

Effective Rescue Capability

Ray Shaw, a member of the National Safety Committee has written an article that assists with the interpretation of what should be considered for effective rescue capability.

The great majority of keelboat club racing in Australia is conducted under the Australian Sailing Special Regulations Event Categories 6 and 7. The definitions of Categories 6 and 7 both require that the organising authority provide "effective rescue capability". This immediately begs the question as to what then constitutes effective rescue capability? We get some help in answering this question from the Definition section of the Special Regulations which states that effective rescue capability "Requires the race committee to have in place an effective rescue procedure taking into account the local conditions, length of race, remoteness, availability of rescue craft and services, and the quality of communications".

Given the wide diversity of clubs within Australian Sailing, it is not possible to be completely prescriptive about what constitutes effective rescue capability but the above definition does cover the key aspects that a club needs to consider so let's look into each component of the definition in more detail.

1. Local Conditions

Aspects of the local conditions that impact rescue capability that need to be considered are:

- The prevailing weather conditions including wind strength, visibility, extremes of temperature and any forecast weather changes.
- The sea state with consideration of the wind direction, the length of time that the wind has been blowing and the fetch over which it has travelled.
- Aspects of the local geography can be important such as; open or enclosed waters, tidal issues, commercial shipping, other known local

boating hazards.

2. Race Length

Most club races are conducted in the vicinity of the club such that the fleet is generally well contained and more easily managed. At times, a racecourse may cover an extended area and in such cases the club will need to consider how it will provide rescue capability throughout the entire course area.

3. Remoteness and the Availability of Rescue Services

- Typically, a club will have its own rescue craft on the course and maybe additional capability on standby. The extent of that capability needs to be viewed in the light of all other considerations discussed here. The adequacy and condition of the equipment carried by any club craft together with the staffing level and training of their crews are also important considerations.
- Clubs in major urban areas may well have access to additional rescue capability to supplement their own resources such as neighbouring yacht clubs, water police, coast guard and other volunteer organisations. More remote clubs will clearly be more dependent on their own resources.
- Clubs might consider other competitors as a component of their rescue capability. While other yachts can play a rescue role, how effective that can be will depend on the suitability of the yachts involved and the level of training that their crews have had in rescue manoeuvres.

4. Communications

The ability of the club to communicate with competing yachts, neighbouring clubs and other rescue organisations can have a significant impact on the club's ability to provide effective rescue capability.

Some other aspects of Category 6/7 racing that might need to be considered are:

- The range of boat designs within the fleet; some boats are inherently better able to look after themselves while others are more vulnerable

when conditions become more challenging.

- The equipment carried by the competing yachts; do the yachts meet the requirements of the Australian Sailing Special Regulations and how has the club ensured compliance?
- The skill levels of the competing crews; some races are of a more social flavour and often attract less experienced crews.

So while it is not possible to give a black and white answer as to what constitutes " effective rescue capability", systematically thinking through the topics discussed above and then matching the club's resources accordingly will stand the club in very good stead in meeting the expectations of the Special Regulations.

By Ray Shaw <https://www.sailingresources.org.au/safety/safety-committees/>.