

Annual Report of the National Inland and Offshore Committee

July 2013

Back Office Productivity and the 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 of Listing (CoL's), Certificates of Fitness (CoF's) and Certificates of Competence (CoC's) and ensures that the data is correctly recorded in the certificate database. The objectives of the system were to achieve a robust database and improve productivity.

Although the system has made the production of certificates slick and efficient, it highlighted other productivity issues. Many members use internet banking to pay for Certificates of Fitness, 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 survey report does not match the Certificate of Listing and the Certificate of Fitness cannot be issued. Resolving these issues takes the certificate administrator a huge amount of time. As a result, it was necessary to continue to call in a temp from time to time during 2012 to assist with certification and related issues.

We have gone a long way towards resolving these problems by insisting on some safety officer disciplines. Safety officers will only do the safety inspection if the Certificate of Listing is present and correct and the owner provides proof of payment. This has greatly improved office productivity and one certificate administrator has just managed to cope with the certificate workload in the Cape Town office for the first 6 months of 2013.

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.

Subsequently, SAMSA was approached by individuals with SAMSA powerboat certificates of competence who also wish to get an ICC for power vessels. SAMSA immediately suggested that it would be appropriate for SAS to issue these certificates, essentially making SAS the certifying authority for issuing the ICC in SA. The number of certificates issued to date is shown in the table below:

July to December 2011	53
January to June 2012	58
July to December 2012	53
January to June 2013	78
Total to June 2013	242

Many charter companies in Europe now request the ICC.



The VHF Short Range Certificate (SRC)

The Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate – previously issued by ICASA and now issued by SAMSA – is an outdated certificate that does not cover the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) and does not allow the operator to use the Digital Selective Calling (DSC) safety features that have built into all or almost all recreational VHF radios sold in SA since 2005.

Part of the problem has been that the radio masts along the SA coastline have not been modernised to accept DSC distress alerts. However large vessels are GMDSS compliant and will all pick up a DSC distress alert, as would recreational vessels with a modern VHF radios. Many lives have been saved worldwide by the use of this technology because all you have to do to send of a DSC alert is to hold down the distress alert button for a few seconds. The DSC alert automatically includes your GPS position.

Internationally South Africans have begun to experience difficulties with the Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate because authorities want to encourage the move to modern technology for safety reasons and are concerned about situations where vessels fitted with DSC VHF radios are operated by skippers not qualified to operate the DSC functionality of their radios.

Internationally the Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate has been replaced by the VHF Short Range Certificate (SRC) which covers DSC and other aspects of GMDSS relevant to recreational vessels. In the UK the MCA appointed the RYA as the training and examining authority for the SRC certificate, and we have been encouraging SAMSA for some time to allow SAS to run SRC courses.

SAMSA have agreed in principle that SAS will be authorised to run SRC courses. We have accordingly developed a comprehensive SRC course manual in the form of a full colour booklet. We are waiting for approval from SAMSA. We have a steady stream of SAS Day Skipper candidates going off to sit the SAMSA exam for the Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate – a certificate that is out of date before it is issued.

Course Books for Certificates of Competence

We now have two books that are nearly ready to print, namely the SAS Coastal Skipper Course Book and the VHF Short Range Certificate Course Book. The SAS Yachtmaster Course Book is not that far behind.

Modern “print on demand” technology makes it possible to print full colour perfect bound course books at reasonable cost. The objective is to print books for use by SAS schools and individual candidates who wish to self study. This would do a lot to standardise the training between schools and would improve the image of SAS. It could potentially generate a significant cash stream for Inland and Offshore, allowing us to contain or reduce the cost of certification.

Certification in the longer term

It is I believe fair to say that in the long term SAS' certification activities may come under threat. It would not be good for sailing if SAMSA took over examinations and safety inspections and certification. To reduce the probability of that happening we need to do three things:

1. We need an excellent database system. We have made a good start but it needs to continue to develop. On line applications and integration with the membership database are obvious candidates.
2. We need excellent training programs. We are I believe well ahead of SAMSA here but the addition of standard SAS course books will be another significant step forward.
3. We need to be cost effective. It makes little sense that it costs more to issue a certificate than it costs to do the safety inspection or the examination. Hence the focus on productivity and back office costs.



Going Foreign

One of our major concerns is the cost of going foreign. In the UK foreign going yachts can register on-line for £25. In SA the cost is several thousand rand. We have however made some progress. In 2012 SAMSA agreed for the first time that participants in the Governor's Cup (St Helena race) could operate under a temporary pass. This year the principle was extended to the Vasco da Gama (Maputo) race.

Inflatable Lifejackets:

We are making progress in this arena, even if it is painfully slow. As a result of SAS' persistence, single chamber inflatable lifejackets were approved in principle for use as life jackets on vessels up to category C (Marine Notice 18 of 2012). We now have several lifejackets that have been approved by SAMSA and the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS).

Unfortunately the approval process is extremely tedious. SAS helped Harken get their award winning Spinlock lifejacket through the first stage in the approval at SAMSA. However, notwithstanding a very constructive meeting with the Minister, the process is still bogged down at the second stage which is approval by the NRCS.

There is I believe little point in the lengthy and tedious approval process. Both SAMSA and the NRCS are stretched. It would make sense for lifejackets which have been approved in the EU to ISO 12402-3 to be approved almost automatically allowing SAMSA and the NRCS to get on with higher added value activities.

EPIRB's

The capsizing of the 44 ft cat *Gulliver* off Cape Infanta in 2011 demonstrated the importance of registering EPIRB's with the MRCC. US Coastguard statistics in the USA show an EPIRB false alert level of 96% and one SAMSA officer estimates that the false alert level in SA exceeds 99%. Because *Gulliver's* EPIRB was not registered through the Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC), the MRCC was unable to verify their EPIRB alert in any way. The resulting delay very nearly cost lives and led to a challenging NSRI night rescue in horrific conditions which won an IMO award in 2012.

To prevent a recurrence, SAS conducted a registration check with the MRCC of all the EPIRB's on category A vessels. Only 85% were registered. This check is now being done on a routine basis and being corrected on an on-going basis.

Controlled Events

The controlled events procedure was revised in 2012 and now appears to be running smoothly. Full details are on the SAS web site. We need to establish a central register of controlled events so that we can review the nature of the exceptions which are being granted by the regions and begin to work towards national guidelines.

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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