



27 September 2020

Marine Rescue

On Sunday September 29 shortly after 1:00pm, members of the Hamilton Police Marine Unit responded to a mayday call in Lake Ontario approximately 4km south of the Burlington Ship Canal. A 29 year old female and 34 year old male were on a 16' catamaran when the male fell overboard. During manoevers to recover the man overboard, the catamaran capsized and the female lost sight of her companion.

Search and rescue efforts were coordinated by Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Trenton, and involved Hamilton Police Marine Unit, Halton Regional Police Marine Unit, and several Auxiliary Units of the Canadian Coast Guard. As a result of this search the male party was located 1.5 miles off shore by members of the Hamilton Police Marine Unit. The male had some signs of mild hypothermia but was not injured, after spending 1 hour in the 18°C water. Both the male and female were brought to shore and assessed by paramedics.

Both persons were wearing personal flotation devices (PFDs) as well as wet suits, and the female was able to call for help using a marine VHF radio she had attached to her PFD. The wearing of PFDs and the effective use of a VHF radio were instrumental in preventing this incident from turning tragic.

Hamilton Police thank all involved agencies for their assistance with this successful rescue.

Learnings:

- 1) Check Your Gear:** Trapeze shackle pin fell out while Skipper was on trapeze resulting in Skipper falling overboard
- 2) Always wear a PFD and wetsuit:** Prevented incident from becoming tragic
- 3) Always carry a water-proof VHF radio:** Recommend that both Skipper and Crew maintain their own radio tethered to their PDF. By maintaining their own radio they could have communicated with each other and confirmed both were okay and help direct Rescue Unit.

Focus on the Sail

Late September 2019

A Club Member had planned a solo long-distance sail from Mississauga to Burlington to bring his Hobie 16 back to the Club. Winds were modest and he had his new cell phone with him in a waterproof pouch for communication purposes. He was almost halfway to Burlington when he noticed he had missed a call from his wife who was planning to meet him in Burlington. He decided to return the call and began to retrieve the phone. During the process he turned abruptly causing the boat to capsize and his untether cell phone (water proof bag included) fell into the lake. He attempted to right the catamaran with the righting line; however, was unsuccessful. Fortunately, he had secured a righting bag under the tramp which allowed him to gain sufficient ballast to right the boat. Once righted he elected to sail back to the original starting point and pick his boat up using a trailer at a later date. A costly sail, given he needed to replace his lost cell phone.

- Learnings:**
- 1) Carry a water-proof VHF Radio tethered to your PFD:** Cell phones are not designed for marine use.
 - 2) Always tether your communication devise to yourself:** Ensures you will have access to it if needed.
 - 3) Focus on the sailing:** “Stuff” happens quickly on a Cat
 - 4) Ensure you have the skills and tools to “right” your catamaran by yourself:** Righting Bag prevented incident from potentially becoming tragic

Several boats capsize in Lake Ontario off Burlington

Mon., June 6, 2016

BURLINGTON — Halton Police say all passengers were accounted for after a sudden wind Sunday afternoon capsized four catamarans near Spencer Smith Park in Lake Ontario.

The catamarans were 500 to 600 metres offshore at 2:40 p.m. when they overturned throwing at least four people in the water who were all wearing life jackets.

Halton, Hamilton and Peel Police marine units as well as the volunteer rescue group TOWARF, the Burlington Fire Department and Hamilton Beach Rescue responded. Halton Police Staff Sgt. Gerard Kelly said three people were plucked from the water with a fourth person making it to shore by swimming.

"As it stands now everyone is accounted for and there were no real injuries in regard to this," he said. Police learned of the incident after receiving numerous calls from people onshore who saw the boats overturn.

"A quick storm came through south Burlington with high winds and we were told at least four catamarans went over on their sides," said Kelly. As of 4:30 p.m. Sunday "two of the boats had been righted and they are trying to right the other two."

The winds also put an early end to the Appleby Line Street Festival. Gusting winds lifted tents and blew bouncy castles into nearby trees. The City of Burlington confirmed that the festival was closed about an hour earlier than usual due to safety concerns. Burlington Hydro also responded to the area due to the reports of power outages.

- Learnings:**
- 1) Always wear a PFD and Wet Suit/Dry Suit when sailing:** Prevented incident from becoming tragic
 - 2) Tether a water-proof VHF radio to your PDF and set VHF Radio to Dual Watch mode:** Permits you to monitor both Club channel (71) and Emergency channel (16)
 - 3) Carry Swimming Aid Gloves (webbed fingers) in PFD pocket:** Can assist if swimming is required.

