

**MAN OVERBOARD
PROCEDURES
FOR
PLEASURE CRAFT**



**SAFETY
ON THE
SEA**



Lifeboats

Royal National Lifeboat Institution



Foreword

This booklet has been produced by the RNLI's Sea Safety Liaison Working Group which has representation from the following organisations and agencies:-

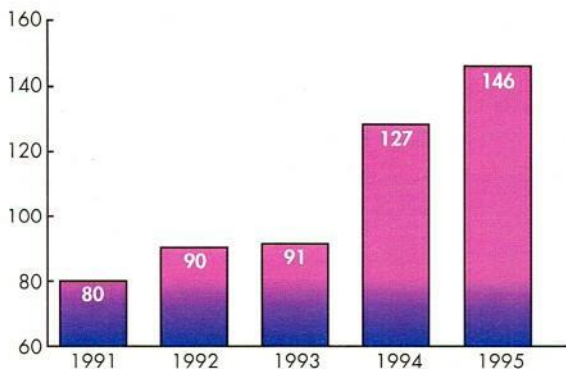
British Marine Industries Federation (BMIF)	Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK)
Coastguard Agency (COASTGUARD)	Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)
Marine Safety Agency (MSA)	Royal Yachting Association (RYA)

The purpose of the booklet is to provide basic guidance on preventing and, if necessary, dealing with man overboard situations. The intention is to cover the principles so that readers can develop them for use aboard their own boats where equipment and circumstances will differ.

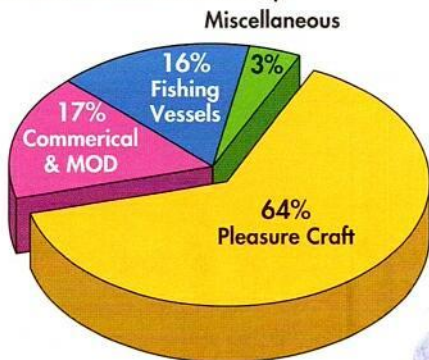
Further copies are available from any of the organisations/agencies mentioned above. See back page for addresses and telephone numbers.

THE STATISTICS

Man Overboard - An Increasing Problem!



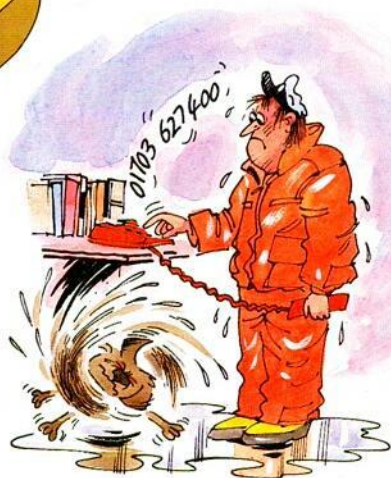
All launches to Man Overboard incidents. (Based on RNLI statistics).



Don't become one of these statistics!

Learn the basics - Your life may depend on it! The **RYA** run courses for yachtsmen which include Man Overboard procedures.

01703 627400



PREVENTION



- Guardrails should be continuous around the upper deck. The ends should be secured with lashings or quick release slips so that you can cut or release them to recover a person from the water.
- Treat any slippery areas with either non-skid paint or stick-on strips. Pay particular attention to the tops of hatches and sloping coachroof sides which become walkways when the boat is heeled.
- Use harnesses in rough weather and at night. Make sure they are adjusted to a tight fit or you can fall out of them.
- Fit suitably placed harness attachment points close to the companionway so that you can clip on before coming on deck and on both sides of the cockpit. Rig jackstays on both sides of the boat so that you can walk the full length of the deck without having to unclip. Flat webbing straps are in some ways better than wire because wire tends to roll underfoot when you stand on it.

- Wear suitable protective clothing and a lifejacket preferably fitted with retro reflective tape and a light.

Remember that if you do go over the side, at night or in bad weather, there is a high probability that you will not be recovered.

- Have the necessary safety equipment to hand so it is ready for immediate use:

Horseshoe lifebuoy – fitted with:

- **A drogue** to prevent drifting.
- **An automatic light** – a continuous beam is considered most effective.
- **A danbuoy** – fitted with a flag 2 metres clear of the water which assists in marking the position of the lifebuoy.

