



# SAILING SAFETY GUIDELINES



## OUR AIM

To promote a culture of safety within the Burlington Beach Catamaran Club

To enhance understanding of sailing, the marine environment, and the weather

To ensure that sailing members are aware of the potential risks in sailing

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Preparation is the key to safe sailing. The right boat, knowledge of weather conditions, boating skills, appropriate clothing and safety equipment are essential

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Once on the water, it's vital that your passengers and crew are organised, know what they are doing, understand the 'rules of the water' and what to do if things go wrong

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Knowledge can be the difference between life and death - so familiarise yourself with recovery procedures, distress signals, first aid and rescue techniques

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A list of useful contacts has been included for your reference

\*The information provided herein is for educational purposes. Whilst every effort is made to cover as many possible aspects of safety as feasible - this is by no means considered a definitive guide to safety on the water, nor a guide on how to operate a sailing vessel. All sailors in the Burlington Beach Catamaran Club are expected to have reached a reasonable level of understanding & knowledge of the sport of catamaran sailing, and the environment in which they operate their craft. No member of the Burlington Beach Catamaran Club Committee shall be held responsible for any damage, minor & serious injury, or collision.

## 1. BEFORE YOU GO

### The Right Boat for the Job

Be realistic about the type of sailing catamaran you can handle. Faster does not necessarily mean better - you will learn more and have just as much fun by starting out with a boat that is easy to handle and forgiving if you make mistakes. Remember that any boat can capsize, sometimes when you least expect it. If you're not able to handle the boat, this could turn into a dangerous situation.

- A boat must never be overloaded - too much weight will affect its stability. Check that the crew capacity is within your requirements.
- Check safety features. Most important is the buoyancy which keeps the boat afloat during a capsize.
- Are your mast and hulls sealed? Check for water leakage. Is your tramp worn? Is your rigging in good condition.

### Learn to Sail

It is best that you first crew with an experienced catamaran sailor to learn how to sail a catamaran before setting out on your own. Taking a sailing course would also be very beneficial with many courses offered within the area.

[Bronte Harbour Yacht Club - Learn to Sail](#)

[Royal Hamilton Yacht Club - Learn to Sail](#)

[Fun Sail](#)



There are also several helpful tutorials and tips for beginners and experienced catamaran sailors on YouTube, such as those produced by British cat sailor based in Greece, Joseph Bennett:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/JosephBennettJoyriderTV/videos>

<https://totaljoyrider.com/pages/joyrider-tv> (YouTube links indexed by topic)

### Master the Basic Skills

Before setting out, you and your crew must possess sufficient skills to sail safely. This means acquiring basic knowledge of how to assess wind and weather, handling the boat, launching and landing, rules of the water, use of safety equipment and maintenance of the boat, rigging and sails. It is highly recommended that anyone going on a catamaran should be able to swim and have water confidence



## Dressed for the Occasion

Both the Skipper and Crew of a catamaran must be dressed appropriately for the weather. All crew members should have access to suitable clothing that is fully functional and will protect against hypothermia and the effects of extreme heat & sunburn.

- The effect of the sun, humidity, and activity level must be

considered. Heat exhaustion, sunburn, and dehydration are very serious - sailors must ensure that they wear appropriate UV protectant clothing, and sunscreen or zink

- The effects of wind chill and cold water must also be considered. It is never as warm on the water as on the land and it may rapidly become much colder
- Protective clothing should always be worn on the boat as a precaution against the elements & sun
- A neoprene wetsuit protects against cold water and wind. To be effective, it must be a virtually perfect fit and have zips and seams that are as near waterproof as possible to stop cold water flushing through. The wetsuit can be worn with a loose fitting, windproof dry top to aid heat retention in colder weather
- An alternative to a wetsuit is to wear waterproof trousers and jacket which are purpose-designed for catamaran sailing and will provide a barrier against spray, rain and wind. They should be worn over fleece mid and base layers. The disadvantage is that you risk getting wet through if you capsize, with the extra weight of sodden clothing impeding your ability for self-help
- A second alternative is to wear a drysuit made from waterproof material with latex neck, wrists and ankles to keep all the water out. Drysuits are highly effective but are expensive and may be uncomfortable in warmer weather. Breathable fabrics which transmit sweat to the outside are likely to provide the best performance. Bright colours and retro-reflective strips are good safety features
- Sailing boots are strongly recommended. They will provide grip when moving around your catamaran, protect your feet and ankles from injury while launching and sailing and help to keep your feet warm
- Sailing gloves are necessary to protect against rope burn and other possible injuries
- Thermal headgear can play a major role in helping to conserve body heat in the colder months
- It is recommended that all crew should wear a hat or helmet at all times to protect from sun and impact.