Man Lucky To Be Alive After Sailing Accident Off Burlington Beach

Posted Jul 3, 2008, 12:00PM EDT.

An amateur sailor is lucky to be alive after his vessel capsized in rough waters off Burlington Beach this week.

Sebastian Wasikiewicz was pulled from the cold and choppy waters of Lake Ontario semi-conscious Wednesday evening after his catamaran tipped over as he sailed back from the Hamilton Beach, police said. **(Mr Wasikiewicz was not a BBCC Member)**

The 34-year-old, with less than two years sailing experience, made the solo journey on his boat from Burlington to Hamilton to meet his family for lunch. After he met with his wife, kids and mother he decided to make the trek back home around 5pm, despite the fact there was a small craft advisory in effect.

Wasikiewicz's wife became worried when she saw his boat capsize twice as he sailed along the Hamilton Beach, even though he managed to right his vessel. Instead of going home, as the family had originally planned, she decided to head to Burlington Beach to make sure her spouse returned safely.

When she arrived she spotted her husband's vessel in the distance and once again, saw it capsize. After she noticed the boat drifting farther and farther out into the lake and into the path of shipping boats she called 911.

The joint Halton and Hamilton Police Marine Unit found the man semi-conscious in the water and in the path of an oncoming tugboat pushing a barge. Rescuers pulled him to safety and immediately treated him for severe hypothermia. He'd been bobbing in 6C water for 45 minutes. He was taken to hospital and released later that night.

Police say the fact that the man's wife spotted him from the shore, that he was wearing a life-preserver and that he was tied to his boat probably saved his life.

- Learnings:**
- 1) Always wear a PFD:** Prevented incident from becoming tragic
 - 2) Wear appropriate clothing:** Mr Wasikiewicz was sailing in bathing suit & tshirt
 - 3) Stay with your boat:** Tether yourself to your boat if necessary
 - 4) Do Not Sail beyond your capabilities:** Novice sailor in high wind conditions
 - 5) Always carry a water-proof VHF Radio when sailing tethered to your PFD:**
Would have significantly assisted the situation.

Alun and Morgan Phillips rescued after hours clinging to capsized boat in Lake Ontario

August 28, 2014

With a couple of soggy \$20 bills in his pocket, all Alun Phillips wanted was a floating Tim Hortons to buy his daughter dinner as they clung shivering to their capsized boat in Lake Ontario Tuesday night.

He and his daughter Morgan had been in there for close to six hours, after a routine afternoon boat trip went sour and his 18-foot catamaran sailboat capsized off Stoney Creek. "We were overdue for hours," the Oakville man told CBC Hamilton. "I was making her laugh by saying, 'Mom's not going to be too happy with me about this one.'"

Phillips — who says he is an experienced sailor and catamaran racer — left the Burlington Beach Catamaran Club with his 13-year-old daughter early Tuesday afternoon and sailed down past the lift bridge to Baranga's on the Beach restaurant where they had lunch.

But the wind was a little stronger than he'd anticipated, and in the couple of hours they were ashore, it picked up even more. Once they left to head back to Burlington, the combination of a strong wind and an ill-timed manoeuvre capsized them.

No phone, no radio

It shouldn't have been a big deal. The 400-pound, small, twin pontoon boats can capsize pretty easily — Phillips even calls it fun. But when a catamaran capsizes, the sail usually hits the water and stays buoyant. Then it's only a couple of minutes of work to right the boat and be on your way.

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But Phillips's boat totally turtled, with the mast pointing straight down in the water. He figures it was because of a leak on a seal on the mast. But whatever the case — once that style of boat flips, there's no getting it back up, he says. "I was just in complete disbelief. It had never happened to me before," he said. Neither of them had a phone or radio on them.

The two spent hours perched on the upside down boat, singing songs, telling jokes, and generally working to keep their spirits high. "She was just a superstar," Phillips said. He wasn't worried that they'd never be found — but some fear did start to creep in about shipping traffic in the water. If the father and daughter were still out there when darkness fell, a larger ship would never see them, and could run them over.

"We had prepared ourselves for a cold, uncomfortable night on Lake Ontario," Phillips said. "Thankfully it didn't come to that — seeing as he "married a worrier." By this time, his wife Carolyn had realized something was wrong. She went to the sailing club and saw his vehicle, but not him. She called police, and a search was started.

Found on radar

It didn't take long for the coast guard to find Phillips's boat on radar and track them down — though what turned out to be rescue at first seemed ominous. "I see this light come out of the darkness and that's my worst fear," he said. "I was afraid I was going to get hit."

Instead, it was a coast guard crew, who found them around 10 p.m. They hoisted the pair aboard, gave them warm clothes and got them into the hands of Halton police, who brought them ashore. The search also included a C-130 Hercules airplane from CFB Trenton.