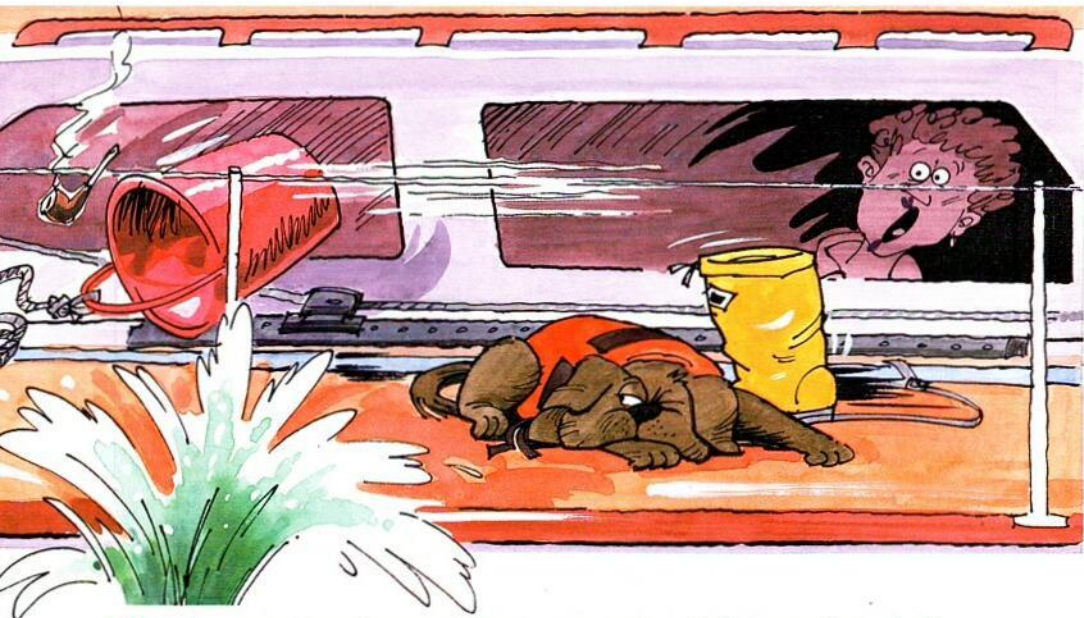
A buoyant heaving line may be necessary in heavy seas if it is difficult to come alongside the person in the water.

- Practise Man Overboard Drill regularly – This can be achieved by using a fender and bucket as your casualty.

Practice Makes Perfect!



ACTION



- When you first discover that someone has fallen overboard, the most important thing to remember is **Don't Panic!**
- If the person overboard is on a lifeline, stop the boat immediately and then recover them using the lifeline/harness as necessary.
- If you are well prepared and have practised the drill regularly, you will automatically know how to react.

Check List

- Immediately throw a lifebuoy and attachments overboard.
- Raise the alarm by shouting: **"Man Overboard!"** (Even if you are the only one left aboard, shouting "Man Overboard" may provide reassurance to the person in the water).
- If there are others on board, instruct a crew member to watch the person in the water and point continuously.



- Start your recovery manoeuvre. You may have to lower your sails and start your engine – Beware of loose sheets fouling the propeller.
- If possible note your position – most nav aids have a MOB function – it may prove vital if contact is lost with the person in the water. **Remember** the MOB function records where the person fell overboard – he/she will drift away with the tide.
- If you are the only person remaining on board, do not leave the deck as you may become disorientated and lose sight of the person in the water.
- During the hours of darkness, a white parachute flare, which will pick up the retro reflective tape on clothing/lifejacket, can be used to illuminate the area.
- If you cannot see the person in the water, or you have any doubt about your ability to recover him/her, send a Mayday call on your VHF radio.

