

NLGYC Patrol Guidelines

Patrol Duty is a wonderful way to spend a morning watching sailboat racing with great friends on one of the most beautiful lakes in the country. It is also vital to the safety of our sailors and success of our programs. Some of the sailors have been trained in boat rescue (most of the kids have had training in classes), but a successful rescue is equally dependent on the knowledge and effectiveness of both the sailors and the rescue patrol.

We recognize that both new members and experienced sailors may have questions regarding these guidelines. Since our patrols are critical to the safety of our sailors in an emergency, it is crucial that everyone understand the best procedures before the emergency unfolds. When the wind is howling, the lake is heaving, and a mast is broken or a sailor is injured, there is no time to figure out how to best approach a sailboat or whether or not you have the equipment you need to help. **Please ask your questions now.** You may contact Barbara Rottier at barottier@gmail.com, or Donna Wotton at dwotton@unconventional.com with any questions.

Your time and efforts patrolling are greatly appreciated. The following guidelines will help you be prepared and equipped to execute an effective rescue.

THE PATROL BOAT and PERSONNEL

The patrol boat must have enough horsepower to tow a disabled or swamped sailboat in heavy wind and rough water. **The boat must have a driver and at least one other able-bodied person**, and in addition, must be able to safely carry three sailors.

The patrol boat must be equipped with at least extra life jackets, 30 feet of towrope, a paddle, a bail bucket, a first aid kit, and an anchor.

RADIO USE

Each patrol boat must report to the NLGYC dock to pick up a radio ½ hour prior to the start of their fleet. Radios can be found in the bag hanging on the overhead sign support on the yacht club dock.

The radio should be set to channel 68 and the volume adjusted to a level that can be heard over the noise of the wind and your boat engine. The squelch should be tuned about ½ turn (with no static). The button on the front should be switched to "ALL" so that you will hear communications between all other patrols and the RC Boat (and perhaps an occasional fishing boat using the same channel).

Check to see if the radio is working by contacting the Race Committee (RC). To speak, press the button on the side of the radio and speak into the face of the radio with the button still depressed. Release the button to listen. This will also serve to report your presence to the RC.

At the end of the race, return the radio to the radio bag on the dock for recharging.

FLEET PATROL RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) **Stay with your assigned fleet.** Though another race may be of more interest to you, if a boat in your fleet is in distress, immediate rescue may be critical, especially if someone is hurt. However, note items 2 & 3, below.
- 2) **If you are required to rescue a boat, radio the RC immediately to notify the race captain of the situation.** Other patrols should hear the transmission and should be available to monitor the rest of your fleet. If there is one boat capsized, the chances are good that another might also capsize or break down, and someone else will need to respond.
- 3) **When leaving the course with a rescue, radio the RC with the number of boats left in your fleet so that another patrol can keep track.** As soon as you have completed your rescue (which may involve towing the boat to the Club and securing the boat and crew), return to the race course if any boats in your fleet remain on the water. Radio the RC that you have returned.

THE RESCUE

PRIORITY OF RESCUE

- 1) **The first priority is to ensure the safety of the sailors.** The rescuers should first determine if the sailors are injured or ill, and whether they need immediate first aid or transport to the Club for medical assistance. Otherwise, if the sailors are able, **they should have their life jackets on**, and be in the water helping with the rescue. **At no time should the sailors leave their boat to swim after gear.**
- 2) The second priority is the retrieval of property and the sailboat itself.
- 3) The third priority is to keep the distressed boat and the patrol boat from becoming an obstruction to other sailboats and motor boats.
- 4) The fourth priority is to complete an efficient rescue so that the patrol boat can return to the race course to support other boats.

RACE DISQUALIFICATION

Once a racing yacht accepts assistance of any kind, it is disqualified from the race. Self-righting boats like Lasers, FJs and Thistles will usually rescue themselves and continue the race. **Before assisting a boat, including retrieval of gear, establish that the boat is ready to retire from the race.** Obviously, this inquiry is of secondary concern if the safety of the sailors is at stake.

PATROL BOAT POSITIONING

- 1) Approach from behind and downwind of the distressed boat. The distressed boat should attempt to point its bow into the wind to make rescue easier and to allow the patrol boat to come parallel. This position allows the boats to drift downwind side by side instead of into each other. **Always keep your engine AWAY from the distressed boat.** Never allow a person in the water to get between the two boats.
- 2) While approaching, locate the mast and sailors, and stay clear. (The mast may be in the water if the boat has capsized or become de-masted.)
- 3) Look around to see if there is shallow water or if other boats present an immediate problem. Keep in mind that you may drift two or three hundred yards before the rescue is complete.

- 4) Locate any floating equipment that may need to be retrieved, making sure that the patrol boat's motor is kept far away from anyone in the water. Note that retrieving equipment is not the highest priority, but should be done first if the boat and sailors are otherwise in a safe position as retrieval is difficult once the sailboat is under tow. **As soon as you retrieve equipment and RETURN IT to the boat, that boat is disqualified.** You may retrieve the equipment and return it after the race without disqualifying the sailors.

