



SIDMOUTH SAILING CLUB – SAFE SAILING POLICY

2026 – Version 1

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Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Dinghy sailing, especially on the open sea, carries an element of risk. Sidmouth Sailing Club (SSC) recognises its responsibility to conduct core on-water activities in as safe a manner as practical, whilst allowing individual participants to acquire and subsequently demonstrate their developing skills in a competitive and, at times, challenging environment. Ultimately, the Club aims to promote ‘safe sailing’ that is underpinned by a risk assessment built on the accumulated experience of members that have sailed at Sidmouth over many years.

1.2 The Club will:

- a. Promote that a ‘safe sailing’ mentality be adopted by all members. The term ‘safe sailing’ covers many facets, including supervision levels, analysis of the effect/impact of weather, tide and beach conditions, matters of safety relating to boat handling ashore (including in the Boat Park, on the beach, and when transporting boats from one to the other) and safety relating to boat handling afloat.
- b. Within the scope of this document, known as the SSC Safe Sailing Policy (SSP), establish and maintain a framework for the safe management of core on-water activities. Except for the Club Constitution, other Club policies and supporting documents, such as the Sailing Risk Assessment, the Major Incident Plan and the standing Sailing Instructions, will be made compatible with this policy. If there is a conflict, this policy shall take precedence.
- c. Provide sufficient patrol boat cover and ensure the competence of patrol boat helms.
- d. Manage the safe operation of winches for handling boats on the beach and slipways.



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e. Establish and maintain a plan to be followed in the event of an emergency or major incident.

1.3 The Chair of the Sailing Committee will oversee the annual review of the SSP, the Sailing Risk Assessment, the Major Incident Plan and SIs ahead of the commencement of each sailing season and propose amendments for consideration by the General Committee. The Club welcomes feedback on this policy. Any comments should be passed to the Commodore (sailingsidmouth@gmail.com).

Part 2: Basic Principles

2.1 The decision to sail on any given day rests ultimately with the helm and crew of each boat. Members must sign a disclaimer to the effect they take part in activities at their own risk. It is incumbent on all helms to assess the prevailing and anticipated conditions and satisfy themselves they are capable and experienced enough to perform safely.

2.2 Members should be allowed to push their limits for the purposes of gaining experience. However, less experienced members will be given advice when conditions are likely to prove too challenging for them. For example, recommendations may be given for an individual or individuals not to go afloat, or to crew with someone else.

2.3 There is a fundamental responsibility for individual members to support each other on and off the water.

a. Members must:

- 1) Have the required insurance cover for their own boat as set out on the membership renewal forms.
- 2) Wear adequate personal buoyancy aids whilst afloat.
- 3) Report dangerous (or potentially dangerous) occurrences to an Officer of the Club.
- 4) Ensure all accidents are noted in the Accident Book held in the Boat Store.
Note: The Accident Book should not be confused with the Routine Sailing Activity and Major Incident Log held in Race Control.

b. Members should:

- 1) Arrive in good time for sailing in order that everyone can launch their boats with appropriate assistance and without undue time-pressure.
- 2) Ensure own boats and sailing gear are in good order.
- 3) Wear appropriate clothing for the prevailing and forecast conditions.
- 4) Sign-on to the Signing-on Sheet in the Boat Store before going afloat in order that the Officer of the Day/Race Officer can keep track of all sailors and patrol boat crews.
- 5) Attend the RO's Race Briefing before racing.
- 6) Assist other members launching and landing boats, particularly those less experienced.
- 7) Prioritise helping landing boats and recovering patrol boats from the beach before de-rigging boats in the Boat Park.

2.4 Club-owned dinghies must only be used afloat during club-arranged activities with patrol boats in attendance. Moreover, they must not be used by any helm who has been recommended not to go afloat due to lack of experience or due to poor weather, sea or beach conditions.