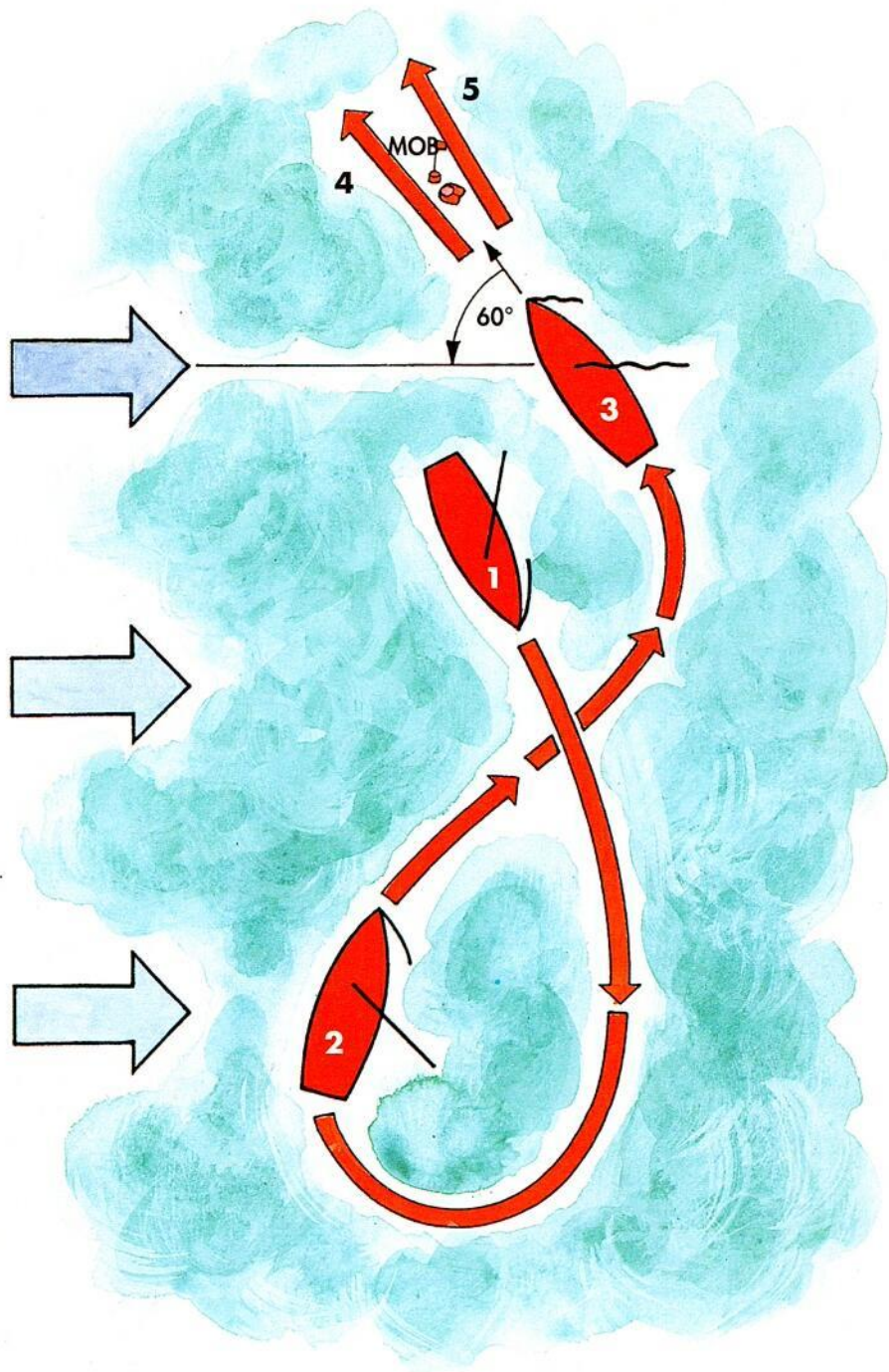
ACTION - SAILING BOATS

WITHOUT AN ENGINE

A simple way to make the recovery is to :

1. Put boat onto an "apparent" beam reach (breeze across the boat). Allow yourself some sea room to manoeuvre and get yourself organised to recover the person from the water.
2. Tack and sail on the opposite beam reach (person in water now on weather bow).
3. Approach on a close reach easing the sheets in the final stages. Leeway will increase as you slow down - allow for this.
4. In a larger boat it is easier to come alongside to windward of the person in the water and make the recovery over the leeward side.
5. In a dinghy, come alongside to leeward of the person in the water and make the recovery by the weather shroud.





