

## Annual Report of the National Inland and Offshore Committee

July 2014

### Computer systems, back office productivity and certification costs

The Inland and Offshore certification database went live at the end of January 2012. The system automated 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. It has also helped to reduce costs. Based on the limited data available, SAS Offshore generated a very substantial surplus for the first time in the 2013/2014 financial year.

Based on this a 7% decrease in price was recommended. This is important for two reasons:

1. A few years ago SAMSA started to authorise other agencies to issue certificates for sailing vessels. SAMSA were persuaded to restore SAS's position as the only agency servicing sailing vessels, in part because we stated that our policy was to break even rather than exploit a monopoly situation for profit. We shared with them at that time our plans to reduce costs including the detail of our first phase of computerisation.
2. Many yachties regard the SAS certificates as a "money making racket". They point to the fact that the honourarium paid to examiners and safety officers who do the work is far less than the certificate administration costs imposed by SAS. A letter from John Levin to Richard Crockett's Sailing magazine suggested that there was a conflict of interests and that SAS would have difficulty arguing for a reduction in regulations that would affect SAS' income stream. The only answer to that is to ensure that offshore services cover cost and do not fund other activities.

There are opportunities to take more cost out of the certification system. For example Gavin van der Meulen and I recently shared with SAMSA a straw model vision of how we could automate the clerical aspects of CoF administration. This includes:

1. On-line booking and payment for CoF's by the owner
2. On-line completion of the notification of completion of survey by the safety officer using a smart phone or tablet.
3. Emailing a digitally signed and encrypted CoF to the owner.

This would further reduce the workload on the office administrators, allowing them more time to audit the process. It would also allow the existing staff to take on more work like power boat certificates of competence, reducing unit costs. SAMSA are in principle supportive of these concepts.

### 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 been built into all or almost all recreational VHF radios sold in SA since 2005. In Europe the Restricted Radiotelephone Operator's Certificate has long since been replaced by the VHF Short Range Certificate (SRC) which covers DSC and other aspects of GMDSS relevant to recreational vessels. SAS has for several years raised the concern that new skippers are completing an outdated radio qualification. We also pointed out that in the UK the RYA was appointed as the training and examining authority for the SRC certificate.

In 2013 we received a strong indication from Captain Dave Colly that he was in favour of giving SAS a similar role in South Africa, and a great deal of effort has gone into the development of an SRC course and a course manual which could be published in the form of a full colour booklet.

Subsequently the radio examiners decided that SAS should have no role in the SRC course. SAS schools can of course apply to SAMSA for accreditation and all schools would of course be free to buy the SAS course manual. We however continued to work with SAMSA on the SRC course because we became alarmed at SAMSA's rather extreme proposals which included a 16 hour SRC course and a compulsory 8 hour conversion course for skippers with the Restricted Radio Operator's Certificate.

Earlier this year we were informed by SAMSA that the decision had been taken to upgrade the VHF radio stations along the South African coast to DSC by the middle of 2015 and to discontinue the monitoring of channel 16 in 2018. Upgrading the coastal stations to DSC is of course to be welcomed. However the proposal to discontinue the monitoring of channel 16 is a serious concern. Logically it would imply that all recreational vessels with VHF radios purchased before 2005 would have to upgrade to DSC VHF radios and all small vessel recreational skippers other than inland waters skippers would have to complete the SRC conversion course and write the SAMSA SRC exam.

Because of SAS's involvement in the development of the SRC course material, SAS has to some extent been drawn into the policy discussions within SAMSA and has I suspect played a role in encouraging the re-evaluation of their initial proposals. My understanding is that the proposals that finally emerge will be more reasonable and will not be imposed unilaterally. There will be a process of consultation before they are translated into regulations.

### **SAMSA audits**

SAS's previous letter of authorisation from SAMSA expired in December 2013. As part of the renewal process SAMSA audited the SAS Cape Town offices in December and the Durban offices in February. The audits were satisfactory but not excellent. SAS's letter of authorisation has been issued for a further 3 years.

Strategically I believe that it is critical that we achieve excellence in these audits. The extent to which SAMSA feel confident to delegate authority to SAS depends on the confidence they have in us and our systems. I believe the areas of focus should be:

1. Ongoing development of our computer systems and a migration from physical filing to electronic document retention.
2. A focus on the appropriate disciplines amongst all players – office administrators, safety officers and examiners.
3. Standardisation between the Cape Town and Durban offices
4. Internal audit.

