DOWNS SAILING CLUB

# MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Participating in sailing carries an element of risk and the possibility exists that something could go wrong. Major incidents involving injury or loss of live are rarely the result of a single catastrophic problem. The progression from a situation being normal and safe to one going wrong can be very sudden. Add to this the likelihood of confused or contradictory information; especially if children are involved then there are the makings of a situation which is difficult to manage.

The first priority will be the safety and welfare of those involved in the incident. However, there needs to be a system in place to manage the Downs Sailing Clubs response to the authorities (e.g. Emergency Services, District Council, and Coroner), the media as well as club members and any friends and relatives of those involved. To do this successfully a club Major Incident Plan needs to be in place.

## 2. MAJOR INCIDENT - DEFINITION

The definition of a Major Incident is any occurrence taking place within the Clubhouse, the immediate surroundings or on the water during an event organised by the Club or involving Club members which cannot be dealt with or managed by Downs Sailing Club resources alone.

Examples include:

- Serious injury or illness requiring medical evacuation
- A squall or other episode at sea leaving more people requiring help than can be provided by the available safety boat cover
- Person(s) separated from their boat and "missing"
- Fire, structural failure or other incident within the Clubhouse or immediate surroundings requiring attendance of the emergency services.

## 3. ACTIVATION OF MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN

### 3.1 Major Incident Declared - Club Events

The Race Officer having assessed the situation with the Safety boat crew will be responsible for declaring a Major Incident. The Race Officer should ring 999 (and ask for the coastguard and ambulance or other emergency service) and follow the steps on Major Incident Action Card 1 - Race Officer/Safety Co-ordinator including assigning a senior club member to act as Incident Control Officer handing them Major Incident Action Card 2 - Incident Control Officer.

### 3.2 Major Incident Declared - Major Events

The Safety Co-ordinator having assessed the situation with the Principal Race Officer will be responsible for declaring a Major Incident. The Safety Co-ordinator should ring 999 (and ask for the coastguard and ambulance or other emergency service) and follow the steps on Major Incident Action Card 1 - Race Officer/Safety Co-ordinator including assigning a senior club member to act as Incident Control Officer handing them Major Incident Card 2 - Incident Control Officer.

### 3.3 Partial Activation of Major Incident Plan

In certain circumstances it may not be necessary to fully implement the Major Incident Plan. The Race Officer (club events) and the Safety Co-ordinator (major events) have the discretion to partially implement the Major Incident Plan depending upon the seriousness and scale of the incident. Partial implementation, should as a minimum, involve assigning a senior club member to act as Incident Control Officer and have them carry out the tasks numbered 1,4,7,8,9 and 10 as detailed in the Major Incident Card 2.

### 3.4 Incident Control Officer - see Action Card 2

The role of the Incident Control Officer is to take a “helicopter” view of the incident to ensure the appropriate action is being taken by the Club to deal with the crisis. Also to act as a point of contact with the Emergency Services

### 3.5 Press Liaison Officer - see Action Card 3

The role of the Press Liaison Officer (this person should NOT be the Incident Controller Officer & **does not** have to be the current Club Publicity Officer) is to prepare a press statement about any incident and ensure that a single consistent message is relayed to the press.

### 3.6 Relatives & Friends Officer - see Action Card 4

The role of the Relatives and Friends Officer is to act as a point of contact and offer support to the friends and relatives of any casualties or “missing” persons until the Police or Coastguard take over as appropriate.

## 4. SHORESIDE ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1 Landing Point for Rescued Persons

All persons rescued by safety boat will be brought ashore to the beach directly in front of the Clubhouse, this will be the single point of landing for all rescued persons EXCEPT in the following circumstance; if an injured person is recovered onto a safety boat, providing there is no immediate threat to life the Lifeboat (RNLI) MUST be requested to be launched to enable safe transfer to an ambulance.

### 4.2 Ambulances

Access for ambulances/paramedics will be via the north gate next to the club boat house.

### 4.3 Air Ambulance

The designated landing area for the air ambulance is on the shingle immediately south of the dinghy compound.

### 4.4 First Aid/Recovery Area

The female changing room in the clubhouse will be the temporary first aid room and recovery area.