ACTION - SAILING BOATS

ACTION - SAILING BOATS

WITH AN ENGINE

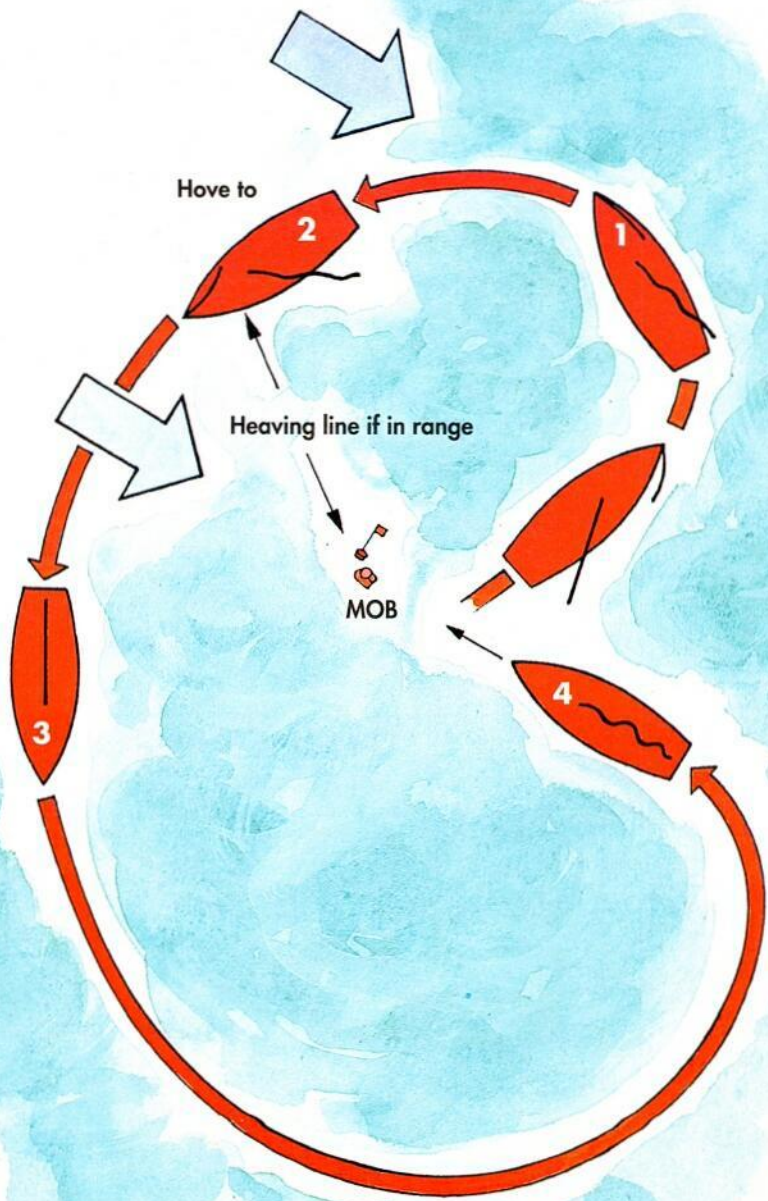
To stay as close to the person in the water as possible:

1. Come up to wind and tack, leaving headsail cleated so that boat stops hove to.
2. Throw a heaving line to the person in the water, if in range and haul alongside.
3. If not within heaving line range:
 - start the engine
 - lower or furl the headsail
 - sheet the main sail amidships.

Ensure there are no lines or sheets lying loose on deck or overside that could foul the propeller.

