

## Annual Report of the National Inland and Offshore Committee

July 2012

### Inland and Offshore Certification Database

The Inland and Offshore certification database went live at the end of January 2012. The system automates the generation of certificates and the recording of these certificates in a database. The certificates are:

1. Certificates of Listing
2. Certificates of Fitness
3. Certificates of Competence

The system has by and large met expectations, namely

1. Improved back office productivity
2. Robustness of the database. This is important from a SAMSA audit perspective. It will no longer be possible to issue a certificate without recording it in the database.

Although producing certificates is now slick and efficient, the improvements have highlighted other productivity problems. Many members use internet banking to pay for Certificates of Fitness and other certificates, but do not reference the payments adequately, leaving the SAS office with a matching problem. And in some cases, new owners have not transferred the yacht into their name, so the owner shown on the CoF does not match the Certificate of Listing. Sorting out these problems takes a lot of time. If we want to bring costs down we will have to find ways of improving on these aspects. One possibility might be to move to on line credit card payments which would create an immediate link between the payment and the vessel. Another option would be to insist on a few unpopular rules. If safety officers insisted on seeing the certificate of listing and getting a copy of the proof of payment the problem would disappear.

### Inland Waters Syllabus and Examination Regime:

The inland waters syllabus was not revised with the rest of the syllabuses in 2008/2009. This has of course not prevented SAS from examining and certifying inland waters skippers to the old syllabus, but it is obviously important to have consistency from Inland Waters Skipper to Yachtmaster Ocean – and have to have the essential information available in a consistent way on SAS' web site.

A draft of the inland waters syllabus and examination procedures was discussed in some detail at a meeting in Northern region in November 2011. The revised syllabus and associated documentation is now available on the SAS web site.

## **SAMSA Regulations:**

There have been three positive developments here:

1. **Going foreign:** Getting a yacht registered to go foreign through SAMSA is an expensive process and brings on-going expense and frustration. This puts skippers off trying international races like the Vasco da Gama (Maputo) and Governor's Cup (St Helena) race. SAMSA have now agreed that these races can be done under a temporary pass.
2. **Prop shafts:** One of the frustrations of owning a yacht registered to go foreign is the SAMSA inspection and the requirement to pull the prop shaft and blue the taper every 3 years. Based on recent discussions it would appear that we have persuaded SAMSA that pulling the prop shaft and blueing the taper is not appropriate for yachts which typically have an auxiliary engine and a 25mm shaft.
3. **Life jackets:** It is recognised internationally that bulky foam lifejackets are not appropriate for working on the foredeck of a racing yacht – or for cruising. So internationally they have been replaced by inflatable lifejackets. However the combination of SAMSA and NRCS specifications and approval processes has made it increasingly difficult to import these items even as buoyancy aids. Currently Harken are having difficulty getting approval to import the award winning Spinlock series of lifejackets which have full ISO approval because the SAMSA specification called for dual chamber inflation. We have now succeeded in getting the dual chamber inflation requirement lifted for vessels up to Category C (Marine Notice 18 of 2012) but there is more work to do to make inflatable lifejackets more accessible.

The first item on the list above is in the bag, but the next two items are still work in progress. And progress is too slow. Part of the reason for this is that we are really only working through SAMSA's Cape Town office. We need to build working relationships in all the regions between SAS and the local SAMSA offices – and then use these relationships to persuade the influential folk in SAMSA that the things we are asking for are reasonable and technically sound. Emotional arguments have a very negative impact on technical people, but well supported technical logic carries a lot of weight.

## **The International Certificate of Competence (ICC)**

In 2011, as a result of work done by SAS, SA became the first country outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to be authorised to issue the ICC. Because this was a SAS initiative, SAMSA duly authorised SAS to issue the ICC to South Africans with appropriate SAS Certificates of Competence. The ICC has proved very popular and well over 100 certificates have been issued in less than a year.

More recently, SAMSA were approached by individuals with SAMSA powerboat certificates of competence who also wish to get an ICC for power vessels. SAMSA immediately suggested to SAS that it would be appropriate for SAS to issue these certificates, essentially making SAS the certificating authority for issuing the ICC in SA. It is perhaps a sign of the improving relationship between SAS and SAMSA, and in the author's view demonstrates the benefits of working co-operatively with SAMSA.

## **Course Books for Certificates of Competence**

Compared with the SAMSA skipper's tickets, the requirements for SAS' skippers tickets are well documented. We have a detailed syllabus, sample chartwork questions and oral practical and general knowledge questions all available on the SAS web site. However candidates do complain that there is no single book that covers for instance the SAS Day Skipper or SAS Coastal Skipper syllabus.

We have made a start with a Coastal Skipper course book. Modern "print on demand" technology makes it possible to print full colour perfect bound course books at reasonable cost. For 5 books the cost is R300 each, but for 50 books the cost drops below R150 per book. The Coastal and Yachtmaster books are being tested at Good Hope Sailing Academy and are being improved with every course. The objective is to get the books to a suitable

professional standard and then print them in larger volumes for use by SAS schools and individual candidates who wish to self study. This could potentially generate a significant cash stream for Inland and Offshore, allowing us to contain or reduce the cost of certification.

## **Incident Reports**

In the UK the Marine Accident Investigation Board publishes excellent incident investigation reports. These reports are actively read by the yachting community and have huge education value. In SA, SAMSA conduct internal incident investigations into serious sailing incidents but seldom publish the findings, and as a consequence a very valuable source of safety education is squandered. We have been encouraging SAMSA to involve SAS in these investigations and to publish the findings whenever there is useful learning to be gained from the incident.

An excellent case in point was a 44 ft cat which capsized off Cape Infanta last year. As a direct result of active encouragement from SAS, SAMSA have published a summary of the incident in a marine notice 21 of 2012. This report is perhaps a bit watered down, but is a valuable start.

One of the important learning points coming out of this incident is the importance of registering the EPIRB with the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC). A very high proportion of EPIRB alarms are false alarms, and because this EPIRB was not registered with the MRCC they were unable to verify the alarm resulting in a very significant delay.

If the EPIRB on this yacht was not registered with the MRCC it is likely that there are others not registered. All category A yachts have EPIRB's, so we have set up a process with the MRCC to do a cross check on all category A yachts which have received a CoF since our database went live in January. This may not be the ideal long term process, but it will give us a handle on the extent of the problem and allow us to register any unregistered EPIRB's exposed in the check.

## **Controlled Events**

The controlled events procedure has not been implemented correctly or uniformly across SAS. Accordingly the procedure has been revised and regional chairmen have been asked to ensure that the procedure is correctly managed in each region.

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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

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