

Safety Boat Briefing Fundamentals

Before we do a briefing, we should consider why we are doing it and what our responsibilities are.

Our aim

Our aim is to ensure that fellow members can enjoy their sailing, knowing that we have done our best to provide them with safety cover which is **appropriate for the expected conditions**.

We can achieve this by:

- 1 Knowing what weather is expected
- 2 Using our knowledge and experience to decide which boats are required and how skilful the crew/s need to be
- 3 Carefully assessing the abilities of the crews who are available
- 4 Providing advice in areas where they may be weak
- 5 Reminding crews of their responsibilities and authority:
 - Attend every capsized within three minutes
 - Care for people before property
 - Remove anyone from the water who is clearly unable to cope with the conditions
- 6 If we think safety might be compromised by the ability of the safety crews or the availability of boats and equipment or the severity of the weather, telling the OOD that he could:
 - try to find more experienced crews from among the members present; or
 - consider putting out more safety boats; or
 - restrict the sailing area.
- 7 If safety cover is still less than we consider adequate:
 - reminding the OOD that he must tell sailors that safety cover is inadequate and it is their individual decision whether or not to sail, and record in the log that he has done so.
- 8 Recording in the OOD's log all advice given to the OOD and all decisions taken. The OOD should record his own actions.

The Boats

The 4m RIBs with 30HP engines are capable, **in experienced hands**, of operating in most conditions likely to be experienced at Weir Wood. The two 3.5m Avons (15 and 20HP) are capable, **in experienced hands**, of operating in up to F6 winds. When these are along the main axis of the reservoir, ie. SW or NE, the wave size is likely to be dangerous for such short and light boats with limited power. As **support** boats in these conditions, they are almost useless.

As Support Boats in less experienced hands, the **maximum** safe operating limit of the Avons should be regarded as **F4**, and that of the larger boats, **F6**. Make sure you don't expect too much of crews who may not have used a powerboat in the last year, and only then, in calm conditions.

If these conditions or worse are likely to occur during the day, you should seriously consider the various options presented in section 6 above. Keep in mind the fact that the wind is rarely constant and stronger gusts are likely. Everyone will capsize at the same time, so safety boat placement becomes important.

As the windspeed increases, so does the risk of capsize and boat damage. Don't forget that support boats also become more difficult to control, and visibility may be reduced.

In more severe conditions, the towing lines provided on the boats are far too short. Longer ropes should be available in the garages. Make sure they are in the support boats, not in the garages!

Radios

Communication between support boats and between support boat and shore is vital. **A support boat without a radio is not a support boat**, it's just another boat on the water.

Clothing

Quite a lot of support boat crews turn up in waterproofs and yachting boots (posh name for wellies). This is completely inadequate for a winter duty in any but the calmest conditions. If you encounter this, apply paragraphs 6 and 7 above and record your advice to the OOD in his log.

And finally....

The OOD has overall responsibility for what happens on the water. Your role as briefer is to advise him and **to record that advice in the log**.