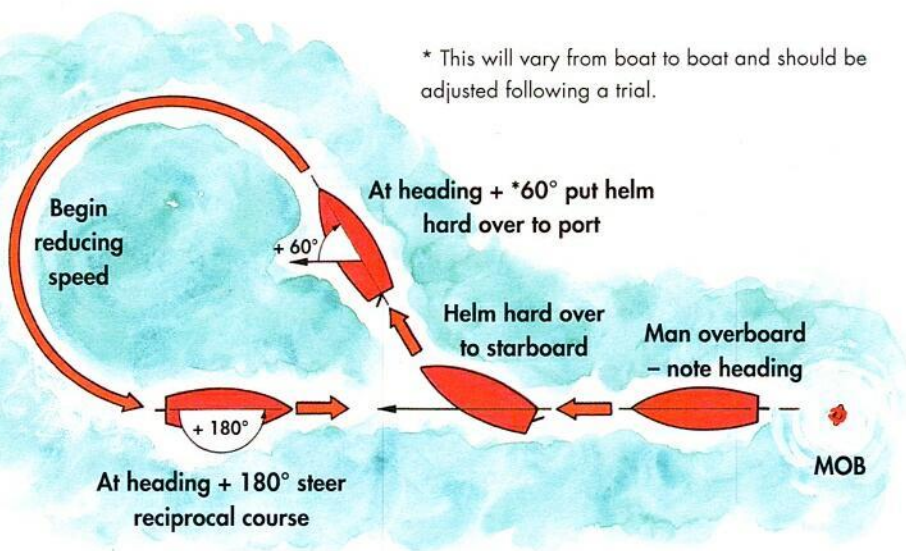
4. Motor to leeward of the person in the water and approach him/her head to wind.





ACTION - POWER BOATS

- If you can see the person in the water clearly, a simple 180° turn is quickest.
- If you lose sight of the casualty, due to poor visibility, or heavy weather and sea state, the 'Williamson Turn' is a good way to get on to a reciprocal course which will take you back down your track:



Put the helm hard over to starboard and add *60° to your course. When the compass is on the new heading, put the helm hard over to port. When the compass is reading the course + 180°, steer a reciprocal course and the casualty should be ahead of you.

- In heavy weather the reciprocal course may bring the sea astern, in which case a short approach head to sea may be more appropriate once the turn has been completed.

- Do not waste time while the boat is turning to approach the person in the water - prepare for the recovery as it is too late when they are alongside.
 - Which side will you approach?
 - Have a heaving line ready
 - Wear a life jacket and lifeline; if you don't, you may get pulled on top of the person in the water
- The initial approach to the person in the water will vary depending on weather/sea conditions and the type of boat. Let the weather help rather than hinder - stop upwind and drift down.
- If you are concerned about drifting onto the person in the water, bring your stern into the wind. If you're not confident with your boat handling skills, or if it looks likely that the boat could come down on top of the person in the water, throw them the heaving line and pull them alongside to a safe place for recovery.
- **Ensure the propeller is not turning when you are alongside the person in the water.**

