



SOUTH AFRICAN SAILING

Appointed Authorised Agent of the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA)

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Annual Report of the National Inland and Offshore Committee (NIOC)

18 July 2010

Infrastructure and SAMSA audits

Several systems audits of the offshore systems in the SAS Cape Town office were conducted in the first half of 2009. Listings and CoF's were satisfactory, but the processing and filing of skippers tickets was consistently unsatisfactory. The audit process ultimately led to a disciplinary process. The staff member concerned resigned at the end of August. We informed SAMSA of the problems that had been exposed by our internal audit process and the action we had taken.

The SAMSA audit of the Cape Town office followed immediately in September 2009. SAMSA graciously accepted that SAS had taken appropriate action and the problems they found in the register of skippers were being corrected. SAMSA reissued our letter of authority on this basis.

A temporary employee was brought in to work through the files of skippers tickets in the Cape Town office and bring the register of skipper's tickets in line with the files. The problems uncovered in this process were so substantial that the job took 5 months.

The SAMSA audit of the Durban office in July 2009 was a far stricter audit. Some of the findings reflected a lack of understanding by SAMSA of the regulations as they apply to SAS. Others reflect a breakdown in our systems.

It is clear that if SAS is to retain its privileges as a certificating authority, new levels of control will have to be introduced. Because we have no general manager to audit critical systems we may have to include audit responsibilities in the "job descriptions" of the relevant members of the Offshore Committee.

Revision of the 2007 National Small Vessel Regulations and Marine Notice 13

Towards the end of 2009 SAMSA created a Small Vessel Technical Committee. The committee essentially consists of representatives from SAMSA and the authorised agencies. SAS has a concern that some of these agencies are not representative of recreational boating and essentially only represent their own commercial interests. The initial proposal – drafted by SAMSA and one of the agencies – was most unfavourable to SAS.

The most extreme problems with this draft proposal were:

1. All sailing vessels down to 3m would require a CoF and the skipper would require a skipper's ticket.
2. Any sailing boat without a buoyancy certificate (this would include all keelboats) would require a life raft at sea even for day sailing.

These extremes were overturned at the next meeting but many other aspects of the draft which are unfavourable to sailing have yet to be addressed.

However our general concerns were raised at a subsequent meeting between the Department of Transport, SAMSA and SAS. It would appear that SAMSA will be more sensitive to the needs of the sailing community.

Keith Stewart has volunteered to represent SAS on the Small Vessel Technical Committee with support from the rest of the Offshore Committee. If Rob M'Crystal becomes President of SAS he will continue to play a key role opposite SAMSA.

Croatia

In early May this year we became aware that Croatia had introduced a requirement that anyone wishing to charter a yacht in Croatia has to have an approved skipper's ticket. To get the SAS ticket approved we were able to supply the Croatian "Ministry of the Sea" with a very comprehensive pack of information on our SAS tickets including

- Detailed syllabuses
- The sample chartwork questions on the SAS web site
- The sample oral questions on the SAS web site
- The examiner's code of conduct and the examination protocols
- The chartwork and Colregs exams
- The format and content of the practical examinations.

The outcome was published on their web site in June. Any SAS skipper from Day Skipper upwards can now charter a yacht in Croatia.

It was very encouraging to see that the American Sailing Association's "Basic Coastal Cruising" ticket and the US Sailing Association's "Basic Keelboat" are limited to 6 nautical miles from the coast, but the SAS Day skipper has no such limitation. It is, we think, reasonable to attribute this success to the detailed work that has gone into defining the SAS syllabus and associated documentation and examination system over the last year or two.

A great many South Africans sign up for very expensive RYA sailing courses because of the perceived international recognition of the RYA qualifications. Some of the income from these courses flows back to the top end of the RYA training schemes and contributes substantially to the success of the British sailing team in the Olympics. If we can enhance the international credibility of the SAS qualification, we should be able to retain some of these funds in South Africa rather than contributing to the British Olympic effort.

Costs

The costs of offshore services – Listings, CoF's and CoC's – are a concern to the Offshore Committee. We have attempted to contain costs at every opportunity. When Sandy Ostendorf (now Samways) left in November 2008 she was not replaced. When Robyn Africa left in August 2009 she was not replaced. Thus the number of staff involved in offshore activities has reduced from 4 to 2.

Costs however remain a concern.

SAS Internet Site

There is ample opportunity for our members to become confused about the complexity of the National Small Vessel Regulations or frustrated with the associated bureaucracy - listings, registrations, CoF's, CoC's, going foreign and controlled events. Our objective has to be to simplify the process as far as possible, and then document the system clearly and simply on the SAS web site.

We have made a good start in this regard. Most of the information is now available on the SAS web site, and most of the forms have been simplified and updated. There is more work to do in this area, but the big step forward depends on computer systems. SAS members should be able to make their applications on line and should be able to track progress on line.

The road ahead

Some of the key objectives for the offshore committee are:

1. Ensuring that any changes to the 2007 National Small Vessel Regulations are favorable to sailing and strike a sensible balance between safety, bureaucracy and cost.
2. Improving the credibility and international recognition of the SAS skipper's ticket.
3. Developing internet based computer systems which improve the service to SAS members, enhance the robustness of our data base and reduce operating costs.
4. Updating the Inland Waters sailing syllabus to bring it in line with the rest of the sailing syllabi.

In conclusion I would like to thank the many people involved in the affairs of the SAS National Inland and Offshore Committee – the SAS staff, the safety officers and safety surveyors, the examiners and the members of the offshore committee - for the huge contribution they have made to sailing in the last year.

Jannie Hofmeyr

Chairman, SAS National Inland and Offshore Committee

15 July 2010