A Voluntary Code of Practice

For Watersports

In the Superyacht Industry

September 2015

Foreword

Yachting is a diverse and exciting industry to be a part of. It is one that has grown rapidly in recent decades and has continued to evolve in terms of standards and professionalism. More and more frequently the raising of industry standards and improvements for owners, guests and crew are being driven by the industry itself, rather than by regulators. This can only be a good thing.

One area that has been identified for some time as lacking in terms of clear guidance on good practice is that of the on water activities conducted from superyachts. These activities are known collectively as watersports and involve a wide variety of on water, in water and underwater sports.

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) has been involved in the training and conduct of various watersports involving both sailing and powered craft over many decades. Our training schemes are world renowned and operate under safety management guidelines fined tuned over many years. We have come together with the PYA (Professional Yachting Association) to create this Voluntary Code of Practice for the well - being of the industry and for all those who participate in the wide array of watersports activities offered on board. There is no charge involved and there is no inspection process or validation.

The intention of this document is to provide superyacht Captains and crew with a set of guiding principles that we hope will assist them in developing their own on board safety management guidelines for watersports. The following pages are not intended to provide all the answers, but rather to assist you in knowing what questions to ask in determining how watersports activities will be managed on board your vessel. Further advice should be sought from national governing bodies or industry groups for activities that are not covered here.

I hope you find this guidance helpful.

Richard Falk
RYA Training Manager and
Chief Examiner

Contents

Introduction

Captains are employed in their roles primarily for their expertise in safely running the vessel on which they are employed. Their training and their experience revolves around the safe operation of the vessel and the equipment needed to safely run it.

Increasingly superyachts will have on board a wide variety of toys for guests to enjoy during their time on board. These may be personal watercraft, kayaks, sailing dinghies, windsurfers, stand up paddle boards or hover boards. Equally onboard activities may also include snorkeling, sea bobs and SCUBA diving or possibly even the use of small submarines. Every year new toys arrive on the market and find their way onto more and more superyachts.

In many cases neither the captain nor crew have much, if any experience in the use of this watersports equipment and in most cases they have little experience in managing the actual on water activities. This has the effect of placing both guests and crew at risk, by potentially allowing activities to take place without the appropriate safety management systems in place.

Effective management of water sports activities not only ensures the safety of your guests but also increases their enjoyment. By having a basic understanding of the principles involved crew will be able to deliver sessions that are not only fun but also result in guests gaining a sense of achievement through learning new skills. This guide provides a basic framework from which you can build your operating procedures. This guidance is adapted from the established practices developed by the RYA over many years of providing water sports training courses.

On board a superyacht, there is often a need to run less formal water sports sessions without the desire for qualified instructors or end of course qualifications. These guidance notes are provided to assist in the development of strategies to ensure, where reasonably possible, that sessions reflect established practice.

Planning

As you will want to provide an enjoyable experience for your guests, a good plan of action will ensure that all matters of safety can be covered in a relaxed manner rather than a seemingly pointless list of instructions.

Guest Questionnaire

As part of the pre-planning stage try to establish an understanding of your guests experience and desires. This may be achieved by asking them some basic questions that could include the following:

Have you taken part in this activity before?
What do you want to do during this session?
Is there anything you wish to learn?

You may wish to incorporate more questions, the more information that you can get before the session the better prepared you will be and the better the final outcome of the session being memorable for all the right reasons rather than from a bad experience.

This may be delivered in a formal, written format but may be better delivered through a casual, conversational interaction with guests. Armed with an understanding of what guests are looking for crew will be better able to tailor briefings and / or tuition more appropriately.

Crew training for watersports

Whilst some yachts have crew dedicated exclusively to watersports operations, many do not. Often crew are expected to take on the responsibility for safely managing watersports activities as an additional responsibility to their core role on board. Regardless of whether watersports management is the core role for which the crew member is employed or a secondary responsibility it is essential that all crew involved have the appropriate knowledge, skill and experience to manage the task safely and effectively.

You may wish to have members of your crew trained as instructors and / or supervisors in the various watersports disciplines they will be responsible for managing. Details on courses available can be found through the various national governing bodies responsible for those activities.

In the absence of any recognized qualifications in these activities the responsibility will fall to those on board to ensure that crew have the appropriate knowledge and skills for the job.

