



OPERATING PROCEDURE No. 18

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BUOYANCY AID AND LIFEJACKET POLICY

PURPOSE

This document defines the Dart Sailability Policy on the wearing of Life Jackets and Buoyancy Aids and guidance on who should wear which.

It should be read and understood by all members.

Shore Party should apply the policy when providing sailor with Life Jackets or Buoyancy Aids.

POLICY

This Policy deviates slightly from RYA Guidance in order to allow consideration of how disabled sailors react in the water and our particular boats.

All Sailability members and anybody involved in Dart Sailability activities must wear a life jacket or buoyancy aid when proceeding on to the pontoons and when afloat.

Any Sailability Volunteer operating in a boat alone without a support or safety boat in support must wear a life jacket.

Boat Skippers and Dart Sailability Officers have the right to refuse permission for anybody to board a boat if their equipment is not properly fitted and worn. However, this does not absolve the individual of their responsibility for properly wearing their equipment if they have the capacity to do so.

Life Jackets must be worn in any boat when proceeding beyond the castles.

This rule may be relaxed for Volunteers proceeding to sea to provide safety cover, who may have to enter the water in the event of an incident. A buoyancy aid is better in this situation so may be worn by a crew member. Such a decision is for the Volunteer considering the risks and probabilities. If in doubt wear a life jacket.

Volunteers and Sailors with the capacity to make an informed decision may decide whether to wear an inflating life jacket, rigid life jacket or buoyancy aid. Making an informed decision requires an understanding of the risk of entering the water and how it might happen, where it might occur and hence the time until rescue. Qualified Sailing and Power Boat Instructors may be consulted when

making the decision. The decision also requires the Volunteer or Sailor to consider their personal abilities in the water, such as their ability to ensure that they can keep their face above water. Opportunities to try out equipment can be arranged. If in doubt wear a life jacket.

Dart Sailability Shore Party will issue life jackets and buoyancy aids as appropriate and ensure that they are suitable for the individual and have been inspected and tested annually.

Sailors and Volunteers are free to use their own equipment. Dart Sailability takes no responsibility for the suitability or fitness for purpose of personal equipment. However, Dart Sailability reserves the right for the OOD and Dart Sailability Officers to refuse permission for somebody to go afloat if, in their opinion the equipment is not suitable.

GUIDANCE

When deciding whether to wear a Life Jacket or Buoyancy Aid, Sailors and Volunteers should consider the following:

- Their personal confidence in the water and ability to right themselves and maintain their face above water. Life Jackets should right an individual and support them with head above water. Buoyancy Aids may not.
 - Dart Sailability has provided opportunities for sailors to experience Life Jackets and Buoyancy Aids in a safe environment (swimming pool) this can be done again if wanted
- The probability of entering the water and needing to swim. It is difficult to swim in a Life Jacket. At least one person on Safety and in each Support Boat should wear a Buoyancy Aid. Volunteers on all our sailing boats should wear a buoyancy aid.
- How they might enter the water in the event of an incident. A fall from any height eg over guard rails may result in shock or unconsciousness. In such circumstances a Life Jacket is recommended. Therefore, sailors and volunteers on the ARC should wear Life Jackets.
- The possibility of an automatically inflating Life Jacket not being triggered if the person is not fully immersed. This might happen in a sailing boat suffering a knock down but the person not falling fully into the water.
- The possibility of an automatically inflating life jacket tangling with ropes in a sailing boat
 - These last two scenarios occurred with a dummy when a Hansa 303 was deliberately capsized with the dummy in the lower seat.

