



SOUTH AFRICAN SAILING

INLAND AND OFFSHORE

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SAS National Offshore Committee Report - 2008

This committee has had an interesting year with many varied issues addressed.

The new Small Vessel Safety Regulations (SVSR) which came into effect on 8 August last year, and will affect all 'inland' waters vessels from 8 August 2008 - THIS YEAR, have required an inordinate amount of time to understand, and have been very difficult to interpret in some areas. Advice on these new regulations is being disseminated as and when their intention and interpretation is understood.

Regrettably this task has not been as simple as it should have been, and there have been delays, but, these have been inevitable. There are still more issues anticipated as proposed amendments are considered and hopefully promulgated.

My thanks to Rob Tarboton, Lance Burger and Patrick Holloway for their time and input in this regard.

In terms of the new SVSR, we are required to issue to Certificates of Fitness (CoF) to all vessels over 9-metres in length. Vessels require a physical inspection which is done by SAS volunteers. This is a thankless task as most owners do not believe that they require this annual inspection, so do it begrudgingly and with ill-humour, sometimes venting their frustrations on the inspector. However, the biggest problem is that the new regulations have taken away from SAS the right to add to the minimum requirements to make vessels safe when they go to sea. The offshore committee, and indeed our inspectors too, are of the opinion that SAMSA needs to address this issue urgently and revert to the previous status quo. Hopefully this will be rectified in the near future.

In terms of the regulations there is a misconception that if a vessel is exempt from requiring a CoF, it has got off scot free and can do what it likes. WRONG. The regulations are very clear in that while vessels under 9-metres do not require a CoF, they still HAVE to COMPLY with the regulations. All boat owners should note this and ensure that their vessels comply.

I would like to thank all our examiners, both SAMSA and SAS for their diligence and commitment when inspecting vessels.

Sailtraining continues to be the cornerstone of our existence, and in this regard we have all our examiners around the country to thank for their diligence and

commitment in maintaining the standards we require. These are all volunteers who are happy to give of their time for SAS.

Late last year the National Offshore Committee agreed to have the current sailtraining curriculum modernised and updated. We appointed our two Senior Examiners, Kelvin Thomas and Russel Sher, plus Jannie Hofmeyr with this task. These guys have spent an inordinate amount of time on this project, and subject to some minor adjustments, the new sailtraining curriculum will be rolled out later in the year.

What this new curriculum does is recognise the use of GPS as a primary means of navigation today, and require candidates to be fully conversant in navigating with electronic aids. Less emphasis will be placed on celestial navigation, although sufficient knowledge will still be required as all electronic may fail while on passage. More emphasis on weather, seamanship and electronic aids has been introduced.

The new curriculum is modern and more relevant to the sport as it is today, and is likely to be in the future - and will hold it's own against all similar sailtraining schemes around the world.

What all sailors in this country need to know, and understand clearly, is that the SAS Certificate of Competence is `the drivers` licence for taking a vessel to sea. No other certificate of competence is valid, unless held by a national of another country, and then for a three month period only.

Last year we had discussions of mutual interest with Simon Jinks of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA). These have again re-opened the channels of communications between the two bodies.

Handicapping is always an issue in sailing. I am happy to report that the IRC handicapping system is working well at the top level. However, PHRF or `Club` Handicaps continue to be an issue. There is an initiative to have a standardised PHRF-type system set up in the country.

During the RNYC Windhoek Regatta off Durban last year Derrick Wilkes lost his boat which sunk after taking water. Fortunately Derrick and his crew were rescued almost immediately by fellow competitors. Our thanks to Ron Pet and his young crew from Glenwood High School who displayed exception seamanship.

While this was simply an accident, what we did learn from it is that all boats with lifting or retractable keels MUST have some method of locking the keel down when sailing. And, vessels with an opening, or hatch, below the vessels sheerline, must sail with a washboard permanently fitted as this will assist in preventing water ingress should a vessel broach or be knocked down.

As there are too many people involved in the affairs of the SAS Offshore Committee to mention individually, I would like to take this opportunity to thank every single person who has contributed to the success of SAS during the past year.

The SAS staff in all regions continue to embrace the work of the Offshore Committee and deal with members queries with confidence and commitment. Thank you all.

In conclusion I would like to thank the SAS Council for their foresight in employing Sandy Ostendorf in a full time capacity to manage all offshore affairs throughout the country. Sandy has grasped the job with enthusiasm and in her normal efficient manner has taken the load off many people and streamlined offshore affairs - all to the benefit of our members and administrators.

Richard Crockett