Area of operation

Whilst en-route to a new anchorage or berth that is unfamiliar to you, study the charts and seek the advice from other crewmembers that may have run watersports sessions there in the past. Clearly define your area of operation for each activity with the approval of your captain or other designated officer.

What makes a good watersports training area?
A large open expanse of water with no other users, no obstructions or speed restrictions and flat calm waters with a constant breeze just enough to ensure that the sail craft can achieve a decent speed without the risk of capsize.

In reality it is not always the possible to find the perfect operating area and therefore you will need to carefully select your area to accommodate as many of these desirable features without compromising the safety of your group or that of others.

When setting up your area of operation incorporate buffer zones to separate high-speed activities such as personal watercraft from bathers and other water users groups.

Take account of the wind direction, especially when you have novice sailors, try and keep them away from lee shores. Be aware also of any tidal streams or currents and brief accordingly.

Consider other vessels operating in the vicinity, are they running watersports operations too? Where are their personal watercraft operating?

Keep your group away from physical hazards such as submerged rocks and over falls.

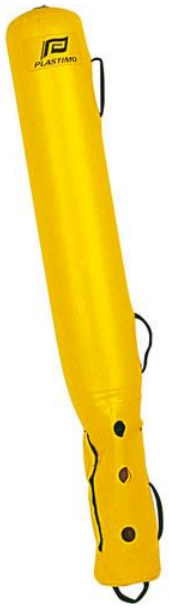
Keep a sharp look out for transient hazards that may enter your area of operation. Remember, you and your guests' will understand the boundaries but others may not. These hazards may take any form but might include yacht races, tour boats or craft from neighbouring yachts.

Upon arrival, take a little time to familiarize yourself with landmarks and other points of reference. Be prepared to amend your plan due to unforeseen activity such as a high density of other vessels in the area.

Prepare a visual aid to use when briefing the guests on the area of operation. Keep it simple and easy to understand avoiding references to technical terms that may cause unnecessary confusion. Important information such as speed limits and restricted areas must be highlighted on the plan.

Marking your training area using tall inflatable race markers is a practical way to establish your operating limits. Not only do they provide a visual reference to your guests but also to other operators within your area. Using this method also has the benefit of providing a simple system that is familiar to your guest's wherever you happen to set up. For personal watercraft activities inflatable marks help create a focal point where guests can practice various manoeuvers.

An example of a tall inflatable race mark by Plastimo



Risk Assessment

All activities conducted from the yacht should have a risk assessment conducted. The aim of this process is to identify any hazards that are likely to be encountered in order that measures may be put in place to minimize the risk of injury, damage or worse. It is impossible to completely eliminate risk, but through a relatively objective approach to assessing all activities it is possible to greatly reduce both the likelihood of an accident as well as the impact any accident may have.

There is substantial advice on the conduct of risk assessments available on the internet.

Number of concurrent activities
There may be pressure to provide as many activities as possible all at the same time. Balancing your guests' requests within the safety plan can be achieved with a little creative thinking. Consider running a timetable of activities grouping together sports that complement each other and therefore maximising the efficiency of the safety cover and equipment available. Having two activities running concurrently with conflicting safety management requirements may appear simple in theory but in practice could prove less than safe. A group of windsurfers relying upon a safety boat that is also being used to tow an inflatable toy at the same time would be an example of incompatible activities, unless separate safety cover is available. Looking after mixed fleets, such as PWs and dinghies might also prove problematic.

Number of supervisors
Ideally each group should have its own supervisor. However in practice this is not always possible. When deciding upon the number of supervisors you must consider the experience of the group. More experienced guests may require less direct supervision. A novice group will need more supervision to get going even with the most basic of maneuvers. In this instance, a good supervisor with experience of the activity will enhance the enjoyment and satisfaction of the group, not to mention the safety.

Experience of supervisors
Whilst it would be desirable to have fully qualified instructors for each activity this will not always be possible. The activity supervisor should be fully conversant with the principles of safety for every aspect of the activities that they are supervising. The ability to impart basic tuition to your guests' for each activity will enhance their awareness of safety issues and contribute to their overall enjoyment.

Number of Lookouts
If the number of supervisors is limited, having dedicated lookouts on board the mother ship can augment the safety cover of the group. If using lookouts they should be in a position to observe all of the participants and be in direct communication with the activity supervisor.