## Personal Floatation Devices

It is mandatory to bring a suitable personal floatation device (PFD) when sailing. Always wear the PFD. It must be a good fit, have secure fastenings and provide the correct buoyancy to support your weight.

Remember to fasten crotch straps if supplied. Newer generation PFD's with impact protection offer a further benefit of reducing the chance of injury should impact with some part of the boat occur.



Unlike lifejackets, PFD's are not guaranteed to turn a person from a face-down position in the water. Their advantage is that they provide a much closer fit which is likely to be less restrictive when cat sailing.

Buoyancy aids should be clearly labelled with the weight range they are designed to support

## Checklist for Safety

- Check the rigging for signs of failure. If there is rust, broken strands or serious corrosion, you should seek expert advice on repairs
- Check where the rigging is fixed to the deck. Tape over exposed pins and rings to keep them in place and prevent them snagging clothing or exposed skin
- Check all fittings including blocks, cleats, rudder, and daggerboards or centreboard to ensure they are secure and work effectively



- Check all lines for signs of wear and abrasion. If in doubt, replace immediately
- Check the toe straps & trapeze systems to ensure they won't break
- Make sure the rudder will stay locked (i.e. with cotter pins on Hobie 16s) onto the pintles if the boat inverts during a capsize
- Check boat for signs of wear and tear or damage before heading out

## Keeping the Water Out

- Check the buoyancy / make sure that the boat is sound and hulls do not leak
- Before launching and immediately after landing, ensure all water is drained from the boat
- Ensure that drain plugs, and hatch covers are firmly tightened prior to launching

## NEVER Sail Without Safety Equipment!

What you take will depend on the size and type of boat and where you are sailing  
On most sailing boats you will need:

- A paddle, so you are not stuck if the wind disappears
- A towline, so you can pick up a lift from a motorboat or tie up to a post or mooring (a mainsheet may also be used as a towline)
- Emergency tool kit, including a roll of adhesive tape, spare line, shackle spanner, folding knife, pliers or equivalent multi-tool
- A sharp knife shall be carried by each member of the crew to cut oneself free if tangled in lines, the sails, or other rigging
- Spare bungee cord for a trapeze boat



## You will also need



- A whistle to attract attention in poor visibility
- A mobile phone / VHF radio shall be carried at all times (preferably in a waterproof case if not waterproof). (Be aware that a mobile phone is often an unreliable means of communication on the water, and as such a handheld VHF radio set may be more reliable and highly recommended)
- In an emergency dial 911 and ask for the Marine Police. The service is free - the Marine Police are always there to help
- **BBCC strongly recommends the carrying of a VHF radio while on the water with the simple one press of the Dual Watch mode engaged. This Dual Mode will allow you to monitor your desired Channel (71) for contacting other sailors and the emergency Channel (16) for reaching the Marine Police.**

## Planning your Day on the Water

When planning your day, you need to consider the weather, limitations of your boat and crew and any hazards on your trip. Always have a contingency plan and make sure someone ashore knows your plans.

Being the skipper of any boat means taking responsibility for your actions. The safety of the crew is in your hands every time you go sailing. You must match your knowledge to the conditions and never put either crew or boat at risk. If you stick to that policy, you will sail safely and have a great time!

