

# Man Overboard Drills

## On The White Board:

- Man overboard is a very serious event, and not to be taken lightly. The three rules that I have always put forth on the boat are:
  - Keep the people in the boat
  - Keep the water out of the boat
  - Look good at all times

Note how these are in order of importance. The last is a joke of course, but applies to everything else like sail trim, good helmsmanship, and not leaving fenders hanging over the side.

- As soon as someone goes in the water, people onboard should **Shout, Throw, and Point.** (STP) Add to this that the Sail Nauticus base should be **immediately notified** so we may come to assist.
- The importance of **stressing eye contact** by someone onboard at all times is crucial. It is very easy to lose sight of someone's head in any kind of seaway. Despite the fact that practice will occur in daysailers in a river with land close at hand, the same methods are used for large boats in the open water.
- There are two methods we use for man overboard recovery. The figure eight, and the quick turn.
- Let the students know these copies are available on the website, under Member Resources.
- Draw each, and focus on explaining the process in multiple steps.
- Do not worry about the process of attachment and retrieval at this point. Our boats have very low freeboard (16"), so dragging someone in is viable. If students wish, they may review recovery into the boat in their own time.

## PART 6

### OVERBOARD RESCUE

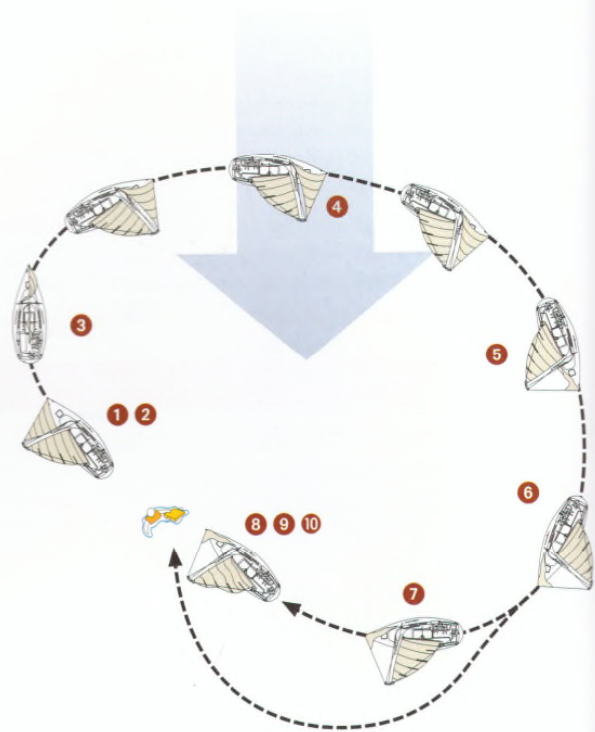
All sailors must know how to react quickly to a crew overboard situation. There are two preferred methods of rescuing a crew who has fallen overboard. All involve the following seven steps:

1. Get buoyancy to the Person in water (PIW).
2. Keep the PIW in sight.
3. Head the boat back to the PIW.
4. Stop the boat alongside the PIW.
5. Make contact with the PIW.
6. Attach the PIW to the boat.
7. Get the PIW back on board.

### Quick-Stop Rescue

The hallmark of the Quick-Stop Rescue method is the immediate reduction of boat speed by turning in a direction to windward and thereafter maneuvering at modest speed, remaining near the PIW. This rescue requires these steps:

- 1 As soon as a crew member falls overboard, throw buoyant objects, such as cushions, life jackets or life rings, to the PIW and shout "Crew Overboard!" These objects may not only come to the aid of the PIW, but will "litter the water" where he or she went overboard and help the spotter to keep him or her in view. It has been determined that the deployment of the standard overboard pole rig requires too much time. The pole rig is saved to "put on top" of the person in case the initial maneuver is unsuccessful.
- 2 Designate someone to spot and point at the PIW. The spotter should NEVER take his or her eyes off the PIW.
- 3 Bring the boat into the wind, trimming the mainsail and jib to close-hauled.
- 4 Continue to turn through the wind, without releasing the headsail, until the wind is almost astern. Do not ease the sails.
- 5 Hold this course until the PIW is aft of the beam, and drop or furl the headsail if possible. If the headsail is lowered, its sheets should not be slacked.

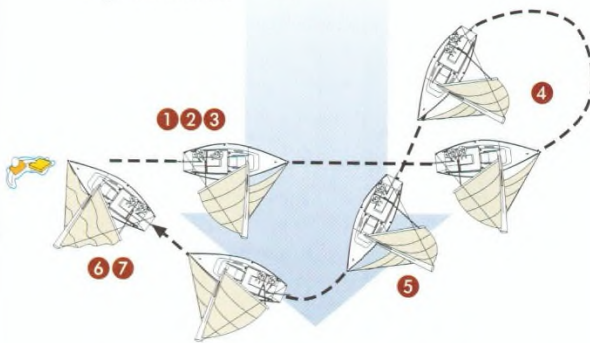


- 6 Jibe the boat.
- 7 Steer toward the PIW as if you were going to pick up a mooring.
- 8 Stop the boat alongside the PIW by easing or backing sails.
- 9 Establish contact with the PIW with a heaving line or other device. A "throwing sock" containing 75 feet of light floating line and a kapok bag can be thrown into the wind because the line is kept inside the bag and trails out as it sails to the PIW. Attach the PIW to the boat.
- 10 Bring the PIW on board.

