



OFF SOUNDINGS CLUB

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TO: Board of Governors
FROM: Dick Roberts
SUBJ: Thoughts on the PFD Issue

Here are some thoughts on the PFD issue. It is recommended that we cogitate for a while and decide at our January 22nd meeting what the Off Soundings Club should do.

A. The "PFD Prescription" is a US SAILING Prescription to the Offshore Racing Council (ORC) Special Regulations. It is in effect only when an Organizing Authority places into effect an ORC Category for a race, usually Category 4 locally. The Prescription, or for that matter, any part of the ORC Regs can be waived or modified for a given race. For example, most are modified to permit flares approved by the US Coast Guard in lieu of the required SOLAS flares.

Most races held in Long Island Sound (north of the Race) prescribe no Category. As stated above, for those, the PFD Prescription does not apply. Some, but not all, races that go outside Fishers Island call for Category 4. Some overnight races that go around Block Island prescribe Category 3. Where a Category is invoked, the PFD Prescription applies, unless it is waived or modified.

The Prescription is, as I last recorded it:

Categories

US SAILING prescribes that all personnel on deck shall wear personal flotation while starting and finishing without exception, and at all other times except when the captain of the boat directs that it may be set aside.

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B. I have obtained a copy of a crew overboard study done by the Lake Michigan Sail Racing Federation. The study looks at 46 cases of people going into the water in Lake Michigan over the last 35 years. The study is cited in an article by John Burnham which will appear in an upcoming issue (December-January) of *Sailing World* magazine.

Some of the conclusions of the study may be of interest in the OSC study of the PFD question for our races.

- The most likely way to go overboard is if the boat sinks (collision, grounding).
Other ways: slipping, washed through the lifelines, hit by boom.
- Most likely to go over is the bowman. Helmsman is half as likely.
- In one-third of the incidents, multiple crew were in the water.
- Nearly one-third of the overboards happen at night.
- There is a high incidence of going overboard before or after a race or in benign situations where the crew is less vigilant.

- Wind strength: in 74% of cases winds were less than 27 kn, 40% less than 18 kn. Majority of cases were in wave heights of 3 feet or less.
- More than one-third of the cases resulted in injury or death.
- In 40% of the cases, the man overboard was wearing a PFD.
- Of the nine who died, two wore PFDs, but one of those was fatally injured in a collision. Four were not wearing PFDs and three were not recovered and were probably not wearing PFDs.

It is evident, through the recent case histories, that many of the Lake Michigan boats had conducted practice man overboard drills.

C. We should remember to keep this in perspective.

Lake Michigan is not San Francisco Bay, where PFDs must be worn while racing.

Lake Michigan is not Chesapeake Bay, where in 1998, the CBYRA deleted reference to the ORC Regulations, leaving the individual clubs to add the ORC Regs, and thus the PFD Prescription (or not), if they wished.

Lake Michigan is not Block Island Race Week, which may waive the Prescription for 1999.

Lake Michigan is not western Long Island Sound, where in 1998, the YRALIS reverted to its own safety equipment regulations, thus omitting the ORC Regs and its Prescription.

Our races are not run at night.

D. Our position last year was similar to that of the YRALIS. We have for some time used our own adaptation of Category 4 of the ORC Regs. Last spring, because we could not find out the wording of the US SAILING Prescription to the ORC Regs prior to our April meeting, we decided not to add the Prescription's wording to the Off Soundings Equipment Standard for our 1998 Race Series. But we did quote in the Sailing Instructions the following from Rule 1.2, "Each competitor is individually responsible for wearing personal buoyancy adequate for the conditions."

Note that Rule 40 states, "When flay Y is displayed before or with the warning signal, competitors shall wear life jackets or other adequate personal buoyancy."

Many Organizing Authorities shy away from putting the Race Committees in a position to have to make that decision -- by deciding to write into the Sailing Instructions that PFDs are to be worn anytime on the water (usually for Juniors) or by declaring that they won't use the Y flag, and now, through the use of the US SAILING Prescription.

Requiring the PFDs be worn at the start and finish means that they're there, they're on. You don't have to go searching for your PFD (down below in the hanging locker) when suddenly it's needed -- if there's a collision or you're all of a sudden out through the lifelines and into the water.

Should Off Soundings take the lead, locally, and show the rest of the clubs what to do?

E. At its October 1998 Annual General Meeting, US SAILING reaffirmed its position on the PFD Prescription. There was one proposal to eliminate the requirement for wearing your PFD at the finish, but it was not approved.