

Boating Communities

NEWSLETTER Number 3 May 2005

Skippers need safety training by 2008

Skippers of recreational vessels throughout Western Australia will have sufficient time to meet safety training requirements announced recently by the State Government.

Given the task of establishing a new safety training scheme for recreational skippers in WA, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure will begin implementing the scheme next summer giving skippers two years to be trained or assessed.

Remembering however, that a large percentage of skippers, being those who are already qualified or can demonstrate skills to an appropriate level, will not require any further training.

Training exemptions

The new scheme will recognise people in the boating community with significant experience on the water.

Training exemptions will apply for those who meet the criteria and experienced skippers will be able to request an assessment of their skills.

Skippers with an approved qualification such as BoatSmart, Yachting Australia's National Powerboat Scheme (TL3), National Motor Cruising Scheme (TL5), or any commercial marine deck qualifications pertaining to being a skipper of a vessel will automatically be deemed to be competent and will not have to undertake any further training or assessment.

Skippers who have held a boat registration for five years or more can elect to undertake a theoretical test to confirm their experience and knowledge. These skippers will receive a letter from the Department from January 2006, advising where they can undertake the theory test.

Skippers who believe they can demonstrate the safety standards without undertaking a full training course can elect to be assessed by an approved training organisation. A list of approved training organisations will be made available before January 2006.



Timing

Although the necessary regulations are expected to be in place by the middle of this year, compliance is not required until 2008.

As part of the implementation of the scheme next Summer the Department will be writing to all registered boat owners outlining their options in full.

BoatSmart

In the meantime, people wanting to improve their boating safety skills and at the same time gain an approved training qualification are advised to book a BoatSmart course.

BoatSmart is an approved training course that will be recognised under the new scheme. People with a BoatSmart certificate will be automatically accredited.

People wanting a list of BoatSmart course providers or further details about the new safety training scheme for recreational skippers can log on to the Department's website: www.dpi.wa.gov.au or contact Marine Safety on 9216 8999.

Boating Communities



From the General Manager Marine Safety

Safety training in Western Australia will take a positive step forward with the introduction of driver training. The Department has been working with a wide range of people and organisations including Volunteer Marine Rescue WA, Yachting Western Australia, Western Australian Police Service, Fire and Emergency Services, Maritime TAFE, Department of Fisheries as well as individual training providers and boat dealers to ensure the new training package is relevant and practical for boaters.

If you want to prepare for the introduction of compulsory training, you can take a BoatSmart course. You will then be qualified.

Details of where you can take a BoatSmart course are on our website www.dpi.wa.gov.au/imate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Riches', written over a white background.

Brian Riches
General Manager
Marine Safety



Remember to hang-on

People on board vessels must hang on if they are to avoid serious injury.

That is the simple warning from the Department's Marine Education Officers following a disturbing increase in the number of injuries caused by nasty falls on board commercial vessels and pleasure craft over the summer.

In a number of incidents passengers have sustained serious injuries after failing to brace themselves or use hand-holds at critical moments.

Falls are most common when the motor is put in gear. This is one of the most important times to make sure your passengers are sitting or holding on.

All people on board a vessel should remember the basic safety rules:

- sit down unless you have a reason to stand;
- if you are standing, hang on; and
- if you need to move, identify the hand-holds you are going to use on the way.

Skippers must ensure their passengers understand these basic safety rules and also that they know what to do in an emergency. Skippers should also check their vessel has hand-holds affixed in appropriate places, particularly with centre console boats and vessels with large, open deck areas.



Anchoring right every time

Whatever else we decide to carry in our boat, a few things will be there because the law says so. Exactly what they are depends on how far out to sea we go, but all of them are concerned with preserving us if we get into trouble or ensuring we can call for help.

So when the law calls for an anchor it has to be for a serious reason and that is mainly to hold us in position if we break down.

This is one of the few bits of gear with practical as well as emergency uses. Anchoring is what we do to fish, have lunch, or stay on the water overnight.

As with most boating activities, anchoring to a system makes it simple and safe.