Environmental Hazards
One factor that should be considered carefully, particularly when in waters with which you are not familiar is the issue of in water hazards. These may take several forms and might include:

Marine creatures – Many areas will have a variety of creatures that have the potential to cause harm to guests and crew. In tropical climates these might include marine stingers, jelly fish, sharks or sea snakes. In colder climates these are more likely to be restricted to sharks. Further information is usually available from locals and dive operators are often particularly knowledgeable in this regard. In many cases the hazards will be seasonal, with Box Jellyfish for example being prevalent in the Northern Waters of Australia between November and April each year. Other hazards, such as sharks, may be present in waters year round.

Pollution – In some areas, despite the appearance of crystal clear waters there may be high levels of pollution present in the water. These may be caused by untreated sewage or industrial pollution from shore or could also be as a result of run off after heavy rain. In any case, local knowledge should be sought to determine if this is something that needs to be considered.

In some cases the risks relate only to the risk of mild injury whilst other hazards will have the potential to cause fatalities. It is essential that crew are aware of such hazards and where the level of risk is found to be too high then the activity should not go ahead.

Guest Safety briefing

Should things go wrong, being prepared is essential to ensuring a positive outcome. Key to this is an effective safety briefing for all those involved with the activity. This should include session supervisors, bridge crew and participating guests.

The safety briefing should include but not be limited to the following:

- Aims and objectives of the session
- Introduce session staff, roles and responsibilities
- Correct use and fitting of a kill cord
- Correct use and fitting of personal buoyancy
- Correct use and fitting of a harness
- Introduction to the vessel, its equipment and how to operate it
- Choice of clothing and appropriate footwear
- How to raise the alarm
- What to do in the event of a capsize
- Importance of staying with the craft
- Importance of keeping a good look out
- Basic hand signals
- What to do in the event of a Man Overboard
- Operating area boundaries
- Identification of hazards
- Interaction with other craft

Alcohol

Experience shows that alcohol and water do not mix. Consumption of alcohol or use of other substances prior to on water activity will impair judgement and reflexes and increases the risk of accidents.

Whilst crew may well be unable to influence the consumption habits of an on board guest, the risk of accidents on the water can be reduced through more subtle measures. By scheduling on water activities for earlier in the day or around times where guests are less likely to have been drinking you will be enhancing their safety whilst not being seen to be impinging on their fun.

Tuition or fun sessions?

Getting out on the water can be great fun and often with only a small amount of guidance a novice on a sit-on kayak may soon have a level of proficiency to enjoy themselves with limited supervision. However, putting a group of complete beginners into sailing dinghies and letting them work it out for themselves will often result in a frustrating first experience and may even put them off sailing forever.

A group of first time sailors will require relatively intense supervision if not one to one coaching in the early stages. Consider who will be supervising the rest of the group whilst this takes place.

Understanding the needs and experience of your group prior to their arrival on the bathing platform is key to the successful outcome of your session.

Personal Buoyancy

Ensuring the safety of your guests is of paramount importance. However, achieving this can sometimes be a challenging experience. Getting them to appreciate the importance of wearing personal buoyancy is the first step. Every guest must be instructed in the correct donning and use of an appropriate sized buoyancy aid or impact vest. Allowing them to decide whether to wear one or not is down to the requirements of the vessels safety management system. You should seek guidance from the captain or nominated senior officer to deviate from the prescribed requirements. All participants should be encouraged to wear a suitable buoyancy aid.

Yacht crew should lead by example. Convincing a guest to wear a buoyancy aid will be a much tougher job if they see crew participating in the same activity without one on.

For crew in the Safety Boat this is a buoyancy aid rather than a lifejacket as they should be ready to enter the water in the unlikely event this becomes necessary during a rescue.

Kill cords

All open power driven vessels such as personal watercraft or open power boats operated by crew or guests should be fitted with a functioning engine kill cord. The purpose of the kill cord is to stop the engine should the helmsman move from the normal operating position of the vessel either intentionally or by accident.

The kill cord should be inspected for damage, tested and a demonstration of how to correctly attach the kill cord should be given to each guest. On a PW the kill cord should be attached to a strong point on the user's impact vest. On a powerboat, the kill cord should be worn around the helm's leg and clipped back onto itself.

