

## Overboard Prevention and Recovery

I: Prevention is the key to success in this field—it's EASY to go overboard at sea, and damned hard to recover anyone in a seaway.

II: Traditional techniques didn't work very well.

A. Reach out and back always resulted in losing sight of the victim.

1. CCA statistics of losses pointed to losing sight of the victim as the most critical element in non-recovery.

B. Errors were also possible, due to necessity of noting course on the way out, subtracting 180deg from that and coming back on a reciprocal heading. About 50% of the time, the course back was NOT the reciprocal. Not good odds.

III: Two organizations developed (independently) alternative techniques, which attempted to keep the victim in sight while maneuvering the boat to recovery.

A. USNA developed the Quick-Stop method for full racing crews. (Described fully in the OSRs). It's quick, reliable and adjustable—but it requires a jibe which may not be advisable in some boats or under heavy air conditions. And it requires an athletic crew to effect a "macho" recovery, by just grabbing the victim by his/her arms and hoisting them aboard.

B. The Seattle Sailing Foundation developed the Lifesling and the circling maneuver required for its use. (This is also described in the OSRs.) Note that both maneuvers involve stopping the boat by turn her into the wind with the jib backed, the sailing a circle around the victim. But the Lifesling maneuver can be done with a single sailor left aboard the boat, so is available to the couple cruising alone.

C. These systems work for most boats, but require practice.

IV: Very high performance boats (canting keels, water ballasted, and catamarans) cannot recover POBs using these methods. They are going too fast to stop quickly without doing serious damage to the boats. So they need a POB button at the helm station, so they can quickly establish a point of entry of the victim on the navigation system; and then slow the boat safely which may take a mile or more. Usually they will then motor back to the victim's navigational position as plotted. Wearing a homing device is usually required on these boats, so recovery can be effected quickly.

V: In all cases, the victim should be treated for hypothermia and shock upon recovery. Take them below, get them out of their wet clothes and into dry clothes and warm them slowly, by wrapping them in blankets or sleeping bags, giving them hot drinks (no caffeine or alcohol, as both affect blood circulation and may send colder blood to the heart). Keep them quiet for at least an hour and make sure they have stopped shivering.

VI: Summary: POB is a difficult and life-threatening problem. In coastal and inland waters, it IS a Mayday situation, and all emergency notification procedures (including flares) should be initiated in case you are not able to recover the victim quickly. If you do so, you can cancel the Mayday easily.

Remember:

--Stay aboard! Use harnesses. (Seasick folks on deck should always be tethered to the boat—and if you can't convince the guys to use a pot to take a leak, require them to tether themselves as they go aft.)

--Wear flotation!

--Practice the overboard recovery method you have selected, with the crew who will sail offshore with you. YOU may be the victim, you know.

--Think ahead, on every watch, to be ready to recover someone who goes over.