



## **"View from the Other End of the Towline and Hoist Cable"**

### **Coast Guard Search and Rescue (SAR) and Safety Preparations for Offshore Sailing**



The Coast Guard has 11 Missions including SAR. It does 64 SAR cases, saves 12 lives & assists 68 people in distress every day. CG assets shift from one mission to another routinely and divert to SAR as highest priority mission. Person in water is highest SAR priority.

CG mindset is from a power-boat (ample electrical power) and law enforcement view, so abnormal lights and not answering the radio will raise suspicion. Keep the radio on channel VHF-FM 16/13 and keep proper running lights on.

CG teams with International Community and Dept. of Defense (Army, Navy, Air Force & Marine Corps) for SAR/LE. Also with Merchant Marine (AMVER) and state/local/private entities.

CG tries to balance its Safety, Security, and Law Enforcement missions with your sailing pleasure. Therefore, keep clear of the big guys, keep the radio on 16/13 VHF-FM, cooperate if the CG wants to board, and remember that CG vessels and people are armed, just like your local police officers.

**AMERICA'S WATERWAY WATCH: 1-800-424-8802 or 1-877-24WATCH.** Report anything abnormal/suspicious. You know your local waters. Call CG or local law enforcement on Channel 16 VHF-FM or 911 for imminent danger or threat.

#### **SAFETY AT SEA OVERARCHING THEMES:**

- 1. Avoid Trouble**
  - 2. Self-Rescue**
  - 3. Outside Assistance.**
- \*Call early & Beware Cascading Casualties.\**

"Preparation Equals Performance." **POSITION and PFDs.** If we know where you are, and you float, you GREATLY increase the chances of a successful rescue and happy ending. **EPIRBs/PLBs are SUPER for position, with radio, Satellite & Cell phones as double-redundancy and to provide more details to rescue forces.**

What is your plan for collision with a floating object that causes a hole and flooding? Consider access to your hull.

Bad weather... Even the best lookouts will not be able to see you. Radars don't work well in heavy rain/seas, so you won't be detected at long range (or at all). Can your hatches, portholes, and vents keep solid water out?

**Avoid Trouble:** Have a good crew, boat, and equipment; train your crew. Practice the unexpected, unusual, and emergencies; under controlled conditions; day/night and heavy weather; and using emergency gear.

**Self-Rescue:** Be able to handle & have a plan for all usual emergencies to vessel & crew including 1<sup>st</sup> aid & seasickness.

**Outside Assistance:** Leave a float plan; Call early...the CG can put you on a Communications Schedule. SAR Checklist:

- 1. POSITION** Latitude/Longitude and general Geographic Position is best
- 2. Number of People on Board** Include significant info...injuries, disabled, children and/or elderly aboard
- 3. Nature of Distress** Sinking, dismasted, loss of steering, medical emergency, out of food/water
- 4. Description of Vessel** As it will look to rescue forces (color of hull/deck/sails, or bottom if capsized)
- 5. PUT ON YOUR LIFE JACKETS/PFDs** ***You are already in trouble; don't make it worse by losing someone.***

**Beware the big 6 that get you in trouble: COLD, WET, TIRED, HUNGRY, TIRED & SEASICK.**

**\*Rig a Preventer\***

**Phone Number for CG ATLANTIC AREA COMMAND CENTER, Portsmouth, VA: 757-398-6700.**

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Outside Assistance: Surface, Air, and Medical Advice. May be assisted by multiple assets including CG, DoD, State/Local, Good Samaritan & AMVER. They may do things differently. Be flexible and patient. Medical evacuation patients bring wallet, passport, credit cards, and prescription medication if possible. You may not be taken where you want to go.

Being Towed: CG may circle to evaluate seaworthiness & tow-points; may/may not take you off; may send people over to help; will pass towline by line-throwing gun or heaving line; will rig single-pennant, double-bridle, or snap-hook to trailer eye; may need to remove anchor from bow roller; perhaps fender float to keep heavy shackles/bridle/etc. from sinking; install chafing gear; CG vessel will have tow-watch on you & do *ops normal* checks on radio; KEEP PFDs ON!

Helo Rescue: 100+ knots of wind from rotor wash; be ready when CG arrives; clear deck of clutter & everything loose if possible; If you can make way under power, wind 30 degrees off your port bow (330 degrees relative) works best for helo; be ready to go into the water if helo can't hoist direct from your vessel; will often lower a rescue swimmer to help...listen to helo (on radio) and the swimmer when he/she arrives. Rescue device options: basket, litter, direct deploy double lift. Don't touch the rescue device or hoist cable until it touches your vessel or you will get a mild shock from static electricity. Once grounded, holding the hoist cable to keep it from fouling is good; Helo may lower a trail line 1<sup>st</sup>... it has no static charge...grab it and use it to pull the rescue device to you. **DON'T FOUL OR TIE OFF THE TRAIL LINE OR HOIST CABLE... the helo will cut it and that could be the end of the rescue. DON'T UNHOOK ANYTHING.**

You must be seen to be rescued... Mirror great in sunny weather; flashlight can sometimes be better than strobe light; flares must be perfectly timed; Whistles can be heard further than yelling; CG aircraft have Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) that can see heat; CG aircraft have Night Vision Goggles that can see virtually any light of ANY COLOR (including Green Chem Lights); Retro Tape works amazingly well. Don't blind CG pilots by shining lights at them at short range.

**Rescue 21** is CG's new-land-based communication system to receive your VHF-FM call.

**POSITION: 406 EPIRBs/PLBs transmit signal to satellite, which alerts rescue forces...GREAT DEVICES!**

Maintain the EPRIB...ensure the info in the NOAA database is current/accurate. 207 lives saved in 88 incidents in 2011.

**PFDs: If you float, you greatly increase your chances of rescue;** Inflatable or Inherently Buoyant. Personal decision or mandated by skipper/race rules. Day/night; good/bad weather; # of crew. Service/check your PFDs. Carry spare CO<sub>2</sub>s.

**Automatic Identification System (AIS)** is wonderful emerging anti-collision tool; send and receive, or receive only.

**Know your Boat.** Visual & Electronic all work...some better than others in different conditions; simple can be better than complex. Radios & SAT Phone; 406 EPIRBs/PLBs, Visual Distress signals (red night & orange day flares), strobe lights, PFDs, Liferaft, Person Overboard Button on GPS, Lifesling/Horseshoe/Other Person Overboard Gear, Starting the Engine. Ensure crew trained on your equipment. Backups? Access if capsized? Watch the weather.

Ensure your EPIRB, PLB, and DSC Radios are registered/accurate/up-to-date, with good batteries. The CG cannot DF on Satellite or Cell Phones, and no one else can hear your call. "Party Line" nature of radios enables *Good Samaritan* response. Rescue 21 has Direction Finding (DF) capability that can determine your position.

- 1. If you float and the CG has your position, it greatly increases the chance of a successful rescue.**
- 2. PFDs, EPIRBs, and Float Plans all add up to the CG finding you. They GREATLY increase the chance of successful rescue.**
- 3. If rescue gear is not on you, you really don't have it.**



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