Step 1 – get it all ready

Check that the anchor rope is tied to the boat at one end and to the chain at the other. Make sure the anchor line runs off the top of the coil of rope, if it runs out from underneath, the line will tangle.

Step 2 – choose your site

Sometimes you can't choose the site, but if you can, go for sand - sand holds best. Avoid weed because most anchors will not hold in it and the weed is damaged when an anchor is dragged through it. Rock often holds too well.

Step 3 – point into the wind

When anchoring is complete the boat will be pointing into the wind. Start off the same way.



Step 4 – stop forward motion

A bit of reverse gear is required here so the boat is stationary then you drop the anchor.

Step 5 – lower the anchor, do not throw it

This saves damage to your boat and injury to you. Lower the anchor until it hits the bottom instead of letting all the line go at once. This stops tangles.

Step 6 – move backwards as you pay out the line

The aim here is to move downwind as you pay out the anchor line. A bit of reverse gear can help. Experience says the length of the line should be three times the depth for lunch, five times the depth for overnight and 10 times the depth for a storm (although home is a much better place to be than on a boat during a storm).

Step 7 – check the anchor will hold

When the appropriate amount of line is out, tie it off and then give a short burst of reverse power. This will either dig the anchor in, or will alert you that the anchor is dragging.



Vessels are safe with a HIN



Owners of vessels without a Hull Identification Number or HIN would be wise to consider having a HIN attached to their vessel for security and peace of mind.

Introduced in 2001 as part of the BoatCode initiative, HINs have been responsible for a 90 per cent identity rate for stolen vessels since June 2003.

It's estimated that more than 70 per cent of vessels in WA now have a HIN and the Department is working hard to promote the scheme which is proving its value many times over in the recovery of stolen property and the apprehension of those responsible.

Before buying or selling a boat it is important to check if there is a HIN engraved or affixed to the hull of the vessel. If there is a HIN on the vessel but the number is not printed on the Boat Registration Certificate, the number will need to be certified by a qualified BoatCode provider. The recommended fee for this service is \$38 GST inclusive.

If there is no HIN, or if the one engraved or attached to the vessel has not been validated, responsibility for this rests with the current owner prior to the sale of the vessel.



To obtain a HIN contact a BoatCode provider. Owners are required to show Proof of Identity (POI), such as a passport or driver's licence and proof of ownership, usually your Boat Registration Certificate, and pay the recommended fee of \$55 GST inclusive. For your convenience many of the BoatCode providers have mobile services at a nominal cost.

Further information about BoatCode, HINs and BoatCode providers are available on the Department's website: www.dpi.wa.gov.au/imarine/

Coastal facilities update

Improvements at Hillarys Boat Harbour

Work is underway on the \$9 million Hillarys Boat Harbour Enhancement Program.

The first stage of the program has seen the introduction of new directional signage, refurbishments to the entry tower and major modifications to the southern car park to improve access.

The second stage of the program will see a 75 metre extension to the western breakwater to improve the wave climate within harbour waters, the replacement of E Jetty, new ablutions for penholders on the northern side of the harbour, major refurbishments to the public beach toilets and a dual use path on the harbour's northern side.

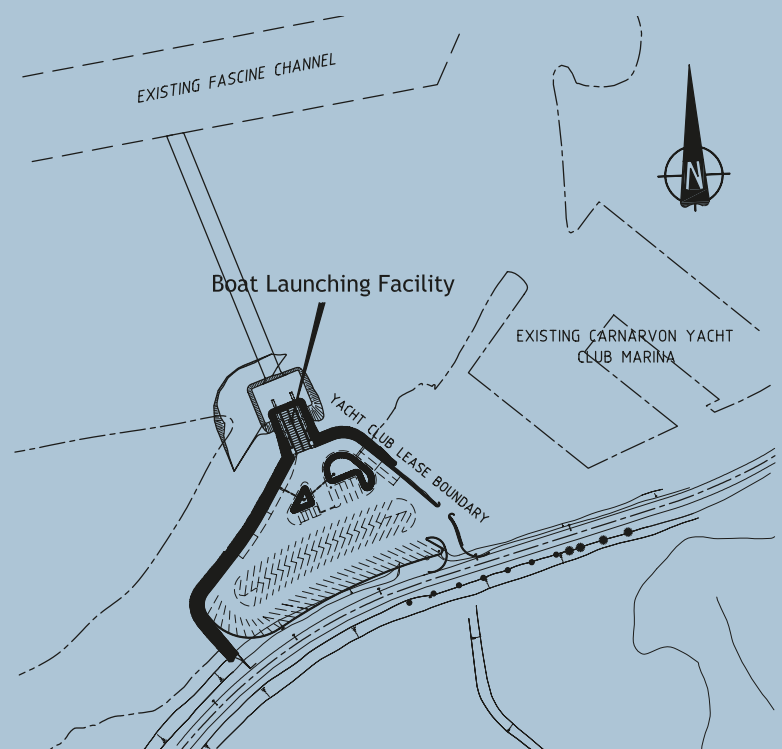
The enhancement program will ensure the harbour continues to be one of the State's premier boating facilities, a place of work for many and a popular place to visit.