### Wind direction

- A cross-shore wind is generally safest and most favourable, allowing you to sail out on one tack and sail back in on the other, with relatively flat water
- An onshore wind may make launching and landing difficult and even dangerous. The waves will increase in size and break as the water becomes shallow close to the shore. The size and impact of the waves will depend on the steepness of the beach - the steeper the beach, the bigger the waves are likely to be
- Never stand between the boat and the shore if the boat is being pushed back by waves in an onshore wind. Beware of the boat being turned side-on to the waves and rolled onto its side when sailing back in
- **An offshore wind is potentially most dangerous for less experienced sailors. Everything seems so calm and quiet by the beach, but as you get further from the shore the wind will increase progressively. The wind is also likely to be gusty as it funnels round trees, buildings and other obstructions on the shore. This can make sailing upwind wind very difficult. If you capsize and have difficulty righting the boat, it will be blown further offshore into even stronger winds**

### Weather - The Beaufort Scale

Wind speed is measured in nautical miles per hour or 'knots' (1 nautical mile equals 1.85km or 1.15 statute miles). Knots are divided into wind forces, using a system invented by Admiral Beaufort in the 1700's to describe likely conditions on the open ocean and are still used for the daily shipping forecasts. The description of the sea state will generally be less severe for sailing in protected inshore waters, although coastal tides may create a sea state that is considerably more dangerous.



Beaufort Number	mph (knots)	Description	Probable Wave Height	Effects on Land
0	1-3 (1-3)	Light airs	Flat	Flag hangs limp, smoke rises vertically
1	4-7 (4-6)	Light breeze	0 - 1/2 foot	Flag stirs, leaves rustle, wind felt on face
2	8-12 (7-10)	Gentle breeze	1/2 - 1 foot	Flag occasionally extends, leaves & twigs in constant motion
3	13-18 (11-16)	Moderate breeze	1 - 1 1/2 feet	Flag flaps, small branches move, dust and paper raised
4	19-24 (17-21)	Fresh breeze	1 1/2 - 2 1/2 feet	Flag ripples, small leafy trees begin to sway
5	25-31 (22-27)	Strong breeze	2 1/2 - 4 feet	Flag snaps, larger branches in motion, whistling in wires
6	32-38 (28-33)	Moderate gale	4 - 5 1/2 feet	Flag fully extended, whole trees in motion, resistance to walking
7	39-46 (34-40)	Fresh gale	5 1/2 - 7 1/2 feet	Twigs and small branches broken off, difficult to walk
8	47-54 (41-47)	Strong gale	7 1/2 - 10 feet	Structural damage occurs
9	55-63 (48-55)	Whole gale	10 - 13 feet	Trees broken or uprooted, considerable structural damage

	Wind Conditions	Wind Speed in kts	Expected Conditions
0	Calm	Less than 1 kt	Smoke rises vertically. Sea like a mirror. You will need a paddle to get home
1	Light Air	1 - 3kts	Direction of wind shown by smoke drift, but not by wind vanes. Ripples like fish scales form on the sea. Just enough wind to fill the sails and get the boat moving
2	Light Breeze	4 - 6kts	Wind felt on face. Leaves rustle. Ordinary vane moved by wind. Small wavelets, still short but more pronounced. The start of pleasant sailing conditions. Excellent for novices
3	Gentle Breeze	7 -10kts	Leaves and small twigs in constant motion. Wind extends light flags. Large wavelets. Crests beginning to break. Crew should be able to sit up on the windward side
4	Moderate Breeze	11 - 16kts	Raises dust and loose paper. Small branches are moved. Small waves become longer. Fairly frequent white horses. The crew will need to sit right out to keep the boat upright. Capsizes possible. Novices should start heading back to the shore
5	Fresh Breeze	17 - 21kts	Small trees in leaf begin to sway. Crest wavelets form on inland waters. Moderate waves taking more pronounced long form. Many white horses. Chance of spray. Both crew need to work hard to keep the boat upright and it will go like a rocket downwind. Gybing requires strong nerves and skill to avoid capsizes. Only those who feel completely confident should be out sailing
6	Strong Breeze	22 - 27kts	Large branches in motion. Umbrellas used with difficulty! Large waves begin to form. White foam crests are more extensive. Probably some spray. The very top levels of dinghy sailing ability become necessary as the wind approaches 25 knots. Many will be unable to handle the conditions and should stay on shore. Safety cover is vital
7	Near Gale	28 - 33kts	Whole trees in motion. Sea heaps up and white foam from breaking waves begins to be blown in streaks along the direction of the wind. Absolute survival conditions for top level sailors. Head straight for shore with rescue boat escort!
8	Gale, Storms, Typhoon, Hurricane	41kts & above	Winds of Force 8 and beyond are highly dangerous to dinghy sailors. You should not venture out in these conditions.

## **Weather Check**

Always check the weather forecast before you go sailing and be prepared to cancel your plans. In addition to the regular TV forecasts, more specific marine forecasts are available.