RIGHTING A CAPSIZED OR TURTLED SAILBOAT

- 1) **All sailors and RESCUERS in the water should be wearing a life jacket at all times** as fatigue is a real and serious danger.
- 2) **Swim the boat around until the bow is facing into the wind.** Usually the crew will do this, but in some cases, one of the rescuers may have to assist.
- 3) **Release any cleated sheets (main, jib, and spinnaker sheets, boom vang) to prevent sails from filling with wind and tipping the boat over again.** The sails should be lowered into the boat before righting, but don't attempt to unrig the boat (i.e. do not disconnect halyards, outhauls or downhauls). The sails must then be further secured to the boat to help center the weight and stabilize the boat.
- 4) **Right the capsized boat** by climbing on the centerboard holding the edge of the boat (where the side of the boat meets the deck). Then lean back until the boat is upright. While one or two people are working to upright the boat, another swimmer should keep the bow headed directly into the wind.
- 5) If the boat is "turtled" (bottom up, mast straight down), it may require someone to go under the boat to push the centerboard up (while someone above catches and holds it) in order to have leverage to right the boat. It takes much more effort to right the boat from a "turtled" position, as the sail will resist the effort to rotate up through the water column. Be sure that the mainsheet is uncleated so that the sail can swing freely. The sail will come up slowly, once it starts moving. Also, the hull may form a seal with the water, causing suction that makes righting the boat more difficult. To break the seal, open the bottom or transom bailers and/or push the bow down and the stern may come up to break the seal.

HAZARDS

- 1) If shallow water is close, do not attempt to right the boat. Rather, first move upwind staying well away from the mast and sails, then throw a line. The line should be fastened to the mast and threaded through something on the bow to keep the bow forward and high in the water.
- 2) Tow the boat slowly upwind to deeper water, accounting for the distance that the boats will drift again during the rescue.

TOWING A SAILBOAT

Once the sails are lowered and equipment secured, the tow lines can be attached.

- 1) The best method is to **attach the towline to the mast of the sailboat at the deck level.** The line should pass through a chock, shackle, between multiple forestays, or even wrapped once around the headstay (keeping the line from the mast to the headstay taught so the weight of towing will remain on the mast). Feeding the line through something that secures it to the bow will ensure the boat is towed bow forward rather than sideways.
- 2) Take extra care to **keep the tow line clear of the patrol boat motor.**

- 3) **Make sure the centerboard is down.** This will create stability during towing to prevent the boat from capsizing under tow.
- 4) If a boat is totally swamped or unstable, **one or two people should position themselves over the transom, facing the front of the sailboat with both hands on the transom.** This enables them to use their weight to push the stern of the boat down into the water, helping to lift the bow. Begin to pull the boat upwind. Once the boat is under tow, the people on the back can balance boat and water will also start to drain over the transom.
- 5) As some of the water is spilled out and the boat becomes more buoyant, the crew can carefully climb back into the boat over the stern, still taking care to keep the boat balanced. They can now pull up the centerboard part way and should use the tiller to steer the boat directly behind the patrol boat.
- 6) **The swamped or disabled boat should be towed at a moderate speed.** Do not plane, as this puts undue stress on both boats and may also make it difficult for the crew to keep the sailboat upright.

OTHER DISTRESS

Although capsizing is the major patrolling issue, other problems may occur that are often more serious. Collisions and broken masts (particularly in the star) can cause serious injury. Get to these boats quickly (but safely) to determine if any of the sailors are injured.

- 1) Injured sailors may need to be pulled from the boat and rushed to emergency treatment. If an ambulance is required, radio the RC, which will alert the sheriff's patrol and advise emergency services to meet you at the club.
- 2) In the case of breakdowns, sails and rigging need to be secured in the boat. The patrol boat should approach from behind and downwind of the sailboat, and the towline secured. Often, a slow tow can stabilize a disabled yacht while the crew is securing the rigging.

FLEET SPECIFICS

- 1) STARS: It is extremely rare that a star boat would capsize. The keel prevents a star from capsizing, and floatation should keep the boat from sinking. It is more likely that a star will have equipment breakdowns. As you tow a star, the backstays must be secured aft, the sails taken down, and the main and jib sheets secured.
- 2) N10s (TURNABOUTS): It is unlikely that this boat with its young crew, when capsized, can be righted and bailed well enough to continue the race. A capsized boat will need assistance and a tow. Be prepared to reassure young sailors and remind them of their responsibility to secure their own boat.
- 3) LASERS: Unless the sailor is disabled in some way, a capsized laser should be a momentary event as the boat is readily righted and can continue on its way without assistance. A patrol boat should approach a capsized laser to determine if the sailor is injured or wants assistance, and if not, should stay nearby until the boat is underway.
- 4) OPTIs, FLYING JUNIORS AND THISTLES: These boats may or may not need assistance as they float high enough to be righted with little water in the boat or they have transom flaps that allow water to be drained. A patrol boat should approach a capsized laser to determine if the sailor is injured or wants assistance, and if not, should stay nearby until the boat is underway.