

Keelboat racing and seeking assistance

There have been a number of occasions this season where the RNLI's Howth based lifeboats have been launched to assist HYC keelboats experiencing difficulties during or after Club racing. The 'casualties' were not in imminent danger nor was there a threat to life.

The essence of our sport is self-reliance and rendering assistance when the need arises. A lifeboat being launched unnecessarily to assist a HYC keelboat reflects poorly on the Club and the members' ability to look after each other.

Whilst the RNLI and the rescue services are always willing to provide assistance when called upon, it is unreasonable to call upon them if a boat can be safely returned to the Harbour without their involvement.

If there is a threat to life or to safety an early call for assistance is always recommended. Issue a MAYDAY on Channel 16 and provide the required information.

IF THERE IS NOT AN IMMINENT THREAT TO SAFETY

If a boat suffers damage or a failure whilst racing that threatens its ability to return to the Harbour without assistance.

1. Call the Race Committee on VHF. For Club racing the Race Committee will be listening on **Ch 77**. Tell them what the problem is and what assistance is required. **DO NOT CALL ON CHANNEL 16**. Ch 16 is monitored by the Coastguard and use of it is likely to result in the RNLI being tasked, regardless of whether their intervention is required.
2. If unable to raise the Race Committee, check for nearby competitors. Hail and advise them what the problem is and what you would like them to do to assist – relay a message, provide fuel, provide a tow or pass a message on.
3. If necessary, call the Marina Office on VHF Ch 37 (may be identified on some handheld VHF's as 'M1'). Set your VHF to transmit on high power to improve the chances of the transmission being received.
4. If the Marina Office is not responding to VHF calls, try a mobile phone call to them on **01 8392777**.

All HYC keelboats should have an anchor warp and suitable anchor aboard whilst racing. If there is no urgency in getting the boat back to the Harbour (not taking on water or otherwise under imminent threat, such as off a lee shore), the boat should drop anchor and await assistance. A tow from a competitor or from the Committee Vessel after completion of the race will resolve the situation with minimum inconvenience to others.

HYC RIBs are not fitted out nor permitted to tow keelboats. However, if there is racing underway there will normally be at least one afloat to assist the Race Committee and they may be able to send the RIB to offer advice or relay a message. The HYC launches may also be able to assist boats in the Sound, depending on conditions.

Rendering assistance to competitors is recognised in the Racing Rules of Sailing and RRS 1.1. is clear on obligations to competitors in danger by requiring that:

A boat or competitor shall give all possible help to any person or vessel in danger.

RRS 62.1 provides for the granting of redress to a boat whose score or place suffers due to **'giving help (except to herself or her crew) in compliance with Rule 1.1'**

Regardless of the Rules, all HYC skippers are expected to lend assistance afloat to those requiring it. It may only be a short term 'lend' that you may need to reclaim sooner than you would prefer.

Safe sailing