Various Smart Phone applications provide in-depth weather forecasts, tidal information, etc.

Some apps we recommend:

- Environment Canada Marine Weather (Burlington Pier Weather Station)
- Windy TV
- Predict Wind
- Sail Flow (actual wind conditions at selected locations)
- Be aware of the vessels leaving and entering the Burlington Bay Canal. If you see the Lift bridge is up or rising a vessel will be sailing through the canal shortly. It is particularly important that you stay clear of tankers moving through the canal area. Tankers have no ability to maneuver and/or stop if you are in their way.



## **The Best Place to Launch and Land**

- Choose a launch spot which is clear of boats, swimmers and other obstructions. Remember, you may have poor control due to the centreboard and/or rudder being lifted in shallow water
- Show courtesy to other people in the vicinity. Be aware that they may not understand the difficulties of launching or landing a boat
- When launching in surf do not attempt to sail across the surf. You will be unsuccessful, and your boat will be pushed ashore by the surf.
- Ensure that all hull plus and hatch covers are properly closed or you may sink the boat
- Ensure that the rudder retaining clip clicks shut and/or rudder pins are locked at the bottom. If not the rudder may drop off (and sink to the bottom) during a capsize

### **If in Doubt...**

- Never keep sailing regardless of external pressures, or otherwise!
- Be realistic about the wind, waves and your ability
- Be prepared to make for shelter in good time, before conditions deteriorate beyond your capability

**IF IN DOUBT - DO NOT GO OUT!**

## 2. UNDER SAIL

### Rules of the Sea

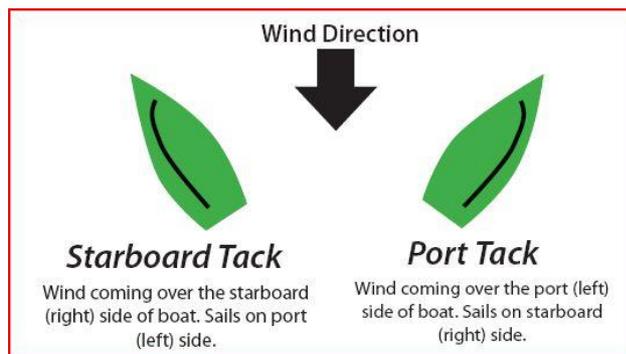
The primary role of these rules is to prevent collisions. They rely on common sense and good practice to succeed. This is only a brief summary drawn from the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea. For information on Racing Rules for sailing dinghies and yachts, refer to the World Sailing website <http://www.sailing.org/documents/racingrules/>. The YouTube videos by Joseph Bennett also show graphically and while sailing on a catamaran covering the basic rules of the sea right of way: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bL-JINrul4>.

### The Basics

- Port tack gives way to starboard tack
- Windward boats keep clear of leeward boats

### Port or Starboard?

- Port tack is when the wind blows onto the port (left) side of the boat and sails. Port tack gives way to starboard tack
- Starboard tack is when the wind blows onto the starboard (right) side of the boat and sails. Starboard tack has right of way over port tack



### General Rules

- It is the responsibility of the crew to maintain a good look-out at all times
- There is a risk of collision if the bearing of an approaching vessel remains constant



- A yacht or boat under power gives way to a yacht or boat under sail. This rule needs to be treated with caution! Firstly, there are clearly defined exceptions (see below) where powered craft have right of way since they need to use deep water. Secondly, a 'rogue skipper' of a powered craft may ignore or be unaware of the fact that he/she should give way to sail
- Boats under sail must give way to vessels fishing, vessels not under command (unable to manoeuvre) or vessels constrained by their draught. Kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards are supposed to keep away from sailing vessels, however, many paddlers are unaware or ignore this rule, so best for sailors to stay out of their way.