**This method should be executed under sail alone unless there is insufficient wind to maneuver the boat.**

### Figure-8 Rescue

Figure-8 rescue avoids jibing during a rescue. In heavy weather, you may find controlling the boat easier with this rescue technique; however, it is imperative to keep the PIW in sight at all times! Take the following steps in a Figure-8 rescue:



- 1 As soon as a crew member falls overboard, call out LOUDLY "Crew overboard!"
- 2 Throw cushions, life jackets or life rings in the direction of the PIW. Steer the boat on a beam reach.
- 3 Assign a crew member to watch and point at the PIW. This crew member should NEVER take his or her eyes off the PIW.
- 4 After sailing a maximum of four boatlengths, tack and fall off onto a deep broad reach, crossing the boat's original course.
- 5 The plan is to approach the PIW on a close reach. This point of sail gives perfect speed control, using the main sheet as a "gas pedal," together with some space for altering direction. To determine whether you're in position for the close-reach approach, steer toward the PIW and let off your sheets. If you are on a close reach, both sails will flog. If your approach is too far upwind, your main will fill and slowing down will be impossible. In this case immediately run off almost dead downwind for a length or two. Then steer up for the PIW again. In all probability this will position you properly for a close-reach approach. Should you still be too far upwind with a mainsail full of air, bear off hard a second time, etc.
- 6 Ease sheets to slow the boat and bring it to a stop alongside the PIW.
- 7 Attach the PIW to the boat and bring on board.

**Attachment.** After maneuvering the boat back alongside the PIW, it is imperative that the PIW be attached to the boat. This should be done so that the boat and PIW do not drift apart, necessitating another return. Do not rely on the PIW holding onto a line. In descending order of preference, here are some methods:

- Use a Lifesling, if you have one.
- Use the "D" rings of an inflatable harness (if being worn) to tie the PIW to the boat.
- Tie a bowline around the PIW.
- Once the PIW is attached, drop the sails. Do not leave the PIW tied to the boat unattended.

**Retrieval.** This is considerably easier if there are more than two crew members left aboard to assist. On a boat with low freeboard, the crew can often drag the PIW aboard. In flat water, and if the boat has a scoop/swim platform, the PIW can be dragged up over the stern. If shorthanded, you may need to improvise some method to aid in the retrieval:

- A line over the side with a bowline tied in the end to act as a stirrup. Any lines over the side should be tied onto the boat on the opposite side from the PIW so they can help themselves get onboard.
- A line over the side with a series of loops tied at intervals so the PIW can assist themselves, or even climb back in unassisted.
- A paddle over the side tied in the middle so it becomes a "T" bar for the PIW to stand on.
- A block and tackle (preferably four parts) rigged to a pre-hoisted halyard that is then used to lift the PIW from the water.

If you are unable to retrieve the PIW, ensure that the PIW is securely attached to the boat, and call for help on the VHF radio (MAYDAY), or attract the help of a passing boat.

**Aftercare.** Be aware that the PIW may be suffering from hypothermia (see page 70). Get the PIW back ashore as soon as possible. Unless you are sailing in tropical waters, you should treat this as a serious first aid issue.

## On the Water:

- Review the steps of the process as you motor or sail to a suitable location. The Hospital Point anchorage, Scotts Creek, and the area in front of Freemason are all good spots, depending on the wind direction.
- Ask the helmsperson if they want to review the steps one last time before you throw in B.O.B. (buoy overboard).
- Check the area for traffic **before** you throw Bob in. Consider where it will drift if the person is not successful the first, second, or thirteenth attempt.
- Go through the process of retrieval. Bob must be within hands reach (rescue swimmers are not an option, an unconscious person will not swim to the boat, and I have not yet met someone who would like to be brought back to the boat by a harpoon), and the boat must be stopped. Dragging a 200 pound person at two knots will simply dislocate someone's shoulder.
- Rotate people out often. If someone is having trouble, have everyone say each step as it is being performed. This builds the team atmosphere (MOB is a team event) and helps the helmsperson.
- The helmsperson should not be the one reaching in the water for Bob. He or she should be focused on keeping the sails flogging and maneuvering the boat. Time and again, I have seen the person steering stare at Bob coming alongside while simultaneously falling off, filling the main, and picking up speed.
- This can be very stressful, so give an overwhelmed helmsperson a break. Many adults, especially parents, recognize the gravity of the situation.
- Have fun, and watch for traffic!