

Health and Safety - September 2015

We have been hearing a lot about the Health and Safety Reform Bill which has now been reported back to Parliament. The next step is a clause by clause debate before being passed into law as the Health and Safety at Work Act. The Government has stated that there are some definitions still to be resolved so the final effect of the Act is a little unknown.

According to the Bill at the moment we are a purely volunteer organisation where volunteers work together for community purposes and which does not have any employees. We are known as a volunteer association under the Bill and likely the final Act will not apply to us. However reading further we do have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment for those participating in our activity which is much the same as under the current Health and Safety in Employment (HSE) Act 1992. In the end the law is designed to prevent people at work from being harmed and that by inference includes our sailing activity.

Our Club already has Sailing Instructions and Safety Procedures that are reviewed, updated and published to each member each year. There is also the work done by Club Members in previous years to identify hazards and work out ways to minimise risks, for example yacht booms. Then our national body publishes safety guidelines for example on the manning and equipment levels for Club patrol craft. I have collected around 80 documents and even then I expect there will be gaps. So how can an ordinary Club member master all this when mastering the sailing rules is all we want to do.

The proposal I would like to put forward is to feature an issue each month. Perhaps add a one line item to the Race Officers briefing and also use the Fleet Sheet. The plan is to gradually build in safety as a habit for all Club members. For the Month of September, which includes our opening day, I would like to highlight the care we need to take when using the ramp to launch and retrieve our yachts and the patrol boats.

To quote from one of the documents:

- **The ramp can become very slippery, so care is required when launching and retrieving boats.**
- **At the bottom of the ramp, the creek tends to scour away the shingle and can leave a 150 mm step. Be aware of this, particularly at the lower part of the tide.**
- **Patrol Boats with the rope attached to the trailer require care prior to running the trailer down the ramp. Ensure that the rope is held by an adult and that it is clear of peoples legs.**

Safe sailing

Kerry O'Brien

Vice Commodore