2.5 Dinghies may be prepared in the Boat Park; however, mainsails must not be hoisted or headsails unfurled for the transit of boats to and from the beach. In benign conditions, and with clear supervision by experienced helms/crew, mainsails, headsails and spinnakers may be hoisted for pre-sailing checks, post-sailing de-rigging and during periods of maintenance or instruction.

2.6 All new and inexperienced sailors must be encouraged to transit boats to the beach 'stern first' with assistance and set dinghies head-to-wind before unfurling/hoisting sails. Extreme care must be taken to avoid loss-of-control of boats that might injure other Club members or members of the public.

Part 3: Sailing Management

3.1 Officer of the Day/Race Officer/Shore Contact. Three roles are defined to manage and oversee club sailing activities. An Officer of the Day (OD) will be assigned by rota for each scheduled sailing activity. The OD has overall responsibility for racing, including the decision to proceed, or not, or to abandon racing if conditions deteriorate. A Race Officer (RO) will be nominated to take responsibility for race management, including starting and finishing, recording results and liaising with the patrol boats using VHF radio. On any given day the OD and RO roles may be combined. In benign conditions, the OD may determine that the OD and RO roles may be undertaken afloat, **in which case the OD must carry a VHF radio**. In such an event, someone nominated as Shore Contact (SC) must be ashore and contactable by VHF radio to assist with emergency communication. Key related points are:

- a. In the event that the nominated OD does not arrive, sailing IS NOT to proceed until an Officer of the Club or other senior sailor resolves who will fill the role.
- b. In the event of serious injury or emergency the OD/RO/Shore Contact must assume responsibility for initiating the Major Incident Plan (MIP), if not already done, and oversee the Club's response until relieved by an Officer of the Club. The MIP is detailed in a separate policy document.
- c. The RO and Patrol Boat helm should liaise with the OD (ashore or afloat) if they have any concerns.

3.2 An on-the-day risk assessment must take place to determine a Risk Management Category before all sailing sessions and must not be considered a trivial matter. Such decisions should be made at least 45 minutes in advance of the first scheduled race start time. The OD/RO shall nominate three or more experienced members, including the senior patrol boat helm and any RYA National Race Officers who are Club members to:

- a. Analyse present and forecast weather, along with present launch conditions and predicted landing conditions.
- b. Determine which Risk Management Category (RMC) is appropriate. For guidance on RMCs see Annex A.
- c. Decide whether to conduct racing, taking account of the chosen RMC; and
- d. Make other recommendations for the safe conduct of sailing, such as whether any members should be advised not to sail; the level of patrol boat cover required, and priorities for launching and landing.

3.3 If any member is advised not to sail, the members of the Committees and those nominated in 3.2 must support the RO/OD present in ensuring this advice is followed.

Routine Sailing Activity and Major Incident Log

3.4 A combined Routine Sailing Activity and Major Incident Log will be held in Race Control and will be dual use, as follows:

- a. Firstly, for routine activity, it is intended as a dated-record of all on-water club activities involving dinghies and RIBs (but not private use dinghies or kayaks). It should include:
 - 1) Names of OD/RO and Shore Contact, if nominated.
 - 2) Weather and beach conditions – present and forecast.
 - 3) Sailing decisions, including the selected RMC for the day's activities.
 - 4) Any relevant narrative, including reference to minor accidents and incidents, and near misses, from which lessons may be learned.

- b. Secondly, it **MUST** be used as a chronological narrative of events when the threshold has been reached for implementation of the Major Incident Plan (MIP). It should include:
 - 1) A short statement regarding the reason for the implementation of the MIP, and details of the OD/RO and Shore contact, if nominated.
 - 2) Any subsequent change of INCIDENT CO-ORDINATOR.
 - 3) Timings and details of key points, decisions and actions taken, including interactions with the emergency services, local authorities and outside agencies, such as the RYA.
 - 4) Details of enquiries from the Press and media.
 - 5) Any relevant narrative.