### 4.5 Body Store

The Walmer Lifeboat Station (50m north of the Clubhouse) will be used as the holding area for bodies.

## 5. STAND DOWN

The Incident Control Officer will be responsible for authorising the Major Incident Stand Down having first consulted the coastguard. If incident is solely shore side then the decision to stand down will be made in consultation with the Police.

## 6. POST INCIDENT ACTIONS

### 6.1 Media

Media interest is likely to continue 2-3 days after the event; this may be longer in the event of a fatality. Arrangements will have to be made to ensure the Club is able to continue to respond to press enquiries.

### 6.2 Statements

Particularly in the event of a fatality, statements should be taken from all competent witnesses as soon as is practicable, whilst memories and views of the incident are still fresh and not influenced by hindsight.

### 6.3 Document Preservation

It is important to maintain in a safe place for future reference by the relevant authorities such as police, coroner, Marine Accident Investigation Branch the documents associated with the incident e.g. list of safety boat crews and the details of any briefing they were given. Included in things to be kept are any items of equipment directly relevant to the incident e.g. buoyancy aids.

### 6.4 RYA

In the event of the Major Incident Plan being activated and in particular if a serious injury afloat resulting in the hospitalisation of an individual or a fatality, the RYA should be contacted as soon as possible with details of the incident.

### 6.5 Club Members

Members will need to be informed about the incident and updated as appropriate. If at all possible new information should be available to members before its publication in the media. By email not by Facebook or any other public media.

### 6.6 Debriefing

Learn any lessons following activation of the Major Incident Plan by having a debrief session of all those involved in its management, a week after the event.

## 7. PREVENTION / PRE-EVENT PREPARATION

### 7.1 On-Water Preparation ~ Club Events

There must be constant vigilance of the sailing area with the Race Box being staffed at all times that there are organised activities afloat.

The Race Officer is responsible for safety co-ordination. The number of safety boats should be commensurate with the number of dinghies on the water and the prevailing conditions. The recommended ratio of participating boats to safety boats should be 15:1. Providing at least one boat is on the water at all times, subsequent safety boats need not be afloat if the prevailing conditions and location of the sailing activity is reasonably close to the Clubhouse. However, these additional boats must be available for immediate launch. All safety boats must be equipped with radio communications, which must be checked and confirmed before going afloat.

Race box radio base station operates on channel 37. Channel 16 is only to be used in an emergency for contacting the coastguard. Spare hand held radios will always to be available for mobile communications. Mobile 'phones could be used as a back up as a last resort.

### 7.2 On-Water Preparation ~ Major Events

Daily safety boat briefings must be held (Where competitors in a major event are predominantly under the age of 18 years e.g. Topper National Championships, a Safety Boat ratio of 12:1 is recommended). A dry wipe board for individual safety boat status, location and call sign etc. in control box. Details of all crews noted, including those qualified in first aid. A list of current qualified RYA First Aiders will be posted in the DSC Foyer.

The Coastguard must be informed of any major event and invited to have representative on site during the event. (Similarly, RNLI, Police and Ambulance service to be made aware) (HM Coastguard will be present throughout a major championship e.g.Topper Nationals)

The Safety Co-ordinator is to have specific responsibility for the safety of all competitors. (Wherever possible, the race management team is to use a different channel / communication format to communicate). The responsibility of the Race Officer is to advise the Safety Co-ordinator of the names of all race management / committee boat crews afloat.

The Safety Co-ordinator should ensure all safety boats are fully equipped. An equipment list should be attached to individual safety boats**.** All safety boats are to be equipped with lengths (typically 1m~2m) of tape (usually red/white stripe) to be

attached to the bows of any dinghy that is abandoned, but where the crew(s) is safe and accounted for**.**

A safety log to record who is on and off the water must be operated e.g. tally boards / sign on-sign off sheets to include safety boat and race management teams as noted above.

### 7.3 Annual Review of Plan

This Major Incident Plan should be reviewed at least every three years, prior to the start of the sailing season by the Executive Committee.

### 7.4 Appendices

Action Card 1 – Race Officer/Safety Co-ordinator
Action Card 2 – Incident Control Officer
Action Card 3 – Press Liaison Officer
Action Card 4 – Relatives & Friends Officer
Key Telephone numbers

originated by Dave Webb - Commodore 2002