Weather limitations

Generally speaking common sense will dictate whether an activity can take place. However, inclement weather does not always mean that all activity must cease and some sessions may go ahead provided the participants are suitably experienced and equipped. Sending a group of novice sailors out on their first experience in excessive winds may not be either enjoyable or safe. When setting weather operating limits for activities, consideration should be given to wind direction, natural shelter, sea state and the level of experience of the group. It may be possible to run some activities in the lee of the mother ship.

Whilst away from the mother vessel ensure that a good supply of drinking water and sun protection is available for all.

Communications

Maintaining close communication with the OOW will ensure that those actively involved in supervision on the water can be kept up to date with unforeseen changes and domestic arrangements. This may take the form of a regular, brief “welfare check” by way of a radio call from the OOW. This will ensure that the on-water supervisor is not distracted by having to remember peripheral details not directly associated with the session. Carriage of a means of direct communication (such as a handheld VHF radio) by the on - water supervisor is essential, as is the need to ensure that someone on the bridge is assigned to maintain a listening watch on the agreed channel.

Emergency Action Plan

In exceptional circumstances it can become necessary to abandon an activity and to return everyone to the safety of the mother vessel. Usually this is due to a significant event such as a major trauma. In such cases it is vital that you have a well thought out and practiced procedure in place. A good emergency action plan should be understood by all and be capable of being initiated by every member of the crew. This may involve alerting the senior deck officer on watch who may take charge or it may involve delegating to the safety boat crew on the scene. Either way, having a pre-prepared plan in the event of an emergency and following it will ensure swift and effective evacuation of any casualties to safety. You should develop an emergency action plan taking into account all activities that you will undertake.

When operating in a new anchorage or port always consider any local anomalies that may impact upon the effectiveness of your predetermined plan and make all crew aware of any additional requirements that may exist.

Knowing about any underlying medical conditions or allergies suffered by the guests is of great importance. While this information may not be known to crew members it should be held in confidence on board the mother vessel and disclosed in the event of an emergency.

SAFETY BOAT

Whilst the safety boat can be used to fulfill a number of roles its primary function is to ensure the safety of all those participating in activities afloat and must therefore be available and capable of recovering all participants to a place of safety in a timely manner.

When selecting an appropriate safety boat consideration should be given to the following:

Capacity
The safety boat should be capable of carrying your whole group including any crew members without compromising its stability.

Maneuverability
When working within the confines of a crowded inshore environment it is essential that the safety boat can be operated effectively.

Stability and Freeboard
The safety boat should have a low enough freeboard that crew can assist guests from the water over the side or alternately over a swim platform or ladder. The boat should also be of a design that will remain stable whilst guests are being helped aboard. You may wish to give some consideration as to how an injured or unconscious casualty may be recovered on board the safety boat. Proprietary recovery devices such as Jason's Cradles may also be useful options.

Visibility
An important aspect of every safety boat is the ability to easily recover persons from the water. It is imperative that the person at the helm has full visibility of the person in the water at all times.

Number of safety boats
It may be necessary to deploy a number of safety boats to cover different activities. Perhaps one for paddleboards and another to accompany higher speed craft that may be ranging over a larger area.

Towed sports
In the case of all towed sports the towing craft can be considered to be the safety boat provided that it can recover all participants to safety. However it is not advisable to utilize a craft that is being used for towing activities to also be tasked as a safety boat for other activities at the same time. It is important to be aware that a boat set up for wakeboarding will, by definition, have reduced forward visibility as the boat is trimmed to generate wake. Trimmed in such a manner it would be a poor choice as a safety boat.

Crew numbers for a safety boat
This may only be determined by taking into consideration all of the above. However, you should be confident that the number of crew manning the safety boat is adequate for any likely situation that may arise. In the event that a boat is engaged in towing skiers or other towed toys it is absolutely essential that a second crew member is positioned in the boat to act as spotter and to notify the driver in the event of a fall or any other problems.

All safety boat crew should be briefed on the practice of cutting the engine once contact is made with a person on the water during a recovery maneuver.