New Carnarvon Boat Launching Facility

The Shire of Carnarvon's new boat launching facility is due to commence construction in mid 2005. The new facility, located near the Carnarvon Yacht Club, includes a two-lane boat ramp with dual finger jetties and associated infrastructure including a trailer parking area. It will serve as the region's primary access point for recreational boaters.

The State Government, through its successful Recreational Boating Facilities Scheme, administered by the Department, has granted \$150,000 to the Shire of Carnarvon for the first stage of the new facility.

The new facility is expected to be ready for use by the end of the year.



Marine radios

Pleasure craft travelling further than five nautical miles to sea are required by law to carry a marine two-way radio.

In the event of an emergency, a marine radio is the first choice of equipment because it allows those in distress to explain the nature of the emergency.

Having a radio is a duty as well as a safety net – unless you are actually using it to talk, you must have it tuned to the distress frequency VHF Channel 16 or 27.88 MHz or to the working frequency of the shore station that you logged on with.

Selecting a marine radio can be a daunting task given the wide range available. Keep in mind that cheaper radios generally mean decreased efficiency. Radios on pleasure boats should ideally be capable of raising a shore station from wherever you are on the water.

The following information will hopefully assist recreational boat owners in choosing a suitable unit.

27 MHz

The most common marine radio in use, this is also the cheapest option and neither the radio nor the operator requires a licence. The flipside, however, is that channels are sometimes cluttered by undisciplined users. A further disadvantage is increased background noise. The range varies greatly, but it is safest to assume an average of 15 nautical miles. All sea rescue groups monitor this radio's distress frequency 27.88MHz.



Very High Frequency (VHF)

Prices of these radios have come down, and they are becoming more popular. A VHF Radio Operator's Certificate of Competency is needed to use it, but the radio itself does not need licensing. The nominal range is about 30 nautical miles and reception is usually very clear. VHF is a particularly good choice for the Ningaloo Coast as the Exmouth Sea Rescue aerials use high naval communication towers, giving a range of 80 nautical miles or more. All groups monitor the VHF distress frequency Channel 16.



Medium Frequency-High Frequency (MF-HF)

This is the deluxe option. Expensive and requires a station licence and call sign from the Australian Communications Authority. Operators must also hold a Marine Radio Operator's Certificate of Competency. The range is virtually unlimited. They are commonly used by offshore racing yachts and serious cruisers.

Radio Courses

If you choose MF-HF or VHF, you will need to attend a short course and gain a certificate of competency. Courses are available at:

- Challenger TAFE, Fremantle
- Mid West TAFE, Geraldton
- Kimberley TAFE, Broome
- Swan Maritime Institute, Henderson
- Boat Skills Institute, East Fremantle

Most sea rescue groups also run courses. FESA has details on 92770555.

Round the Regions



Kimberley

Boat owners in the Kimberley who enjoy night fishing are reminded to ensure their vessels are fitted with the appropriate navigation lights.

Regional Transport Officer Kris Robinson said that with increased traffic during the current Barramundi season, navigation lights had become an issue in the region.