3.5 Race Briefing. The RO will hold a briefing approximately 30 minutes before launching. It will include a reference to the chosen RMC and will use the format shown at Annex B. It is expected that all helms attend the brief. An aide-memoire will be available for the RO, which must remain in Race Control.

Routine Training Management

3.6 The Training Centre Principal shall maintain a Staff Handbook describing routine safety management for use during training activities. Staff and volunteers will be issued with a copy of the handbook.

Open Meetings and Championships

3.7 The risk assessment and provision of safety and support boat cover for Open Meetings and Championships shall be managed by the organising committee. The Principal Race Officer for the event shall have overall responsibility for safety afloat during the event. A Club officer or senior club sailor must remain ashore and undertake the responsibility of Shore Contact for the purposes of initiating the MIP.



Serious incidents

3.8 Serious incidents afloat that require medical attention will likely reach a threshold that necessitates implementation of the MIP. All members should become familiar with the Major Incident Overview, at Part 6, and the related document known as the Major Incident Plan (MIP), in order that they can contribute effectively if a serious incident takes place.

Part 4: Patrol Boats

Ensuring Competence of Patrol Boat Helms

4.1 The RYA advises clubs that patrol boat helms should be appropriately trained through a recognised powerboat qualification or a club-based training programme. The Club will operate an accreditation scheme whereby patrol boat helms will, based on an assessment of their competence and their experience at Sidmouth, be accredited as Level 1, 2 or 3. A team of three committee members will support the grading of patrol boats with the lead patrol boat helm overseeing this grading.

4.2 Accredited helms are authorised to use the Club patrol boats as follows:

- a. Level 3 helms are authorised to helm a patrol boat and to supervise Level 1 and 2 helms in all conditions when sailing takes place.
- b. Level 2 helms are authorised to helm a boat in RMC 'green' and 'amber' conditions (but not category 'red') and supervise Level 1 helms in 'green' conditions.
- c. Level 1 helms will have undertaken training and be gaining experience. They are authorised to helm in risk category 'green' only.

4.3 The Sailing Committee will maintain an up-to-date list of all accredited helms and will be responsible for accrediting new patrol boat helms. A copy of the list must be displayed in the Boat Store.

Patrol Boat Provision and Operation

4.4 Members intending to sail must assist in getting the patrol boats and equipment to and from the beach.

4.5 For the purposes of this policy, 'patrol boat' means a serviceable RIB with competent crew, radios (primary and spare hand-held VHF radio) and all other prescribed safety equipment.

4.6 All club sailing activities must be supported with adequate safety cover. The necessary level of cover depends on the prevailing and forecast weather and sea state, the number of dinghies going afloat, the competence and experience of the sailors and patrol boat helms and crews. The following criteria apply:

- a. Two or more patrol boats will be required if there is likelihood of multiple simultaneous incidents requiring attendance of a patrol boat.
- b. Two or more patrol boats should be used if there are enough accredited helms and crew. This may be reduced to one in consultation with the OD and senior patrol boat helm, giving due consideration to the weather conditions and sea state.



- c. There shall be at least one patrol boat afloat before launching any dinghies, and it will remain afloat until the last dinghy is ashore.
- d. A patrol boat may be nominated to undertake race management tasks in RMC 'green'. All such tasks shall be abandoned at the first indication an incident has occurred.
- e. It is acceptable, on occasions where training or coaching is taking place, if no crew is available, that a second or third patrol boat may go afloat with only a helm, provided the helm is Level 2 or 3.

4.7 Members under the age of 18 **MUST NOT** operate or be near the winching mechanism on the RIB trailers when it is being worked.