Safety boat equipment
In addition to the standard equipment carried on board your vessel it is recommended that vessels engaged in safety boat duties carry the following items:

- Serrated Knife
- Bailer, bucket, sponge or pump
- Towing lines
- Towing bridle
- Spare shackles
- Boat hook
- First aid kit
- Spare kill cord
- Additional fuel (for stranded PWCs)
- Survival bag
- VHF Radio (fixed or handheld)

RYA Safety Boat and Tender Operators Courses
The two-day Safety Boat course provides the skills required when acting as an escort craft, safety boat or coach boat for a fleet of dinghies, windsurfers or canoes, or for racing or training activities.

Specific techniques include: Preparation, boat handling, dinghy rescue, windsurfer rescue, kayak or canoe rescue (can be covered as theory), towing, end-of-day procedures, safety, suitability of craft, local factors, communication, rescuing other water users.

Pre-course requirements are: Minimum age 16 plus a basic understanding of sailing boats and windsurfers. An RYA Powerboat Level 2 certificate must be held prior to attending this course.

The RYA Tender Operators course focuses on larger and more powerful craft with specific training in activities that will be commonly carried out by superyacht crew. Some of the subjects included in the course syllabus include night time pilotage, procedures for towing skiers and short - handed tender operations.

RYA Safety Boat and Tender Operators courses are run at recognised training centres around the world. Course providers can be found at www.rya.org.uk

Activity Specific Advice

Below is a basic list of considerations relating to specific activities.

Sailing Dinghies and Windsurfing

A suitable area may have other activities taking place, but should be free from unacceptable hazards such as submerged obstructions, ski boat lanes and traffic.

Match participants to craft that are appropriate to their level of skill.
Endeavour to provide basic tuition to all novice sailors, especially with regards to tacking and an awareness of the dangers of an inadvertent gibe.

If using harnesses ensure everyone concerned is aware of the dangers of entrapment. Brief safety boat crews accordingly.

Use masthead floatation to prevent inversion following capsize. This can take the form of an external inflatable or foam attachment or may be incorporated within the mast

Cover the procedures for what to do in the event of capsize.

Where possible, pair up novices with more experienced sailors.

Consider reefing the sails rather than over-powering boats in stronger winds.

Further guidance on dinghy sailing and windsurfing can be found at www.rya.org.uk

Personal Water Craft

The RYA recognises some super yachts to deliver a short introductory course to their guests. The training is run by an RYA qualified Personal Watercraft Instructor. Information about becoming recognized to deliver the Introduction to Personal Watercraft Safety course is available from www.rya.org.uk

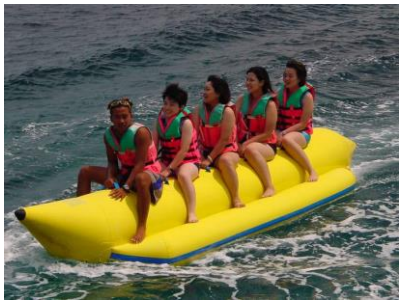
A suitable operating area should be large and free from other activities and obstructions with a large buffer zone separating it from other activities. Consideration should be given to wearing an impact resistant buoyancy aid. Always wear the kill cord when afloat. Ensure that it is fitted according to the manufacturers' recommendations. Keep a good look out.

Ensure that guests have an understanding of basic collision avoidance. You should also take the time to identify any local byelaws or harbor regulations with which operators of personal watercraft must comply.

Tall race marks should be used to mark an operating area. This provides focus for PW activities and also serves to contain the operating area, rather than expecting guests to remain within a set area.

Providing a challenge such as a slalom time-trial can help to reduce the number of PWs moving at any one time and often proves a fun way to handle supervised PW sessions.

Water skiing and towed inflatable toys



A suitable area would be large and free from other users and obstructions with a large buffer zone separating it from other activities.

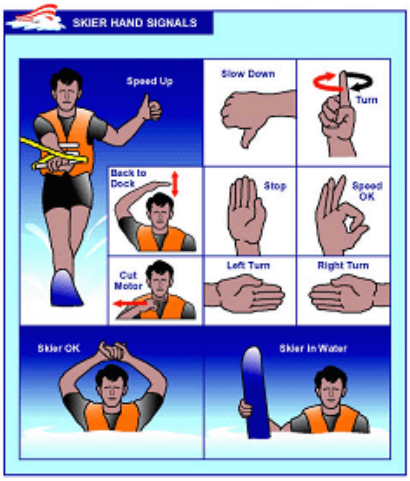
Wear appropriate clothing; consider a wetsuit and always wear personal buoyancy.

