

Health & Safety November 2016

Our sailing day for Sunday the 27th November was cancelled. For the few Club members who did turn out the reason was obvious and well supported. You might recall the weather on the day featured a strong wind but there were also other factors which gave me the idea for a health and safety topic.

Our Club Safety Procedures caution us not to go onto the water in boisterous conditions and it could be argued that this instruction is vague so here is my take on how I would evaluate the conditions on Sunday and so arrive at the same outcome. There are at least four predominant factors to be considered, river flow, wind speed, wind direction and the importance of the event.

Thinking about Sunday 27th November and taking each in turn:

The river flow was at 300 cumecs which is about three times normal. This would add another knot or two to the flow past our clubhouse but I did not observe any logs floating down so we could still sail in this flow.

The wind speed was averaging 20kts with gusts to 30kts. While this is outside my own sailing range I have seen and heard of others sailing in this wind strength. The issue on Sunday was the wide variation in wind strength over a short time span, it was gusty. This would likely have led to yachts capsizing.

The wind was from the West which is straight down the river and out to sea.

The day was listed as a reserve day with no trophies to compete for so this lowers the level of risk we should take.

It does not matter whether you give each factor a score or just a yes no answer the equation goes something like this. If a boat were to capsize it would move with the current and wind towards the sea with some speed and as there would likely have been multiple capsizes this would have tested our rescue services. Something we can do without on a reserve day.

For Health and Safety

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