4.8 The method of recovery of patrol boats shall be at the discretion of the helm, who shall consider the safety of those in the vicinity of the landing area. The helm should consult with a responsible person on the beach who is in possession of a radio. The following points apply:

- a. The helm will declare their intention to approach at low or high speed and will, if necessary, direct the placement of 'weights'; the preference should be to approach at low speed.
- b. For all landings at low speed, shore-helpers may be at the water's edge ready to acquire the bow rope.
- c. For landings at high speed: the helm will not approach the beach, or will break off their approach to the beach, if helpers are on or close to the line of approach, or likely to be affected by flying debris.
- d. Helms are to take extreme care at high-water when there is little or no beach on which to land on. If the approach involves direct access to a water-covered slipway, the engine must be raised to avoid damage to propellor and skeg should they come in to contact with the hard surface. Consideration should be given to using another beach.



Part 5: Use of the Winches

5.1 The Club will run an accreditation scheme whereby members will be trained in the safe use of the winch. Members will be trained and assessed as competent by a nominated member of the Sailing Committee. Only members assessed as competent shall operate the winch.

5.2 The Sailing Committee will maintain an up-to-date list of competent winch operators.

5.3 Winch operators and assistants shall operate in accordance with the procedures in Annex C.

Part 6: Major Incident Overview

Introduction

6.1 The Club's Sailing Risk Assessment establishes control measures that mitigate the degree of risk implied by the Club's core activities. The control measures will enhance the safety of members and guests in foreseeable situations; however, a level of residual risk will remain. Minor incidents/accidents can likely be handled with little or no fuss. This part of the SSP gives an overview on how the Club will deal with situations of an extreme or serious nature that has, or is likely to lead to, loss of life or serious injury to one or more persons involved in organised club activities.

6.2 The SSC Major Incident Plan (MIP) is readily available in Race Control and contains Emergency Response Cards (ERCs) to aid the OD/RO/Shore Contact regarding the execution of the Plan. Importantly, the MIP gives guidance regarding the alerting of the emergency services in order that their assistance is brought to bear to resolve the situation.

Emergencies & Major Incidents

6.3 A major incident is an event where there is loss of life, a serious injury, other significant harm or serious likelihood of such harm taking place. The following are examples of serious incidents:

- a. An incident leading to a fatality or serious injury.
- b. A collision with powered craft and/or serious damage to several boats causing multiple physical injuries.
- c. Loss of sight/contact with one or more persons overboard.
- d. Loss of contact with a group or individual, or overdue groups or individuals.
- e. Multiple capsizes/strandings, where self-rescue or rescue by club patrol boats would result in prolonged exposure to a hazard or hazards, e.g. a lee-shore stranding; multiple capsizes in strong tidal conditions; early or late-season cold water exposure.
- f. Other circumstances in which a group or individual might be at serious risk of harm.
- g. Medical emergency, e.g. a heart attack.
- h. Craft/crew not accounted for when tallies are checked.
- i. Any situation that presents a serious risk to the Club's reputation and/or in which the media might get involved.

Action Plan

6.4 Immediate Action. The following action is to be initiated by the patrol boat helm, instructor afloat, OD/RO (ashore), or the nominated Shore Contact, if they consider a

situation exists that may lead to loss-of-life or serious injury, or stems from incidents mentioned in para 6.3 above, or when such a situation has already occurred:

- a. A patrol boat helm will take control of the incident on the water. The OD/RO or nominated Shore Contact will assume the role of **INCIDENT COORDINATOR** until relieved by a senior Club Officer. If the OD/RO is afloat he/she should be informed and asked to proceed ashore as soon as possible.
- b. The alarm should primarily be raised by the power boat helm with a call on the working-channel (P4 aka M2) on VHF radio to the OD/RO (if ashore) in Race Control, or the nominated Shore Contact, who will in turn make a call on '999' to the Emergency Services asking for the Coastguard/Ambulance/Police, as appropriate, stressing the proximity of Sidmouth Lifeboat station. Be aware that the range of VHF radio on Ch 16 is likely to be very limited at sea-level and may not be suitable for contacting the Coastguard if attempting to make an emergency call by that means.
- c. The OD/RO or, if not ashore, the nominated Shore Contact, must dial '999' and relay the information gleaned so far, which will hopefully include the nature and location of the incident, with emphasis placed on the number of potential casualties and the proposed location at which the rescue teams should congregate, if it is other than the beach immediately in front of the Watersports Hub (eastern end of Sidmouth Esplanade).
- d. Club members, in particular Club officers and committee members, not involved in the incident should take steps to aid the **INCIDENT COORDINATOR** so that other elements of the MIP can be implemented, including assistance on-shore for the recovery of boats that have not been affected and move them in close company to a place of safety. If appropriate, instructor-controlled boats may assist in the rescue operation but only if the lives of those on board are not endangered.
- e. Patrol boats will carry out rescue operations, with priority being given to those in greatest danger. Individuals in the water but not in immediate danger will be dealt with as soon as those in most need have received attention.
- f. Where possible helms/crews will not be left in the water unattended. If the patrol boat is unavailable a responsible person is to maintain contact until assistance can be given.