### Organizing the Crew

- Ensure the crew is sufficiently experienced for any sailing trip, particularly if it involves children. Be aware of their limitations and try not to expect too much from them
- Beware of dehydration when sailing in warm sun. Take sufficient fresh water or soft drinks for all the crew and make sure they drink it. Take snacks such as fruit bars to boost energy and morale if the crew start to get cold and tired
- Ensure that you carry sunscreen to protect against sunburn
- The effects of wind chill mean the crew will get progressively colder. Everyone must be equipped with suitable clothing for the prevailing and forecast conditions
- Ensure that everyone always wears a government approved buoyancy aid when afloat. Buoyancy aids must fit snugly with fastenings correctly secured. Children must wear the correct size - an oversize adult buoyancy aid which will float up over their head in the water will not do! Wearing a buoyancy aid should be as natural as wearing a seatbelt in your car



- Give the crew specific duties when rigging, launching and sailing. Try to get everyone involved which will help prevent them getting bored, feeling cold, or even becoming frightened, in which case it's time to head back for the shore
- Brief the crew and keep them fully informed of what you are doing and what you expect them to do. This should include launching and landing, manoeuvres while sailing and what to do if the boat capsizes
- Getting banged on the head by the boom is always unpleasant and sometimes dangerous. It is vital that the crew

knows when to duck, particularly during a gybe when the boom can swing across at high speed. Before departing land, wearing a helmet is a good preventative measure. In the event of a head impact, all sailors should return to shore and seek medical attention. Continuing to participate in further sailing with a possible concussion increases the risk of more severe symptoms and other injuries.

## **Sailing Safety**

- Don't sail alone until you are suitably experienced. It's best to never sail alone in a solitary area
- It is recommended that new catamaran sailors sail in the area in front of the Club Compound as this area of the lake is more sheltered and less isolated.
- When possible, sail in company with other boats or in an area patrolled by a rescue boat. One big advantage of taking up organised club racing is that there should always be safety cover at hand
- Check the wind and weather forecast. Consult other sailors and be prepared to postpone or abandon your plans if you are unsure of your ability to cope with wind or waves
- Be aware of the limitations of your boat. Do not overestimate its ability to deal with difficult conditions
- Leave details of a planned sailing trip away from the Beach area with a reliable person on shore. This information should include your itinerary, expected times of departure and return, plus description of the catamaran and contact names for all people on board.
- Never sail in poor visibility or risk being caught on the water at nightfall. Allow plenty of time to get back to shore in case the wind drops in the late afternoon
- Make sure you have alternative means of propulsion such as paddles or oars
- Do not sail off over the horizon. Keep as close to the shore as is reasonable
- Don't wait until you are cold and tired before you head for home

## **Reefing the Sails:**

Some catamarans can be reefed, either by rolling the mainsail round the mast or pulling the mainsail down onto the boom. Reefing is usually only effective when done on the shore and may be impossible on the water. So be cautious and reef before you go sailing - it's easy to come back and take the reefs out if the wind is less than you expected.

## **Catamaran Capsizes**

Capsizing is all part of the fun of catamaran sailing! It should be absolutely safe if you wear the correct technical clothing, are able to right your catamaran and abide by the capsize rules in the following section.



## Capsize rules:

- Stay with the boat. Modern catamarans float high and can be blown downwind faster than you can swim. If you find yourself under the sails or tangled in sheets, don't panic. Your buoyancy aid should keep your head clear of the water. In an emergency - use your safety knife to cut yourself free!
- Try to prevent the boat turning turtle. It may bury the mast tip in the bottom which makes righting



difficult and can break the mast

- Avoid repeated capsizes. Each attempt to right the boat becomes more physically draining and, in an offshore wind, you will be blown further and further out to sea. Don't hesitate to accept outside assistance

- ***If you can't right the boat, grab hold of something and stay with the boat until rescue comes. Never leave the boat and attempt to swim for shore - an upturned boat will float and is much easier to spot than a sailor lost in the sea***

- Beware of hypothermia following a capsize. If you are wearing an efficient wetsuit or drysuit, you should be able to continue sailing. If you or your crew have any doubts or start to feel cold, head for the shore immediately.

## Capsize Recovery

Practice capsize recovery near the shore so that you know what to expect. Different sail boats have different characteristics which may also be changed by the wind and waves.

- The skipper should swim around to the underside of the boat, holding the mainsheet for security. He/she can then grab the end of the centreboard/ daggerboard to ensure the boat will not turn turtle
- The crew must ensure that all sheets are released from cleats and put away the spinnaker into its bag.
- It is normally easiest to right the boat when the bows are almost pointing into the wind. This prevents the boat from capsizing in the other direction when it is righted. The crew may need to stand on the bow of the hull that is in the water to rotate the boat into wind. Climb either up onto the bow (or stern) to dip the chosen end into the water deeper and wait for the wind to pivot the boat around.
- To right a catamaran, normally the heavier of the helm and crew will hold onto the righting line and the lighter person will hold onto the dolphin striker. Both helm and crew should lean away from the underside of the boat until the boat is upright. Beware that once the mast is clear of the water - the boat will right quite quickly. If the boat still will not right itself with both crews hiking out alongside one other; consider having the lighter crew climb up onto the larger crew and try to get to his shoulders. Very strange thing to have to do – but it works well as the righting weight is moved much further outward. You won't have to climb far before the boat comes over. A righting bag (preferably with tackle & blocks to help lift the heavy weight of the water) will also assist in creating more righting ballast and it is recommended that all sailors carry a righting bag.
- Once the boat is upright, the person who is first on board should help their sailing partner onboard. It depends on the type of boat whether it is easiest and most stable to get in over the side, front or transom. On some trapeze boats, the trapeze can be used to aid climbing on board the boat
- The crew should check the boat and ensure everything is in order before continuing to sail



- If you can't right the boat, or it keeps capsizing, one solution may be to pull down or roll up the sails, using the sheets as a lashing to prevent them blowing uncontrollably in the wind. With the sails down, you should be able to right the boat. You will then need to summon help.
- If there is a completely turtled boat and there is a rescue motorboat – by far the easiest is to untie a trapeze wire and hand it to the motorboat and ask them to very slowly reverse into the wind. This works super well at the rescue boat pulls close to the tip of the inverted mast. Once the boat is on its side the rescue boat can come up to the mast tip, reach over with one hand and simply physically grab the mast tip and lift it up by hand. (One hand is all it normally takes if the crew is hiking out trying to right the boat.) Once righted the crew need to sort out the loose trapeze wire and tie it back in place.



[Capsized Catamaran: Here is what to do](#)

[Hobie 16 Capsize & Righting Solo - Is it possible \(Need Weight and Wind\)](#)

[Capsized Catamaran: Using a Righting Bag](#)

[Righting Hobie 14/16 with a Righting Bag](#)

[How to Right a Turtled Catamaran](#)

## **3. EMERGENCY**

### **Man Overboard**

If a person falls overboard, the following are guidelines for keeping them in sight and retrieving them with minimum delay - remember that if you lose sight of the person in the water, they may be very hard to find!

- Heave to
- **Watch the person in the water and point at them continuously**
- Alert the emergency services if possible and let them know what has happened
- Start your recovery manoeuvre

It is very easy to get separated from a catamaran if you fall off while sailing or don't hold on to something during a capsized. This is extremely dangerous - in certain conditions, it may prove impossible to regain contact with your boat!

- Check that the toe straps are secure every time you rig the boat and ensure your feet are properly tucked under them before you start to lean out over the side!
- If the boat carries trapeze lines, ensure that all shock cords and lines are free from wear and that you are securely clipped on before leaning out
- If the boat capsizes or you fall over the side, you must grab hold of something. The end of a sheet or control line is ideal. Don't let go until you have a firm hold on the boat
- Try to swim for the catamaran but remember you will be slowed by buoyancy aid, boots and clothing and the energy required will cause rapid heat loss and exhaustion
- Most modern catamarans are highly buoyant and can be blown downwind at several knots while they are capsized. If you fail to catch the boat, remain as calm as possible
- The greatest threat to your survival is the cold during spring and fall months. Keep your legs close together to restrict movement and prevent cold water flushing through your clothing. Tighten up wrist, ankle and neck fastenings if you are wearing loose waterproofs
- In rough conditions, turn your back to the waves to keep airways clear of spray. Remember that a buoyancy aid will not be as effective as a lifejacket in keeping your head clear of the water.
- If there is someone still on board the boat, they will hopefully have the skill to sail back and collect you from the water. If necessary, you will have to shout or signal to show them your position

### **Recovering the Crew**

If one of your crew is on board and the boat is still upright, a man overboard recovery may be possible.

- Turn the boat to the head-to-wind position, with the sails flapping to bring it to a halt. Hold it in that position to allow the man overboard to swim back to the boat
- If this proves impossible, you will have to tack around and sail back. During this manoeuvre it is vital to keep the man overboard in sight
- Get the boat sailing on a controlled beam reach, tack around and sail back on a course which is slightly downwind of the man overboard. This will allow you to luff onto a slow close reach for the final approach, controlling your speed by sheeting in and out the sails

- Position the boat so it will come to a halt with the man overboard by the windward shroud. From this position, you should be able to lean forward and grab the shoulder of their buoyancy aid with your forward hand.
- With the sails blowing to leeward and stabilising the boat, you can then help them clamber over the windward side
- The man overboard may be suffering from injury or shock. If you are in any doubt, head straight for the shore or call for help

### **Calling for Help**



Don't delay if you require outside assistance! If other boats are near at hand:

- Wave your arms, or blow a whistle to attract attention
- Stretch out your arms to either side and raise and lower them steadily up and down. This is an official distress signal

If you are alone:

- Use your mobile phone or VHF radio to the Marine Police to call for help (911)

### **Basic First Aid**

A comprehensive first aid kit and basic first aid knowledge could prove invaluable in a crisis.

#### **Dehydration:**

It is easy to ignore the effects of 'drying out' while sailing, until symptoms that include a parched mouth and a fuzzy, tired, headachy feeling become apparent. The cure is to drink plenty of liquid, preferably before this happens. Plain tap water is as good as anything, and you can store it quite easily in plastic bottles.

#### **Hypothermia:**

Hypothermia is a potential danger especially during winter months.

- First Stage: Shivering, looking cold, complaining of cold. Head for shore without delay!
- Second Stage: Lethargy, drowsiness or confusion followed by numbness, cramp, nausea, slurred speech and eventual loss of consciousness

#### **Action:**

- If a person complains of the cold or shows any symptoms of moving towards the second stage of hypothermia, get them ashore as soon as possible
- Get them out of the wind and warm them up with dry clothing/coverings and warm drinks, but never alcohol
- If their condition deteriorates or fails to improve, seek urgent medical attention

#### **Sunburn:**

The sun needs to be treated with caution. The combination of cooling wind and strong sun reflected off the lake may cause severe sunburn. The solution is simple - always use waterproof barrier cream on exposed body parts when catamaran sailing in the sun. Zink is also a very good protectant as it does not wash off easily.



**Basic lifesaving:**

Suspected drowning is extremely rare among sailors. However, if someone appears to have stopped breathing due to being in the water, speed is crucial in maintaining oxygen to the brain.

Check for breathing by placing your cheek beside the casualty's mouth and looking at their chest. If there is no sign, begin immediate basic lifesaving. This technique should be learnt through a first aid course.

**Concussion:**

Beware of bangs on the head when sailing. These can be avoided if the helmsman always informs the crew prior to tacks and gybes, making sure everyone watches the boom as it crosses the boat. If you suspect concussion, seek immediate medical advice.

**Drink and Drugs:**

- Be sensible about drinking alcohol and taking drugs - these may impair your judgement when catamaran sailing. Alcohol will also act as a diuretic which, at the very least, is a nuisance, and at worst can cause dehydration
- Beware of the side effects of any medication which may impair judgement and reduce physical ability

**Accepting a Tow:**

- A sailing boat which is being towed should have sails lowered (if possible) and centreboard/daggerboards retracted. The crew should sit on either side towards the back of the boat, keeping the bows up with the helmsman steering to maintain a straight course
- Beware of towing at speed. If the catamaran starts to sheer from side to side, the tow boat must immediately slow down
- If an official safety boat or lifeboat approaches, the skipper or coxswain will inform you of their intentions. Advise them of any hazards. Follow their instructions - they are the experts. This may mean having to abandon your boat which should, of course be insured!

**A Final Note to Remember!**

**Sailing is all about enjoying yourself and having a great time!**

**Don't spoil it by biting off more than you can chew. Learn to sail sensibly and you will hopefully never need the services of a lifeboat crew!**

**The emergency services are here to help but would rather do so before you get into trouble!**

## 4. USEFUL CONTACTS

### Marine Rescue

MARINE POLICE EMERGENCY: 911  
Channel 16 VHF Radio  
Marine Rescue Centre: 800-267-7270  
Marine Police: 905-546-2929

### Medical Services

AMBULANCE: 911  
Halton Regional Ambulance Hotline: 905-825-6000