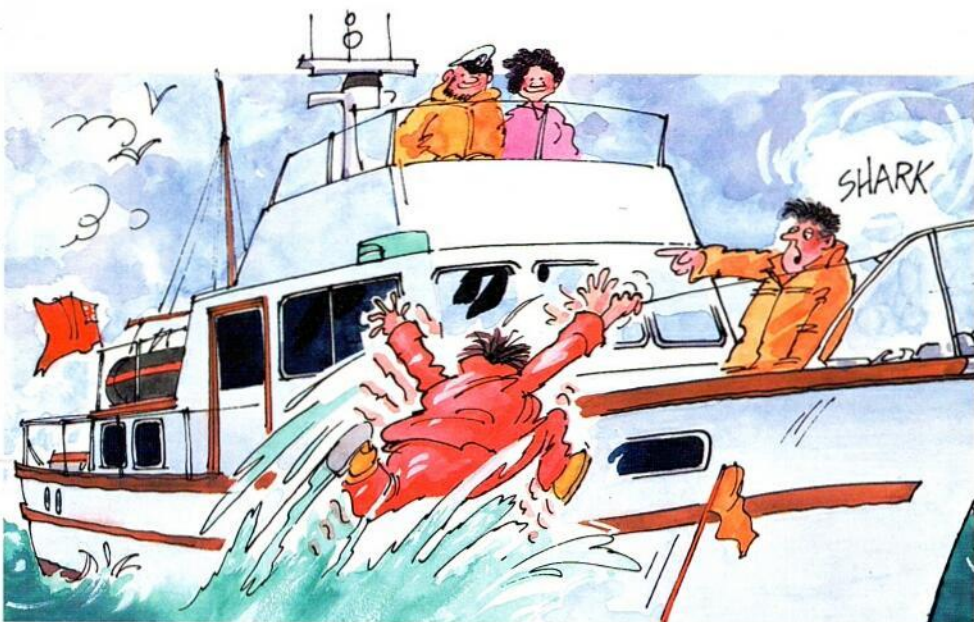


IN THE WATER



- Look for the lifebuoy which may be close by. Remain calm, keep your legs close together and restrict your movements to stop flushing cold water under your clothing.
- What ever your situation conserve your body heat – the greatest threat to your survival is from the cold. **Remember** in UK waters during the winter your ability to assist in your rescue will be greatly diminished after ten to fifteen minutes.
- In rough conditions, turn your back to the waves to keep your mouth and nose clear of spray.
- Tighten up wrist, ankle and neck fastenings of protective clothing to reduce heat loss and the onset of hypothermia. Do not attempt to swim back to the boat for the same reasons.
- If you are not wearing protective clothing or any of the safety equipment advised in this booklet - **Good Luck, you'll need it !!**

RECOVERY



- Getting the person aboard can be difficult. If you have a bathing platform or boarding ladder and the person in the water is able to help themselves, use it if it is safe to do so. If they are unconscious or exhausted, a form of lifting gear will need to be improvised.
- A short strop used in conjunction with a block and tackle rigged on the end of a halyard (sailing vessel) or attached to a suitable strong securing point on the wheel house (powerboat) would make it easier for a heavy casualty to be brought on board.
- A parbuckle can be improvised by using ropes, nets or a small sail, and then rolling the person out of the water.
- A dinghy provides another option for recovery, perhaps by partially deflating one section of the sponson tube to make it easier to get them on board.
- Prevention is **better** than cure. Ensure that all the actions and safety precautions to prevent a person overboard have been taken and practise drills regularly in all weathers and sea conditions – **You could save someone's life.**

WHO WE ARE:

BMIF

British Marine Industries Federation
Meadlake Place, Thorpe Lea Road
Egham, Surrey
TW20 8HE
Tel: 01784 473377

COASTGUARD

The Coastguard Agency
Spring Place, 105 Commercial Road
Southampton, Hampshire
SO15 1EG
Tel: 01703 329100

MSA

Marine Safety Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton, Hampshire
SO15 1EG
Tel: 01703 329100

RLSS (UK)

The Royal Life Saving Society UK
Mountbatten House
Studley, Warwickshire
B80 7NN
Tel: 01527 853943
Registered Charity No. 279782

RNLI

Royal National Lifeboat Institution
West Quay Road
Poole, Dorset
BH15 1HZ
Tel: 01202 663000
Registered Charity No. 209603

RYA

Royal Yachting Association
RYA House, Romsey Road
Eastleigh, Hampshire SO50 9YA
Tel: 01703 627400

WHAT WE DO:

We are the trade federation for the UK marine industry. Our primary objective is to represent members' interests. We are equally committed to ensuring that the growth of boating and water-based leisure is achieved through a harmonious relationship with the environment.

Our aim is to minimise loss of life at sea and on the coasts of the UK, and to minimise pollution from ships to the seas and coastline of the UK. We coordinate search and rescue.

We are the Government body responsible for marine safety. Our aim is to develop, promote and, if necessary, enforce high standards of marine safety and to minimise the risk of pollution of the marine environment from ships.

Our aim is to prevent loss of life through drowning and asphyxiation, and we are the principal provider of lifeguard training throughout the UK.

We exist to preserve life from disaster at sea. This is achieved by providing a fleet of lifeboats, with 24 hour cover, and crewed by well-trained volunteers. In addition, we work with other national organisations to promote sea safety. We are funded entirely by voluntary contributions.

We are the governing body representing sailing, windsurfing and motorboating in the UK. We offer a wide range of benefits and advice plus full training courses for all types of recreational craft.