6.6 Co-ordination. The following actions shall be taken in order that all persons can be accounted for:

- a. When the lifeboat arrives on scene the patrol boat helm will make contact immediately and explain the current situation and related information regarding casualties. Soon after, on-scene control will be assumed by the lifeboat skipper. The lifeboat will coordinate any helicopter response and may direct search patterns for those unaccounted for.
- b. The **INCIDENT CO-ORDINATOR** should ensure that the member's contact list is available, and confirm it includes details of all those still afloat. Thereafter, a dynamic



tally should be maintained in respect of those still afloat. Such a tally should be communicated to the patrol boat helm, lifeboat and other emergency services when requested.

- c. The **INCIDENT CO-ORDINATOR** should allocate the following Emergency Response Cards to club personnel, when available: Immediate Aftermath (ERC No 3); Site Organisation (ERC No 4); Securing Evidence (ERC No 5); Safeguarding and Welfare (ERC No 6); Dealing with the Press (ERC No 7); Notifying Outside Agencies (ERC No 8); Closure (ERC No 9).

6.6 Post-incident. When all individuals involved in the day's activities are accounted for and casualties evacuated by the emergency services, the remaining craft will return to the Club. As soon as possible thereafter, everyone should proceed to the function room to 'sign-off' and confirm if they have anything to contribute to the initial post-incident analysis.

6.7 Summary. The aim of this plan is to have procedures in place that will be implemented in the event of serious incidents. The Club will aim to ensure its effectiveness by implementing a regime of briefings for RO/OD, patrol boat helms and others involved in managing activities and maintain their competence in all areas of emergency handling and control.

6.8 Incidents and Accidents. Incidents and accidents (involving boats and/or individuals), or near misses, should be recorded in the Sailing Activity and Major Incident Log in Race Control and the OD and an Officer of the Club must be made aware. The General Committee must review all reported incidents. Minor accidents requiring simple First Aid should be recorded in the Accident Log that is kept in the Boat Store.



Annex A: Risk Management Categories (RMC) Guide

CATEGORY:	Green	Amber	Red	Black
Conditions	<p>Sea: smooth ≤ 0.5 m Wind: light 0-11 mph (F0–F3) Visibility: moderate ≥ 3 miles</p> <p>If any of the above are not met, consider amber</p>	<p>Sea: slight ≤ 1.25 m Wind: moderate 8-18 mph (F3–F4) Visibility: moderate ≥ 3 miles</p> <p>If any of the above are not met, consider red</p>	<p>Sea: moderate ≤ 2.5 m Wind: strong 19-31 mph (F5–F6) Visibility: poor ≥ 1 miles</p> <p>If any of the above are not met, consider black</p>	<p>Sea: rough > 2.5 m or Wind: strong > F6 or Visibility: v. poor < 1 miles</p>
Who sails:	Beginners and above	Intermediate and above	Experienced helms only (adult and junior)	No-one
Patrol boat helms:	Level 2 or 3 Level 1 supervised by Level 2 or 3	Level 2 or 3 Level 1 supervised by Level 3	Level 3 Level 1 or 2 supervised by Level 3	No-one
Launching:	Patrol boats first, then beginners.	Patrol boats first, then intermediates.	Patrol boats first.	No-one
Landing:	Either Club beach.	Most protected Club beach.	Most protected Club beach or Clifton beach. Patrol boat crews and OD/RO to decide on preferred option.	

