



ROYAL NEW ZEALAND YACHT SQUADRON

Commodore
Ian Cook (Ranger)

Vice Commodore
Aaron Young (Checkmate)

Rear Commodore
Andrew Aitken (Margaritaville)

Dear Skippers,

As the Safety Officer for the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, I would like to bring your attention to a few safety aspects relating to recent incidents during club racing.

The single biggest risk to safety at the RNZYS, needless to say, is the unfortunate event of a drowning or a serious injury while racing in a club event.

This is a very real risk and has happened numerous times at other yacht clubs internationally. The RNZYS experiences, on average, in excess of five man overboard situations every year. In the past year, two of these have resulted in the rescue helicopter being called.

There are a few very simple measures that can and should be taken to dramatically decrease this risk

1. Wear a life jacket when appropriate. I would suggest that this becomes a practice whenever wearing wet weather gear. If you have ever tried to swim in wet weather gear you will quickly understand why. It is important to note that the safety of the crew is the skipper's responsibility, while the RNZYS race management policy is to fly the Y flag (making it compulsory for everyone to be wearing a life jacket) in wind over 22 knots average, by no means does this mean you should only be wearing it then. Be responsible and wear a life jacket when appropriate.
2. Have a VHF on the correct channel (17 for Harbour racing & 77 for Commodores Cup) on deck at all times. As a safety requirement, we ask that all boats maintain a listening watch on VHF Radio channel 17 or 77 as indicated in the SSIs, and channel 16. This is not primarily for contacting the Race committee. The primary reason for this is if there are any issues on the racecourse your best option to receive immediate assistance, is from your closest competitor, and for this to happen you need to be listening to the radio on the right channel. Emergency communication must be made on channel 16.
3. Un-cleat the mainsheet and boom vang before attempting to dip another boat. This seems very simple, but this is the one reoccurring cause of major collisions.
4. Keep an active lookout, even if you are the right of way boat

We all need to take responsibility for our own safety on the water.

Regards,

Richard Wingfield - Safety Officer, Flag Officers & Sailing Director

Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron