



# Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club Inc.

ABN 691 6301 9282  
www.sailglyc.com

Commodore: Wendy Gardiner  
Secretary: Russ Peel 5156 6691

P.O. Box 194  
Paynesville Vic 3880  
Phone: (03) 5156 6864  
Email: glyc@sailglyc.com

---

## On-Water Incident – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2018

### FINAL REPORT – ANALYSIS AND ACTIONS

This report has been prepared by Wendy Gardiner (Commodore), Jim Callahan (Vice Commodore), Andrew Somerville (Rear Commodore), and Russ Peel (Secretary). None of these people had any direct involvement in the incident itself, or in the immediate response to it. Written statements provided by most of the Club members involved in the emergency were read and used to inform the recommendations.

#### Summary of Incident

Wind conditions on the day were within the acceptable range for racing, though at the high end. As such, sailors were cautioned to make a careful personal decision as to whether or not to race.

One OTB capsized, with a crew member becoming entangled in his trapeze harness, main sheet and side stays. He ended up under the sail, taking water. Lines and harness were cut to free him. He was returned to shore and transferred via ambulance to hospital, where he spent the night under observation. He made a full physical recovery within three days.

Several other OTB boats capsized with 3 crews being taken out of the water on to the course boat, their dinghies being abandoned where they drifted towards Raymond Island. The dinghies were subsequently retrieved and returned to the Club.

Although the situation had the potential to have been very serious, the overall arrangements in place by GLYC, and the training of our volunteer race management and rescue teams, resulted in an excellent outcome.

#### Analysing Team Actions

Emergency situations call for analysis in order to ensure that procedures and protocols are as effective as possible thus minimising risk in future events. The analysing team examined four aspects of operations that could, if not handled well, negatively affect the outcome of future on-water incidents. These aspects are:

- Rescue Boat preparedness;
- Race Management and Rescue Crew preparedness;
- Communications;
- Club Policies and Safety Procedures.

Generally speaking, the Club's existing Policies and Procedures in these four areas work well in theory. However, some important protocols were either not known/understood or were forgotten by our volunteers when working in a stressful environment. Therefore, there is a need to make improvements in all areas of emergency management as a means to reduce the risk of harm to people and boats during Club racing and Regattas. The following observations and

recommendations were presented to the Committee of Management for approval on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2018.

## **RESCUE BOAT PREPAREDNESS**

It is a Club priority that Rescue boats are maintained in top condition to cope with any water conditions and must have a full inventory of safety equipment on board. If there are mechanical issues or safety equipment issues that could jeopardise rescues, the boat should not be used. It is acknowledged that this could mean that racing may have to be cancelled on a given day. On the day in question, all boats were fully fuelled before heading on to the water and all safety equipment, with the exception of one bailing bucket, was in its designated location on each rescue boat. During the emergency not all safety equipment could be located by the Rescue Boat Crews.

1. A checklist of safety and rescue equipment, including the location of that equipment, be included on each rescue boat as well as Start Boat, Course Boat and tower.
2. All emergency equipment potentially used in a rescue to be placed in an easily accessible location for the duration of racing and re-stowed after racing.
3. Marker buoys to be located on all Rescue craft ( 2 x RS Thompson, 2 x Rescue 1, 1 x Alex P)
4. As a backup, High Vis tape to be placed on each Rescue boat to wrap around an abandoned yacht.
5. Larger recovery marker buoys be purchased to enable clear vision that crew has been rescued.
6. Pontoon pressure on inflatable hull rescue boats and fuel levels to be checked by the rescue crew prior to heading out to the race course. (Note, this may require checking several hours before racing to allow sufficient time for correction)
7. A quick reference guide to handling emergencies to be laminated and placed on each boat in an easily visible location and emailed out to duty crews a few days prior to duty.
8. All mechanical faults to be rectified as a priority. Boats with non-trivial faults to be tagged "out of service" until the fault is rectified. [Noted that there is a blackboard in the boatshed where faults are to be listed.](#)

***Note: Safety equipment is kept on board rescue boats for a purpose and MUST NOT be removed for any reason by any club member. Moving safety equipment between rescue boats, or to other locations, is not an acceptable practice.***

## **RESCUE CREW AND RACE MANAGEMENT CREW PREPAREDNESS**

It is understood that as volunteers, our Race Management and Rescue Crews have varying skills and capabilities. The Club's efforts to maintain consistency in Rescue teams assisted in a positive outcome as, on the day in question, at least one person on each Rescue Boat was experienced in handling the boat and with capsizing situations. However, all effort should still be made to ensure that transient volunteers are well prepared to handle any emergency that may arise. Marker Buoys were placed on capsized boats to indicate that crews were safe, however, these buoys were too small to be seen by all passing craft and many of our sailors did not understand the protocol. To this end, the following recommendations are proposed:-

1. A sign on/sign off sheet to be implemented that includes ALL those on board each and every boat (already [in place](#));
2. Rescue Boat briefing to be given every race day by Boat's Portfolio Officer (or suitably qualified delegate of Boat's Officer) - briefing to include:
  - a. Boat operation;

- b. Appraisal of minor issues that must be considered but will not affect the capacity of the crew to perform their duty (for other issues see point 5 above);
  - c. Safety Equipment location checklist ([already in place](#)).
- 3. All safety items to be carefully checked (via hands on contact) by the Rescue Crew of the day. Any missing items to be reported to the Boat's Officer and rectified by the crew before heading to the race course;
- 4. Endeavour to obtain one (or a small team) of regular rescue craft operator for each boat, who will take on a leadership role in case of emergency and who will coach/mentor the transient crew;
- 5. Boat's Portfolio Officer to be required to undertake Power Boat Handling and Rescue Boat Operator's Course prior to commencement of 2018-2019 Season;
- 6. All Club members to be encouraged to undertake Power Boat Handling and Rescue Boat Operator's Course as well as First Aid Training. The Objective being that from the start of the 2018- 2019 Sailing Season, members are competent to handle the Rescue Boats and at least one person on duty at any event is First Aid Trained and at least one person on duty has a Rescue Boat Operator's Certificate;
- 7. All Rescue Boat Crews (Including RS Thompson) to wear non-inflatable type 1 or type 2 PFD on the water (personal supply, or supplied by the club from the DSC stock and returned to stock on completion of duty). There is no need to carry additional PFDs to those being worn. During regattas if additional borrowed rescue craft are used that are not clearly signed as "Rescue", the crews to also wear high vis vests;
- 8. Start Boat crew to wear a PFD of choice as an example to sailors;
- 9. Committee to explore a method of ensuring that all members have access to information relating to the handling of OTB boats in strife;
- 10. Safety Information and procedures to be emailed out to duty crews a few days before racing;
- 11. Sailors who are retrieved from the water on to Race Management Boats to be transferred to a Rescue Boat and returned to shore at the earliest opportunity.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Clear and effective communication, along with an effective chain of command is essential to the efficient management of emergency situations. It was noted by sailors with radios that all radio communication relating to Rescues was clear and calm, indicating that matters were well- handled. Despite this, there were a few questions and instructions which were not heard by all involved. Any breakdown in communication has the potential to heighten risk to an unacceptable level. The following improvements to our existing protocols are recommended:-

- 1. During emergency situations, the SG call sign is the relay conduit for all communications between on-water and land-based operations. All communications between shore and water to go through the Tower;
- 2. All decisions about actions that take place on the water must be approved by the Race Officer for the day;
- 3. All decisions about actions that take place on shore to be approved by the Land Based Co-Ordinator (where such role is activated). Call sign to be assigned to LBC.
- 4. No members/visitors in to the tower during emergencies. Access only by SG Operator and Land- Based Co-Ordinator;
- 5. Race Officer, Land Based Co-ordinator and SG Operator prioritise emergency co-ordination and where necessary, delegate other tasks to other personnel (eg race finishing, taking boats off the water, etc);
- 6. Season prior parental permission required for Juniors to be included as rescue crew;

7. Immediate prior parental permission required for Juniors to assist in ad hoc boat retrieval. Assistance is then at the discretion of the RO;
8. An up-to-date list of emergency contacts and personal details and medical conditions (where known), is to be readily accessible on each race day, e.g. taken to the tower at the start of racing and returned to a secure location at the conclusion of the day's events. As part of future annual membership processes, the DOB of members will be a requirement of renewal. When non-members race with a member on any given day, it is the Skipper's responsibility to obtain full name, DOB and an emergency contact phone number.

## **CLUB POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

GLYC has a number of documents that relate to emergency situations:- Emergency Response Policy, Safety Manual, Risk Management Plans, etc. . These have been written with a cross- referenced focus so that they all align. Included in these policies and manuals is a clear expectation that follow-up and support of those involved in rescues is one of our Club Objectives. In the case of this incident, there has been follow-up of both a formal and informal nature. Whilst the documents provide essential background information for club officials in how to handle emergencies, each of these documents is too long to be of use in the middle of an emergency. Therefore, the following actions are recommended:-

1. GLYC Emergency Response Policy to be reviewed and updated as necessary. In particular, the roles of the SG Call Sign Operator and the Land Based Co-ordinator need to be clarified;
2. Safety Manual to be reviewed and updated to align to all recommendations above;
3. A quick reference sheet to be created and placed in a visible position on Club power boat, as well as in the tower. This will outline the basic and immediate steps to be taken in an emergency situation.
4. GLYC Emergency Response Policy and Quick Reference Guide to be located on the Club website, with all members encouraged to familiarise themselves with these prior to undertaking duty crew roles;
5. Explore the possibility of developing a quick guide for handling OTB boats that capsize (ref. Rescue Crew Preparedness point 8).

**This report was accepted by the Committee of Management 28/3/2018**