Always operate the towing boat with at least two people, one driver and one observer to watch whoever or whatever is being towed.

Do not accelerate unnecessarily violently and always maintain a safe speed that is comfortable for the skier.

When turning the boat always be aware of where the skier will end up.

Establish a method of visual communication using hand signals.



Kite boarding

A suitable area would be large and free from other users and obstructions with a large buffer zone separating it from other activities.

When Kite boarding is taking place ensure that all participants afloat are aware of the risks associated with the kite cords.

Always approach a kite from upwind to de-power it before attempting to get to the kite surfer.

Remember, for a novice, Kite boarding can be tiring, keep observing your participants and consider ending the session early if they are tiring.

A novice will spend a lot of time in the water so consideration to wearing a wetsuit should be given.

Canoes and Kayaks

A suitable training area need not be large or free from other activities but it should be within easy reach of either the shore or mother ship.

In the event of a capsize stay with the upturned craft.

Keep a good look out when supervising paddle craft. Remember that they are small and easy to lose sight of.

Sit-on-top kayaks are extremely stable, but participants are very exposed to the elements and consideration to sun exposure should be given.

Parascending

This should be considered an independent activity and run completely separately from other watersports sessions. Due to the nature of equipment and techniques required it is recommended that those wishing to run parascending sessions seek expert guidance from an appropriate National Governing Body.

Hover boarding

This should be considered an independent activity and run completely separately from other watersports sessions and well clear of other vessels. Due to the nature of the equipment and the techniques required it is recommended that those wishing to run hover boarding sessions seek expert advice.

Sub Aqua

All Sub Aqua activities should be run under the supervision of a qualified instructor or dive master accredited by one of the recognised governing bodies such as PADI or BSAC.

Sub Aqua activities should not be run as part of a general watersports session. Underwater activities are specialist in nature and require their own dedicated supervision.

Launch and Recovery

There is a huge range of launch and recovery equipment in use across the industry. Regardless of the simplicity or complexity of the hoists, winches or lifts on board your vessel it is important that appropriate procedures for the launch and recovery of tenders and other on board toys are developed for your specific operation and that all crew are properly trained in those procedures.

Equipment and Maintenance

Equipment, whether craft being used for watersports activities or safety equipment in support of those activities should be fit for purpose and selected with the planned activities in mind.

Equipment used for watersports activities may not form part of the regular operation of the yacht itself and care must be taken not to overlook their care and maintenance. Craft used for safety cover should receive the regular programmed maintenance they deserve. Engines should be reliable and the craft itself should be free of sharp edges and hazards. Where possible ensure that a specific crew member is assigned ownership of maintenance duties and that regular checks of the serviceability of equipment take place.

Protecting the Environment

Crew and guests should be provided with guidance on relevant environmental factors. Ensuring rubbish is removed from picnic spots ashore and that guest are briefed not to throw rubbish overboard are simple ways of protecting the beautiful locations they will be visiting.

Interaction with wildlife should follow a common sense approach as a minimum. In some locations there are strict laws in place requiring minimum distances be maintained between craft and wildlife such as whales and dolphons.

Recommended Reading

The following RYA publications provide detailed guidance and practical tips to aid you in the execution of your watersports sessions.

G16 RYA Safety Boat Handbook
G13 RYA Powerboat Handbook
G19 RYA Power Schemes Instructor Handbook
G14 RYA Sailing Instructors Handbook
W33 RYA Windsurfing Instructor Manual
G35 RYA Introduction to Personal Watercraft
G3 RYA Start Sailing
G49 RYA Start Windsurfing

RYA publications are available in both paper and eBook format visit
www.rya.org.uk/shop

Other Bodies for Activity Specific Guidance

SCUBA Diving

- PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors)
- BSAC (British Sub Aqua Club)

Canoeing and Kayaking

- British Canoeing

Water Skiing and Wakeboarding

- BWSW (British Waterski and Wakeboard)

Kiteboarding

- IKA (International Kiteboarding Association)

The Environment

- The Green Blue (http://thegreenblue.org.uk/)