There is no reason why these audit results should not be excellent.

### **Power Boat Certificates of Competence**

Many SAS clubs around the country – particularly clubs on inland waters – have both power boat and sailing boat members. These clubs would like SAS to service their members with power boat training and examinations for certificates of competence. These are mainly under 9m boats, but there is also a need for training and certification of skippers of recreational power boats over 9m.

The major problem has been finding the resource to put together the documentation and implement the systems in a way that is synergistic with our sailing boat scheme and gives us economies of scale. We have now found just such an individual – a person who has been teaching power boating for several years and would like to start a power boat school in Cape Town. SAMSA have also pointed him in our direction and he would like to operate under the SAS umbrella. He is keen to work with us to put together the scheme and implement it through his school in the full knowledge that SAS would allow other power boat schools to operate under the SAS umbrella.

SAMSA support this project and see it as part of SAS's obligation to service the needs of our member clubs.

## 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 approached SAS to also issue the ICC to individuals with appropriate SAMSA powerboat certificates of competence, essentially making SAS the certificating authority for issuing the ICC in SA. Many charter companies in Europe now request the ICC. The number of certificates issued to date is shown in the table below:

July 2011 to June 2012	111
July 2012 to June 2013	131
July 2013 to June 2014	148
Total to June 2014	390

The ICC has increased the number of skipper's tickets issued by about 25%. The increase in volume together with the productivity increases created by computer systems has obviously contributed to the reduced unit costs.

## Course Books for Certificates of Competence

We now have three course books that are nearly ready to print, namely the SAS Coastal Skipper Course Book, the SAS Yachtmaster Course Book and the VHF Short Range Certificate Course Book.

## Career Paths for holders of SAS skippers certificates of competence

Many youngsters come to South Africa every year to get RYA or IYT<sup>1</sup> certificates of competence (skipper's tickets) because the RYA and IYT qualifications create a career path to higher MCA qualifications such as 200GT or 500GT or 3000GT Master of Yachts and beyond. Because there is no such career path in South Africa, they are joined by many South African youngsters. SAS has long argued that SAMSA should create a similar career path for youngsters with SAS Yachtmaster qualifications. SAMSA have begun to recognise the importance of these arguments. This project might require significant effort but the benefits to SAS and SAMSA would be huge. It needs driving.

## EPIRB's

The National Small Vessel Safety Regulations (NSVSR) require all category A vessels (vessels going more than 40 miles from the coast) to carry a float free EPIRB. A float free EPIRB is a requirement on SOLAS vessels but the suitability of a float free installation on a small yacht is controversial. Ocean going yachts with high angles of vanishing stability are designed to pop back up again if inverted by a broken wave in an ocean storm. The yacht *Black Cat* was inverted on the Rio Race in January, but popped back up almost immediately. She lost most other means of communication when water got to the power supply and satellite phones. If her EPIRB had been installed in an external float free arrangement she might have lost that as well.

Captain Alan Britz has now accepted in principle that it should not be compulsory for an EPIRB on a small vessel to be installed in a float free mode. That does not change the National Small Vessel Safety Regulations. It does however mean that SAS does not have to enforce a float free installation.

What does however make sense is to purchase an EPIRB with a built in GPS. Without a GPS it could take up to 3 hours for the Cospas-Sarsat satellite system to get an approximate fix on an EPIRB that has been activated. With an internal GPS that time reduces to about 10 minutes and the fix is accurate. The cost of the GPS option is much less than the hydraulic float free option and provides far greater safety benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Professional Yachtmaster Training (PYT) in Durban offer training for the IYT (International Yachtmaster Training) certificates.

## **Conclusion**

After more than 5 years in the Chairman role, it is high time for a change of watch. Gavin van der Meulen will be taking over as Chairman of the Inland and Offshore Committee after the AGM in August. I have promised to assist him as he sees fit. There are many projects – too many to mention in this report – that need to be tackled or completed.

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, the examiners and the members of the offshore committee - for the assistance they have given me and huge contribution they have made to sailing in the last five years.

Jannie Hofmeyr

Outgoing Chairman, SAS National Inland and Offshore Committee

17 July 2014