Phillips says he's eternally grateful for the fantastic work done both by the coast guard and police to help his family. "I'm never going to complain about paying my income tax ever again," he laughed. While he and his daughter got home safe, the boat wasn't so lucky — it split in two when coast guard tried to hoist it out of the water. As for his wife? "She was just in pieces," Phillips said. "You know how wives are. She's been hugging my daughter and me ever since." "But it was her being exceptionally worried that got us out of this mess."

- Learnings:**
- 1) Always wear a PFD and wet suit/dry suit**
 - 2) Carry a water-proof VHF radio tethered to your PFD**
 - 3) Check your catamaran for leaks in mast and hulls**
 - 4) Ensuring someone ashore knows your sailing plans**
 - 5) Stay calm & do not panic**



You Can't Outrun a Storm

July 26, 2009

Sunday, July 26, 2009 started out like any other Southern Ontario summer day — hot and humid. Initially it seemed like a great sailing day. It was the first dry day in a wet week of stormy weather. At approximately 11 a.m. the skies in Hamilton darkened as heavy clouds approached from the southwest. In the next three hours, an extremely intense storm moved across the Red Hill Creek watershed releasing well over 100 mm (4") of rainfall. Classified a 100yr storm. By 2:00pm the sun had emerged, and it appeared there was still time for a sail. Two club members coordinated to meet at the club and set sail.

Everything started out fine; however, within 30 minutes new clouds began to form in the horizon. Notwithstanding this pending storm in Burlington, the sun remained shining over Confederation Park in Hamilton. Both sailors assessed the situation and decided to sail towards Hamilton expecting they could outrun the potential storm. Within 15 minutes, it became apparent the storm was getting closer with the winds significantly increasing and both sailors needed to get off the water as quickly as possible. Fortunately, they were close to shore and headed to the beach shoreline at the closest spot. Once onshore, boats were turned towards the wind with the main blocks released. Both sailors proceeded to the asphalt path and were met by several bystanders who had come down from their homes to see if they were okay. The rain then started and after 10 minutes stopped with the winds beginning to ease. Both sailors felt this was the window needed to sail back to the Club. Everything seemed on plan with both boats making good progress to getting back to the club. However, this was short-lived as the rain started again and this time lightening, and thunder accompanied the rain. Both sailors were extremely nervous and considered capsizing their boats to reduce the risk of a lightening strike. After what seems like an eternity both sailors made it back to the Club without incident.

- Learnings:**
- 1) Do not attempt to outrun a storm:** Proceed to shore as quickly as possible
 - 2) Do not sail if thunderstorms are forecasted:** Sailing under lightening is not fun

Two capsized boaters rescued

Mon., April 5, 2010

Two men were rescued from Burlington Bay after their catamaran capsized -- thanks to a mayday call from a portable radio on a life-jacket. The police marine unit was called to the waters of the bay around 5:30 p.m. yesterday. They had received a distress call from a man who had floated away from the capsized vessel. He called for help on his portable radio as his buddy continued to cling to the catamaran. Police were able to find the floating man, who was in a wetsuit, and rescue him and his friend. The men are in their early 50s, police said.

Background

The 2010 Easter weekend was exceptional with warm temperatures (reaching close to 70F) and windy conditions. Everyone was keen to get on the water given the mild Spring weather. Two Club members decided to try out their new F18 before celebrating Easter Monday with their families. It was very early in the season and there were no other sailing vessels on the water. Both Members were wearing a PDF & dry suits with the Crew member carrying a VHF Radio. Shortly after heading out, their boat was hit by a gust which capsized their catamaran. During the capsize, the Crew member became separated from the boat. Although he attempted to swim to the capsized catamaran, winds were pushing the catamaran away with the Skipper remaining with the catamaran. The Crew utilized his VHF Radio to issue a Mayday call. His specific VHF radio had a GPS location sensor which allowed him to provide the Rescue Dispatcher his exact location. Notwithstanding this location accuracy, it took approximately 45 minutes before the Marine Unit arrived to pull the Crew Member out of the water. It was early in the season and the Marine Unit needed to get the rescue boat coordinated. Both dry suits worked well and both members did not suffer any hypothermia.

- Learnings:**
- 1) Dress appropriately for your sail:** Prevented incident from becoming tragic. You could be in the water for some time before rescue.
 - 2) Always carry a water-proof VHF radio tethered to your PFD:** Having both Skipper and Crew maintaining their own radio, they could have communicated with each other and confirmed both were okay
 - 4) Sail with Others:** Always safer to sail with others particularly in windy conditions