Guide to Visibility			Breeze measured in: Beaufort Scale – Knots – MPH						
			calm	light			moderate	fresh	strong
5 miles	2 miles	1 mile	Force F0	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
East: Beer Head	Weston Mouth	Salcombe Hill	Knots 0	1–3	4–6	7–10	11–16	17–21	22–27
West: Otterton Pt.	Big Picket	Peak Hill	MPH 0	1–3	4–7	8–11	12–18	19–24	25–31

Note: This should be used as a guide only and further considerations should be made to determine the RMC for sailing. Such as a change in forecast conditions at or after start time, or state of tide/sea at time of launch and/or recovery.



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Annex B: Briefing for Club Sailing

1. The purpose of the race briefing is to promote safe sailing and improve communication.
2. Prior to the briefing the OD/RO will determine the likely course to be sailed, seeking advice if necessary.
3. The briefing will take place at the entrance of the Boat Store at least 30 minutes before the scheduled race start time.
4. The briefing is compulsory for patrol boat crews and competitors under 18; all other competitors are encouraged to attend.
5. The RO will lead the briefing, with assistance if necessary.
6. The key points to be briefed are:
 - a. Welcome and introduction of new members or guests.
 - b. The Risk Assessment for the session and announcement of the Risk Management Category and any concerns arising.
 - c. Nomination of experienced sailors to check the rigging of any boats being used by novices or inexperienced juniors.
 - d. A description of the intended course (drawn on the whiteboard) to both the competitors and patrol boat crews. Answer any questions arising.
 - e. Seek help with the patrol boats and then each other's boats both when going afloat and when coming ashore.
 - f. With the guidance of the senior patrol boat helm, state whether the tide height or sea conditions have any effect on the urgency of launching or recovery of RIBs.
 - g. Remind everyone: the last one out of the changing room mops the floor.
 - h. Invite participants to respond with questions or observations.



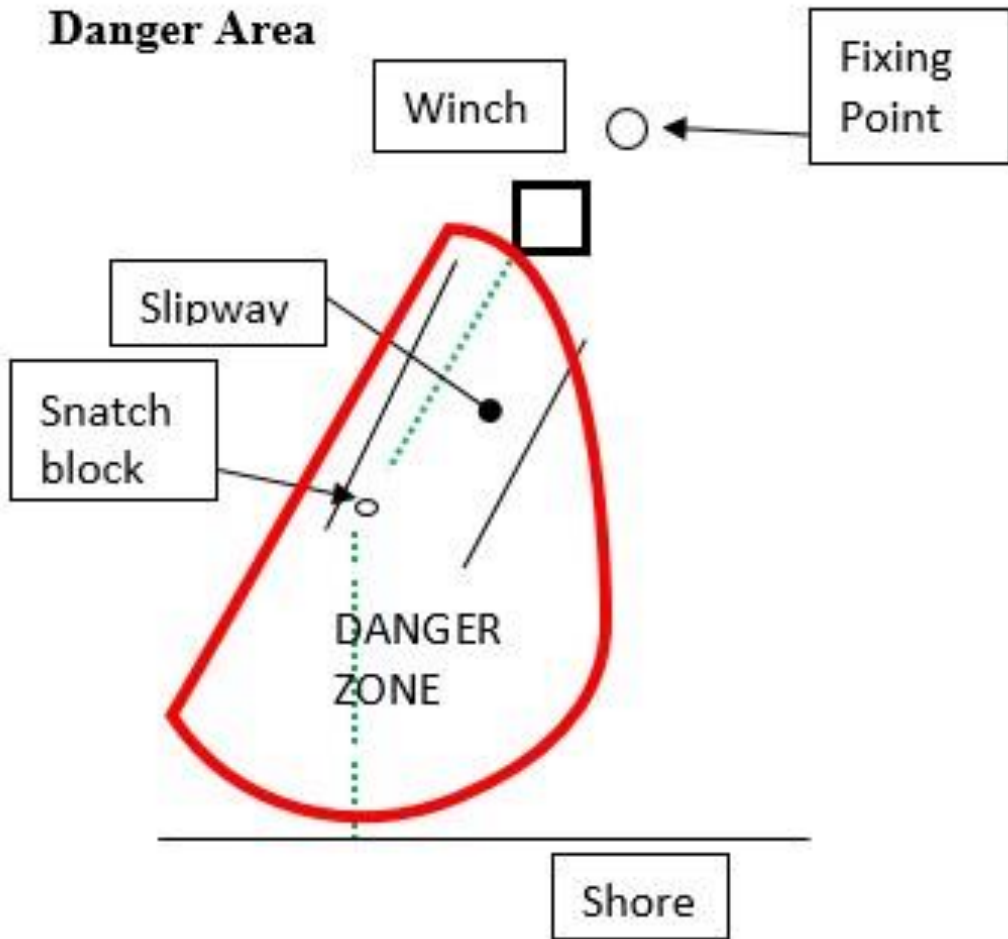
Annex C - Procedures to be Followed for the Safe Use of the Winches

