities, with whom you are co-operating, are investigating the incident.

## **Fatalities**

If there has been a fatality the police will inform the next of kin, similarly with injured people when a criminal offence or traffic collision occurs. Do not publicise the name/s of the casualty/casualties until you know this has been formally carried out by the Police, even if the press appear to know who it is.

## **Dealing with the Press**

If contacted by the press or other media representative, the initial response is to acknowledge that an incident has occurred and that the club or centre will issue a press statement as soon as possible.

Direct statements and interviews are to be avoided unless authorised.

The nominated person may produce a written statement that you can give to the press, e.g. "The XYZ Sailing Club / Training Centre regret to announce the death of a member who fell overboard ...

When

Where

We extend our deepest sympathy to the relatives.

A full statement will be issued at 2pm tomorrow."

(Give yourself time to collate the information).

If it becomes necessary to give an interview, unless confident in being able to cope with unexpected questions, it is better to read from a prepared statement, If the incident is attracting attention from the national media, call the RYA Communications Team for advice.

- Don't hold a press conference
- Decide who will speak to the press
- Do not allow well-meaning but ill-informed members to make public comments
- Try to keep a record of whom you have spoken to, who has contacted you etc.

## **Notifications**

Consider who must be notified in accordance with the requirements of your location.

In the UK:

- If it is water-based incident, you must inform the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) within 24 hours.
- If it involves work-related fatal or major injury you must inform the Health and Safety Executive.

## **Closure**

- The primary phase of the incident is closed when any injured parties have been moved from the location and all property damage has been secured so that it no longer presents a danger to club members or the public.
- A meeting should be held with all those involved in the handling of the incident and any experts who may be required (legal, insurance, structural etc.).
- This meeting should finalise all records of the event and determine any follow up action that may be required.
- A record should be made of lessons learnt and a plan developed for implementing ways to improve procedures and the major incident response system.

## Sample Emergency Checklist



### PROTECT LIVES

- Provide emergency first aid if necessary
- Protect individuals from further harm
- Secure the scene of the incident and ensure the safety and physical/emotional wellbeing of those involved
- If lives are at risk contact emergency services
- Isolate the cause of the incident (e.g. turn off electricity, isolate gas)
- Clear the water of boats as necessary, while you deal with the incident
- Evacuate the premises as necessary



### TAKE CONTROL

- The Officer of the day (OOD) or, if operating as a Training Centre, Principal / Chief Instructor will take immediate charge of the situation and inform the appropriate emergency services as necessary
- They may then delegate an appropriate member to act as Incident Co-ordinator until the emergency services arrive
- When advised of an emergency situation, act as quickly, calmly and as effectively as possible
- If there is a fatality, the prime responsibility for notification of next of kin lies with the Police, similarly with injured people when a criminal offence or traffic collision occurs
- Maintain a record of key information and actions using an incident log sheet (see page 7)
- Retain all equipment such as boats, lifejackets, safety equipment etc. involved in the incident in an unaltered condition so that an investigation can take place
- Protect and ensure the welfare of all those involved and any witnesses



### INFORM AGENCIES

- Make sure you have the following information: what the problem is, your location, how many are involved, when it happened
- Liaise with the local Police to ensure that parents and relatives of any injured persons are contacted quickly in order to precede the press or social media
- Notify the relevant RYA Senior Manager and Communications Team (see page 6)
- Do you need to contact other agencies? Police, Local Authority, Harbour Master, environment agency; electricity, water or gas suppliers?
- In the UK, if it is a water-based incident on a coded vessel, you are legally required to inform the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) at the earliest opportunity. For non-coded boats this is recommended but is not a legal requirement. If the incident involved a work-related fatal or major injury, you must inform the Health and Safety Executive



## MEDIA RESPONSE

- Appoint one person to deal with the media; this person will be designated as the **only** person to make any public statements to the media
- Manage any media that are onsite – if relevant provide a room or area away from the witnesses, victim's relatives and other participants
- Contact the RYA Communications Team for assistance and guidance with handling the media
- Only reveal names of any victims/casualties once advised by the Police that it is alright to do so. Families do not want to hear of an incident through the press or social media
- Do not get drawn into speculating about causes, blame or possible outcomes
- If necessary the RYA Communications Team can arrange interviews or a local press briefing; larger incidents may require a formal press conference
- Remember – declining an interview or saying “no comment” will almost certainly look like you have something to hide. It is far better to give a factual response such as “It would be inappropriate to comment further until we’ve had the opportunity to consider all the factors contributing to this incident.”
- Never lie to the media about something you know to be true
- “Pity, Praise and Promise” is a tactic that can be used even when little is known about the crisis. You should express sympathy for those caught up in the incident; praise those who are helping in the recovery – they may be your staff or the emergency services; and finally promise to get to the bottom of the problem, to participate in any investigation and use your best efforts to put systems in place to minimise the of risk of it happening again



## POST INCIDENT

- Pass your Incident Log Sheet to the Club Secretary or Training Centre Principal
- Complete the Accident or Near Miss form accordingly
- Arrange a debrief of all staff and identify any additional staff welfare needs (e.g. counselling) or rewards
- Use information gained from the debrief to review and update your Emergency Action Plan

## EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Add your important contact names/numbers – including staff, volunteers and key agencies. Numbers shown here are for UK organisations, so you will need to check local contacts if you operate outside the UK.