Navigation lights are required from sunset to sunrise as well as in poor weather such as fog or heavy rains. Lights must be clearly visible and displayed as required for the size and class of a boat

Different combinations of lights also tell other boaters what you are doing: whether your boat is at anchor, under sail or motoring.

The WA Boating Guide provides detailed information on the use of navigation lights for recreational vessels. Guides are available from the Department and marine dealerships throughout the region.

Kimberley Regional Office: 9192 0200.

Pilbara

The Pilbara boating community will benefit from two marine safety projects underway by the new West Pilbara Boating Community Group, established in July 2004.

Regional Services Manager Ray Buchholz said the group, made up of representatives from the Department, volunteer sea rescue groups, recreational boating and fishing groups and local marine dealerships, had given priority to addressing issues such as boating awareness and hazards.

A recent audit of marine safety issues in the region revealed 11 key issues in the region, including poor marine radio operation skills and the navigational hazards posed by Conflict Reef in Hampton Harbour and moorings in the Dampier Archipelago. The Group plans to begin development and implementation of solutions to these issues as soon as possible.

A new guide in the Department's series of boating guides - the West Pilbara Boating Guide is currently in development, it will be the definitive guide to boating in the Dampier Archipelago and waters around Point Samson. It is anticipated that the guide will be launched at the 2005 FeNaCING Festival in August.

Pilbara Regional Office: 9185 6100

Gascoyne

Gascoyne's boating community will benefit from two new appointments in the region.

Formerly a member of the Gascoyne Regional Office in Carnarvon, Chris Mather has moved to Exmouth to take up the position of Regional Coordinator.

Chris will head key marine safety initiatives in the area, in particular the current expansion of the Exmouth Boat Harbour.

Chris will oversee the development of the new harbour complex, which will include a resort facility similar to Broome's Cable Beach Resort, residential canal lots and a dual use commercial/residential complex comprising shops, bars and restaurants.

In addition, David Skene has been appointed to the position of Regional Transport Officer for the Gascoyne. David previously served as one of the Department's Marine Officers based at Fremantle and a Regional Transport Officer in the Pilbara.

Both officers are active boating enthusiasts and look forward to providing advice and information to boating communities in the region.

Gascoyne Regional Office: 9941 1830

Exmouth Office: 9949 2079.

Mid-West

The Mid-West has a new boating guide to assist boaters operating in the Batavia Coast region.

The Mid-West Boating Guide is the latest addition to the Department's popular series of regional boating guides.

Regional Services Manager Tony McCann said the guide was a valuable resource for boat owners exploring the waters off Geraldton, Kalbarri, Port Denison and Port Gregory.

The Mid-West Boating Guide gives boat owners the benefit of local knowledge, with information on hazards, facilities, speed, skiing and personal watercraft areas specific to the region.

While boating guides can be extremely useful when planning a voyage they do not replace detailed nautical charts that are vital for safe navigation.

Boating Guides are available FREE at any of the Department's offices or from local sea rescue groups, marine dealerships and dive shops.

Mid-West Regional Office: 9956 0117

South-West

A recent crack-down on speed is expected to result in higher levels of compliance in the South-West in the coming months.

Regional Services Manager Peter Kiely said Regional Transport Officers had engaged in an intensive speed education and enforcement campaign in February and March, focusing on strategic ocean, inland lake and dam areas in the region.

Officers patrolling busy waterways with hand-held laser speed guns issued 24 infringements and cautions over the period. Speed limit signs at the popular Blackwood River ski area, Geographe Bay 8 knot areas, Grand Canals in Bunbury and Port Geographe Marina have also been inspected and upgraded.

Speed was also a focus at boating education event in the region on Easter Saturday. The Marine Safety Education Day at the Dunsborough Boat Ramp targeted both local and visiting boaters over the busy Easter holiday. Officers from the Department worked alongside Police, Sea Search and Rescue and Fisheries Officers to highlight many aspects of marine safety.

South-West Regional Office: 9792 6610.

Great Southern

An increase in infringements concerning the use of Personal Water Craft or PWCs, marine radios and safety equipment has been recorded in the region over the summer months.