This operating procedure covers the safe operation of the portable rechargeable battery powered capstan winch and the diesel engine powered winch on Sidmouth Beach by either Sidmouth Sailing Club or Sidmouth Lifeboat. If ANYONE is within the Danger Area, winching operation is to stop immediately.

- a. **If in doubt: stop!**
- b. The winch operator (WO) must have two responsible assistants designated as Safety Marshalls (SM).
- c. The WO and SMs should wear fluorescent tabards. The WO must be over 18. SMs must be minimum 16 and selected by the WO.
- d. WO and a SMs independently to check fuel (if applicable), operating controls, winch alignment and attachment to the anchor point with shackle and pulley block and check condition and alignment.
- e. SMs to keep members of the public away from winch cable and out of danger area (see diagrams below).
- f. Inspect rope / wire as it is pulled out.
- g. Ensure rope passes through pulley block correctly.
- h. Place one SM at top of ramp to keep people clear of rope.
- i. Second SM to be on the beach in company with designated person who will be attaching rope/wire to boat. At or near high water this may be one and the same person where winching distance is shorter.
- j. If there is no clear view between the winch and beach, SM at top of ramp to relay messages.
- k. WO to start winch, take up excessive slack.
- l. WO to signal to beach when ready, via SM if needed.
- m. WO to await signal to start winching. Acknowledge response and start winching. Watch out for people stepping over the rope or approaching the winch. Remain alert: do not be distracted.
- n. WO to respond to signals from the beach and acknowledge these. For signals see diagrams below.
- o. Boat Crew to hold boat level and boat ONLY to be moved when riding on keel.
- p. All kit to be packed away by WO or SM and returned to safe storage; battery to be recharged if required.

Remember: if in doubt: stop

• **See diagrams**

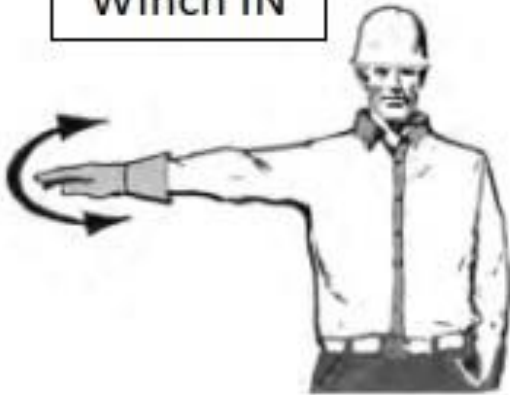




Winch IN



Winch OUT



STOP