



# Sidmouth Sailing Club

## Major Incident Plan

2026 – Version 1

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NOTE: It is better to be familiar with this material **BEFORE** you ever need to put it into effect!

Note:

- **EMERGENCY** and **DISTRESS** mean there is '**grave and imminent danger**' to a person or persons, i.e. there is a '**risk to life**'. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) may substitute the international code-word **MAYDAY** when referring to such incidents. The term **PANPAN**, if used by MCA, relates to a situation/incident of an **URGENT** nature (below the threshold of **MAYDAY**).
- The SSC radio licence **DOES NOT** include authority to operate on VHF Channel 16 (or any other 'international' channels). Such channels should be inoperable on the SSC base-station in Race Control.



## DEFINITION OF A MAJOR INCIDENT/EMERGENCY

**NOTE: IF IN DOUBT GO DIRECTLY TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR:  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE CARD NO. 1 – INITIAL ACTIONS**

### Definition of a Major Incident

A major incident is an event where there is loss of life, serious injury, or there is substantial damage to property and/or the environment.

The following are examples of serious incidents or accidents:

- An incident leading to a fatality or serious injury, including unconsciousness, wounds or fractures.
- Major damage to vessels afloat or property ashore.
- Loss of contact with a group or individual, or overdue groups or individuals.
- Other circumstances in which a group or individual might be at serious risk of harm.
- Serious illness of an individual or group.
- Any adverse situation in which the media are or may be involved.
- Any situation that presents a serious risk to the Club's reputation.

The following are incidents that could lead to a major casualty situation, and the intention of this plan is to introduce systems that will seek to effectively control both those listed and the unforeseen:

- Multiple capsizes/stranding, where self-rescue or rescue by club patrol boats would result in prolonged exposure to hazard, e.g. a lee-shore stranding, multiple capsizes in strong tidal conditions, early or late-season cold water exposure.
- Collision with powered craft and/or serious damage to several boats.
- Loss of sight/contact with one or more persons overboard.
- Medical emergency in poor weather (these conditions are likely to be assessed as AMBER, RED or BLACK in the club racing Risk Management Category Guide).
- Multiple physical injury.
- Craft/crew not accounted for when tallies are checked.

In the event of a major incident the priority is the safety of the participants, volunteers and instructors. Once ashore the authorities and potentially the media will have to be dealt with.



## **ERC No 1 - INITIAL ACTIONS**

1. Only the following may initiate an emergency:
  - a. Officer of the Day (OD)
  - b. Race Officer (RO)
  - c. Patrol boat helm
  - d. Sailing instructor afloat
  - e. Nominated Shore Contact.
2. A patrol boat helm will take control of the incident on the water.
3. If the OD and RO are afloat, a nominated Shore Contact will take the Initial Actions to notify the Emergency Services.
4. **NOTE THE TIME and RAISE THE ALARM using ERC No 2**



## ERC No 2 - RAISING THE ALARM

### KEY POINTS:

- FOR ON-BEACH INCIDENTS STILL CONSIDER REQUESTING THE 'COASTGUARD' IN ADDITION TO THE 'AMBULANCE' AND 'POLICE'.

#### 1. PROCEED AS FOLLOWS:

- a. **Call** the **EMERGENCY SERVICES** using **999** and ask for the **COASTGUARD, AMBULANCE AND POLICE**, as appropriate.
- b. **Give** your **ROLE, NAME, LOCATION** and **CALL-BACK NUMBER**.
- c. **Highlight**:
  - 1) the **location/position** of the incident.
  - 2) **nature of the incident** and **type of injury**.
  - 3) **age/gender/number** of injured or missing people.
  - 4) and **other information** including the Club VHF working channel (P4 aka M2) and where casualties/boats will be brought ashore, if different from the Club beaches.

2. Maintain contact with the COASTGUARD, if requested by them.

3. **Proceed to ERC No 3.**



## ERC No 3 - FOLLOW-ON ACTIONS

1. Until relieved of responsibility, the Shore Contact or OD/RO, if ashore, should assume the role of **INCIDENT COORDINATOR** and **TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS**:
  - a. Maintain contact and flow of information with on-water patrol boat using VHF radio channel P4 (aka M2). If requested by emergency services to use Channel 16 use a second radio for that purpose.
  - b. If anyone else is available in the Clubhouse, ask them to assist you as **INCIDENT COORDINATOR**.
  - c. Open the **Major Incident Log** and, when possible, record a chronological narrative of events, including actions and decisions. Record names and contact details, as and when appropriate.
  - d. Ensure you have access to the **MEMBERS LIST** held in the Race Control safe (PIN required), which includes **EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS**.
  - e. Have the **Signing-On Sheet** from the Boat Store at hand.
  - f. As soon as achievable, appoint a small **INCIDENT COMMITTEE** and delegate tasks, as appropriate, issuing the following **EMERGENCY RESPONSE CARDS (ERCs)**:
    - 1) **IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH** Use ERC No 4
    - 2) **SITE ORGANISATION** Use ERC No 5
    - 3) **SECURING EVIDENCE** Use ERC No 6
    - 4) **SAFEGUARDING AND WELFARE** Use ERC No 7
    - 5) **DEALING WITH THE PRESS** Use ERC No 8
    - 6) **NOTIFYING OUTSIDE AGENCIES** Use ERC No 9
    - 7) **CLOSURE** Use ERC No 10