You might include your senior staff members or officials, RYA contacts, local authority safeguarding officer and insurance company etc.

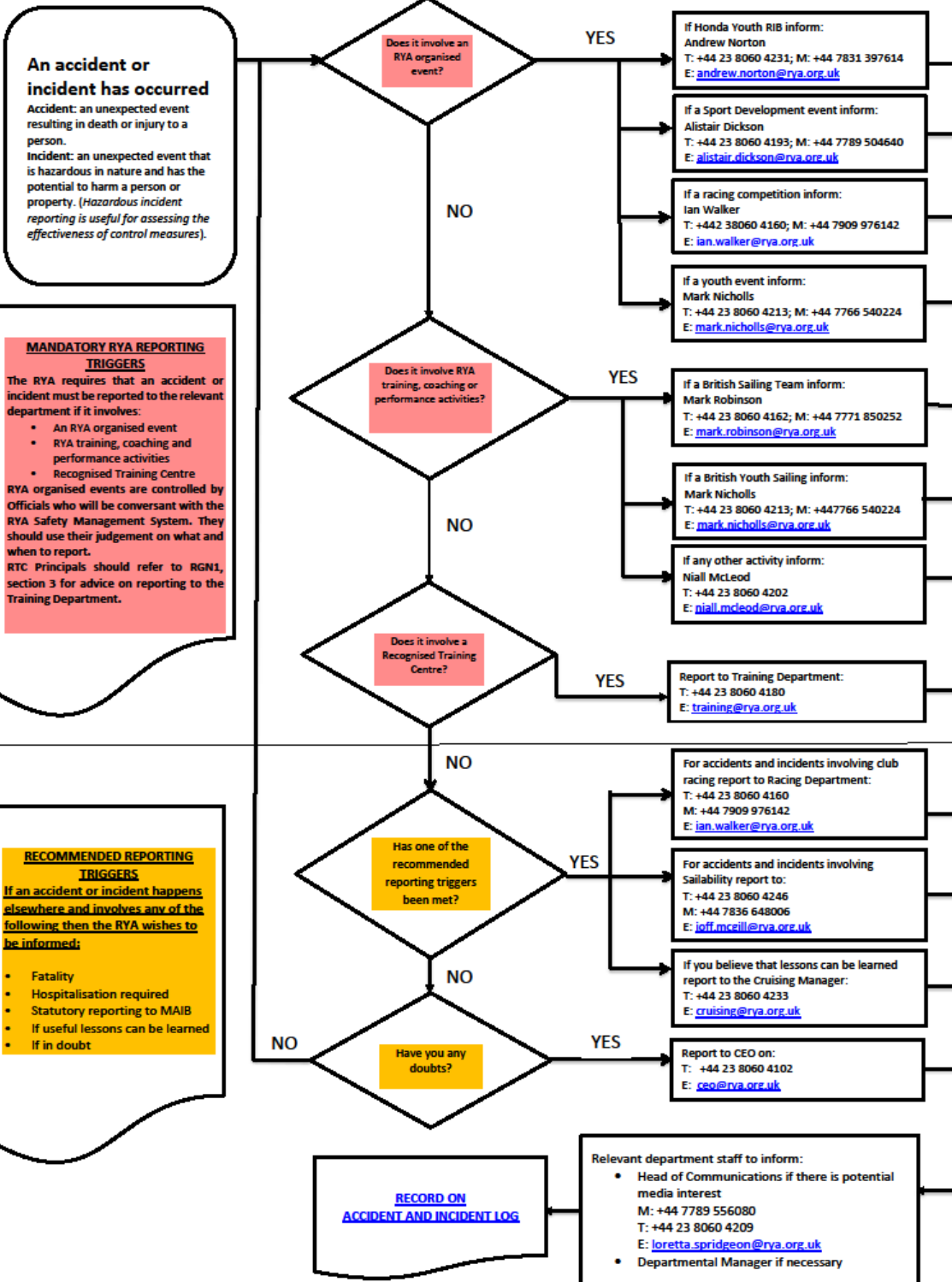
Emergency services	999
Health and Safety Executive	Reporting fatal and major injuries only - call the Incident Contact Centre on 0345 300 9923 (opening hours Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 5 pm).  24/7 Duty Officer - 0151 922 9235
Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB)	023 8023 2527

This extract is taken from the [Accident and Incident Reporting](http://www.rya.org.uk) section of [www.rya.org.uk](http://www.rya.org.uk)





**TRIGGERS FOR REPORTING ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS: VERSION 6**



- Feedback of lessons learned** This might include:
- Amending rules
  - Amending RYA policies and procedures
  - Further (re) training for staff and volunteers
  - Articles in RYA Magazines and newsletters
  - Reporting outcomes to the Sport and Recreational Alliance, Sport England, UK Sport, BOA, RYA regions and home countries
  - Case study at conferences
  - Emailing of any urgent findings to those concerned
  - Proposals for amending ISO standards
  - Communication to the wider boating public through SAN/yachting press