Regional Transport Officer Tony Fitzpatrick said boat owners should be reminded that safety regulations are designed to make our waters safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

Officers patrolling popular fishing areas like Bremer Bay report that boat owners often carry deteriorating safety equipment alongside spotless and well-maintained fishing gear. Safety equipment could save your life and should be the priority.

Skippers in the region are also reminded to log on and off with sea rescue groups when boating. Officers are currently installing and updating marine radio signs at busy waterways including Emu Point Boat Harbour and Princess Royal Harbour.

Officers also advise they will be targeting recreational areas such as Good Beach and Frenchman Bay in following weeks to reinforce regulations on PWC operation.

Great Southern Regional Office: 9841 3554

Esperance

Boat owners in the region are asked to exercise caution when approaching two navigation hazards in Bandy Creek Boat Harbour over the next few months.

Regional Transport Officer Garry Wilson reports that dredging has begun to remove sand build-up, increase water depth and widen the narrow channel entrance.

As per marine safety regulations, skippers should steer well clear of the dredge, maintain a proper lookout, and abide by directions given by the dredge skipper.

Skippers should also look out for a bright yellow waverider buoy located approximately 500 metres from the entrance to the harbour. The buoy measures wave heights and periods to aid the dredging project.

Both the dredge and the waverider buoy will be in place until September 2005.

Esperance Office: 9071 6891.



Be prepared when heading north

After a long southern summer and a warm autumn, many of us find a piece of garden for the boat to live in and, except for the occasional outing, leave it there until next spring.

The exception being retired people or those who take their holidays in winter. For them it is business as usual, operating from a few degrees further north. But is it strictly business as usual or is there more involved when you're at a different launching site?

Actually there are many differences and some of them are closely connected with safety, so what preparations should you make for a northern boating safari and what are the operating habits you should get into?

Planning

Half the fun, of course, and vital to ensure you actually enjoy yourself when you get there, is the planning.

Start with road maps and charts. Both will give you a good idea about how remote the area is. If no large scale charts are available, it is a good clue that the boating population will be thin. See if you will have to negotiate reefs and check if ramps are available. The WA Boating Guide lists most of the major ones.

Talk to as many people as possible who have been there before. Ask about mud maps, private leading marks and tips on currents, conditions and available services.

Service

A must is to schedule your servicing so the motor is fresh from the workshop for the trip. With so many people joining the northern trek these days, it is a good idea to book well ahead. This is also the right time to check other things on the boat besides the motor such as the state of the hull, the wiring, the steering and gear and throttle cables. If the battery has needed frequent top up charging or has a bad cell, now is the time to bite the bullet and get a new one.

Include the trailer in the servicing. Don't just make sure the rollers roll, check the state of the cable, look for structural problems and rust in the springs, and check the wheel bearings. If you are not mechanically minded, get your service station to repack or replace them.

Spare parts

You may not be a mechanic, but the want of a part you could fit yourself could take days off your holiday or worse, leave you drifting at sea. Your list could include fuses, a second hand propeller, gear oil, fuel line, O-rings, spark plugs and a battery charger. And for the trailer, a set of wheel bearings and a spare wheel.

Trailer loading

It's tempting to use the boat as a baggage trailer. Make sure you don't load it beyond the rating of your trailer or your car and check on the tyre pressures for a maximum load. Any heavy items should be stowed over the axles. To minimise trailer sway when towing, balance your load to achieve around 10 per cent of the trailer mass on the tow ball.

Safety equipment

Don't forget to check that your safety equipment is packed and in good condition:

- Is the battery expiry date on the EPIRB still current?
- Are the flares dry and in a good condition? (If not, then replace them)
- Is there any chafe in the anchor rope – typically where it joins the chain; has the rope faded or become hard and rough; – signs of sun damage?
- Are the tapes on the life jackets firmly attached; is there any damage to the stitching?
- Is the fire extinguisher pressure gauge in the green; is the safety pin firmly retained?
- Is the radio working correctly? (Place a test call before departing)

Extra gear

Draw up your own list – this is just a start:

- A chart of the area
- Extra fuel containers – you may be travelling much further than usual
- Sun protection – perhaps a makeshift awning
- Drinking water containers
- GPS
- Compass
- Reef anchor

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