## ERC No 4 – IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

1. The **INCIDENT CO-ORDINATOR** should appoint a small **INCIDENT TEAM** that includes Club Officers, committee members and volunteers. The **INCIDENT TEAM** should then consider:
  - a. **Incident Control Room.** Creating an Incident Control Room, in the front portion of the main floor, balcony door locked and room-dividers closed, along with appropriate communications, including mobile phone, internet and VHF radiotelephone connectivity.
  - b. **Access. RESTRICTING ACCESS TO THE INCIDENT CONTROL ROOM** to Club Officers, committee members and nominated core volunteers. All others should be discouraged from seeking access unless they have valuable information regarding the incident, if it is ongoing.
  - c. **Major Incident Log.** Assuring maintenance of a **MAJOR INCIDENT LOG**, detailing a chronological narrative of events and recording calls made and received, including what was discussed and actions taken.
  - d. **Welfare.** Taking immediate welfare steps to safeguard juniors, vulnerable adults and other directly affected adults from continuing exposure to any incident, particularly where there are serious injuries or fatalities. See ERC No 6.
  - e. **Emergency Services.** The Emergency Services **WILL TAKE CONTROL** of the incident/response relevant to their role, except that in a multi-agency incident, a **LEAD AGENCY** will be appointed:

**POLICE** - Fatalities, major trauma and abduction of and search for lost children.

**COASTGUARD** - marine search and rescue.

**AMBULANCE** - casualty treatment.

**FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE** - fire/rescue incidents.



- f. **Galley.** Organising volunteers to open the galley for teas/coffees etc.
- g. **Witness Statements.** Arranging for witness statements from competent witnesses involved in the incident, explaining that statements are being taken to obtain an accurate account of the incident, as these may be required for insurance, or other purposes. Notes need to be taken and agreed by each witness.



## ERC No 5 - SITE ORGANISATION

i. The **Incident Coordinator/Incident Team** should consider organising the site as follows:

- a. **Site Access.** If necessary, control site access to the Boat Park and building, keeping the media outside until the **Incident Coordinator** gives authority to come on site.
- b. **Room Allocation.** Use the room-dividers on the first floor to create. Compartments (with signage, as appropriate) for:
  - 1) **Incident Control.** Reserve the front portion of the building for Incident Control (adjacent bottom of Race Control steps) and quite space for those being interviewed or recording statements. Signage: INCIDENT CONTROL ONLY
  - 2) **Balcony.** Restrict access to the balcony during the incident and stop access to the building via that route. Signage: NO ACCESS – ONGOING INCIDENT
  - 3) **Galley Area.** The Galley area should be used for the preparation of hot and cold drinks and food in an ongoing incident. Signage: INCIDENT - MEMBERS ONLY
  - 4) **Lounge Area.** The lounge area should be used for and relatives who have been directly affected by the event. All other should avoid crowding the space. Signage: INCIDENT - MEMBERS ONLY



## ERC No 6 - SECURING EVIDENCE

1. The **person nominated by the Incident Coordinator** for securing evidence should arrange for:
  - a. Photographs of the incident location, relevant boats, equipment, clothing, buoyancy aids, lifejackets, as appropriate.
  - b. Keeping and securing (quarantining) all relevant boats, equipment, clothing, buoyancy aids, lifejackets etc
  - c. Photographing 'Signing-on Sheets' and 'Rounds Sheets' and passing them to the **Incident Co-ordinator**.



## **ERC No 7 - WELFARE**

1. The **Incident Coordinator/Incident Team** should:
  - a. Arrange for warm clothing.
  - b. Identify uninjured adults who are significantly affected by the incident and arrange to provide comfort, if possible.
  - c. If not already done, arrange for a volunteer to prepare hot and cold drinks and food.



## ERC No 8 - DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

1. The **Incident Coordinator/Incident Committee** should designate **ONE** person to make public statements. That person should take heed of the key points below and refer to the **RYA Guidance for Major Incident Procedures at RYA Affiliated Clubs and Recognised Training Centres**, which includes a **Media Response** section at the back of the MIP folder:
  - a. **The local Police are responsible for notifying parents and relatives regarding injured persons.**
  - b. **DO NOT** publicise or confirm the name of any casualties until the Police have confirmed that the next-of-kin has been informed, even if the press appears to know who it is. The Incident Co-ordinator/Incident Committee must give approval **BEFORE** eventual release of names.
  - c. Do not proactively approach the media. If the media take an interest, only the designated person is authorised to respond.
  - d. **Don't allow well-meaning but ill-informed members or volunteers to make public comments.**
  - e. Manage any media that are on site and if necessary, provide a room or area **away from** the witnesses, victim's relatives and other participants. Organisation of the layout of the building is detailed in ERC No 4 – Site Organisation.
  - f. Acknowledge that an incident has occurred and state that the club will make a statement as soon as possible once it knows the facts. Do not get drawn into speculating about causes, blame or possible outcomes.
  - g. Avoid interviews unless confident of being able to cope with unexpected questions, **IT IS BETTER TO PREPARE A STATEMENT**. Make sure the key facts are up-to-date and ready to hand.
  - h. Remember, declining an interview or saying "no comment" will almost certainly look like you have something to hide. It is far better to give a factual response such as: **"It would be inappropriate to comment further until we've had the opportunity to consider all**



**the factors contributing to this incident."** If you do not provide comment when asked to do so the media will speculate!

- i. Never lie to the media about something you know to be factually incorrect. Be accurate in what you say and respect the families of those involved.
- j. Remember that rumour spreads quickly! Consider the "Pity, Praise and Promise" tactic that can be used even when little is known about the crisis:
  - express sympathy for those caught up in the incident; and
  - praise members and emergency services helping in the recovery; and
  - promise that we will establish all the facts and will give further updates, moreover, we will undertake a review regarding what has happened, to see if what lessons are identified.



## ERC No 9 - NOTIFYING OUTSIDE AGENCIES

1. The **Incident Co-ordinator/Incident Committee** must arrange to:
  - a. Notify the relevant RYA Senior Manager and if there is press interest, the Communications Team. See ERC No 7 for details to avoid duplication.
  - b. Determine if you need to contact other agencies such as the Local Authority, Environment Agency, and utility companies.
  - c. In the UK, if it is a water-based incident on a coded vessel, you are legally required to inform the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) at the earliest opportunity. **For non-coded boats this is recommended but is not a legal requirement.** For MAIB telephone: 023 8023 2527.
  - d. If the incident involved a work-related fatal or major injury, you must inform the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Reporting fatal and major injuries, only call the Incident Contact Centre on 0345 300 9923 (Monday to Friday 08:30 to 17:00) - 24/7 Duty Officer 0151 922 9235.
  - e. Contact the **RYA Communications Team** (telephone numbers below) for assistance and guidance regarding handling the media. If necessary, they can arrange interviews or a local press briefing; larger incidents may require a formal press conference. By calling this line you can receive support and advice on dealing with the immediate issues and communicating with the media. The nature of the incident will be assessed and, if necessary, an RYA manager with relevant expertise will be asked to contact you to offer more specific advice. When calling the RYA, provide an overview of the incident/accident and describe what activity was being conducted and what safeguarding relating children and vulnerable adults was in place.

Incident line (Out-of-Office Hours)

Contact Nos

023 8060 4209 – RYA Head of Communications

023 8060 4181

023 8060 4193

023 8060 4104 – RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager

07789 556080



## **ERC No 10 – CLOSURE**

1. The **Incident Coordinator/Incident Committee** must:
  - a. Keep the Incident Log and all other compiled written work safe for future reference, including personal statements and signing-on sheets.
  - b. Complete the Accident or Near Miss form accordingly.
2. The **General Committee** must:
  - a. Consider arranging a debrief of all members and identify any additional welfare needs, e.g. counselling.
  - b. Use information gained from the debrief to review and update the Major Incident Plan.
  - c. After the incident, review and critique safety procedures and equipment and make the necessary amendments ahead of ratification at a General Committee meeting.



## EXTRACT FROM SAFE SAILING POLICY

### 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:

- An incident leading to a fatality or serious injury.
- A collision with powered craft and/or serious damage to several boats causing multiple physical injuries.
- Loss of sight/contact with one or more persons overboard.
- Loss of contact with a group or individual, or overdue groups or individuals.
- 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.
- Other circumstances in which a group or individual might be at serious risk of harm.
- Medical emergency, e.g. a heart attack.
- Craft/crew not accounted for when tallies are checked.
- 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 4); Site Organisation (ERC No 5); Securing Evidence (ERC No 6); Safeguarding and Welfare (ERC No 7); Dealing with the Press (ERC No 8); Notifying Outside Agencies (ERC No 9); Closure (ERC No 10).

**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.



## **RYA GUIDANCE ON MAJOR INCIDENT PROCEDURES (TG14-15)**

The 'RYA Guidance on Major Incident Procedures', which underpins the SSC Major Incident Plan, will be set out in full in the hardcopy of the Plan that will be available in Race Control. The link below points to its location on the RYA website.

<https://www.rya.org.uk/network/clubs-and-affiliates/managing-activities/safety-on-the-water/risk-assessment/#stp5>