

## **ROYAL ENGINEER YACHT CLUB LIFEJACKET AND BUOYANCY AID POLICY**

### References:

- A. JSP 419: Adventurous Training in the UK Armed Forces.
- B. JSP 660: Sport in the UK Armed Forces.
- C. ACSO 3216: Organisation and Arrangements for the Management of Safety and Environmental Protection in the Army.
- D. AGAI Volume 1 Chapter 11: Adventurous Training.
- E. RYA Guidance 2018.
- F. AGAI 18: Military Training on or over water.

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. This note provides the REYC policy on the wearing of lifejackets and buoyancy aids when sailing aboard REYC boats: yachts, dinghies, windsurfers and kitesurfers. In developing this policy, the direction or guidance provided in References A – F has been considered; Reference E is copied verbatim at Annex A to provide background and further inform users. Nothing in this policy relieves the Skipper's or Instructor's from their responsibility for the safety of their personnel no matter the chosen sailing discipline.

### **OFFSHORE**

2. Usage of Club yachts falls under two broad categories requiring specific consideration:

- a. Serving military personnel on duty. Direction provided in the relevant MOD instructions is to be followed. In summary, individuals must have passed the military swim test, and all crew members must wear lifejackets when underway unless conditions are such that the Skipper decides that lifejackets may be removed. A decision by the Skipper not to wear lifejackets is to be recorded in the Deck Log with reasons.
- b. Member charters. The Skipper is responsible for directing lifejacket wearing policy for their charter and is expected to follow RYA advice (Annex A) noting the Club recommendation that a lifejacket should be worn by all crew members unless the Skipper is sure that they don't need to, and:

- (1) By all crew on deck when a reef is taken in the main sail.
- (2) At night and in restricted visibility.
- (3) By non-swimmers and children under 16 when on deck.
- (4) When using yacht dinghies/tenders/liferafts.

3. In addition to the direction in paragraph 2 above, when racing (on and off duty) the Skipper is responsible for following specific race instructions included in Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) 2016, Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions and direction by the Race Officer. Attention is drawn to RRS 1.2 life-saving equipment: "Each competitor is individually responsible for wearing a personal flotation device adequate for the conditions". For example in RORC Offshore Races "a combined lifejacket and harness shall be worn when on deck:

- (1) Between the hours of sunset and sunrise.
- (2) When alone on deck.
- (3) When reefed.

- (4) When the true wind speed is 25 knots or above.
- (5) When the visibility is less than 1 nautical mile”.

4. **Lifejackets on board Club Yachts.**

- a. On takeover of an REYC Club yacht, the skipper is to be made aware of this lifejacket policy which is to be included within the boat folder.
- b. The number of lifejackets on board depends on the coding status of the yacht. Coded yachts carry sufficient lifejackets to meet the requirements of their coding, usually the coded maximum crew number plus two spare.

**INSHORE**

5. **Dinghies.** Dinghy sailors are to wear buoyancy aids at all times on the water.

6. **Windsurfing & Kitesurfing.** The level of skill will determine if a windsurfer is mandated to wear a buoyancy aid.

- a. **Novice / Intermediates.** Novice and intermediate windsurfers are all required to wear buoyancy aids at all times on the water.
- b. **Advanced.** Advanced windsurfers are not mandated to wear buoyancy aids; however waist/seat harnesses and wet suits provide additional buoyancy. Dependent on weather and wave conditions, helmets and impact vests can be worn which provide additional buoyancy.
- c. **Racing.** Each race/event is assessed on conditions and only if it is considered safe will that fleet race. The UKWA do not require their sailors to wear life jackets and it is a personal preference as to whether individuals wear buoyancy aids.

**CONCLUSION**

7. If clarification on this policy is required, the relevant Club Officer (Rear Commodore (Offshore) or Rear Commodore (Inshore)) should be contacted (details on Sapper Sailing website).

Lt Col M E Johnson-Ferguson  
Cdre

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Annexes:

- A. RYA Buoyancy Aids and Lifejackets Guidance.

**ANNEX A TO**  
**REYC LIFEJACKET/BUOYANCY AID POLICY**  
**DECEMBER 2018**

**RYA BUOYANCY AIDS AND LIFEJACKETS GUIDANCE<sup>1</sup>**

*Personal floatation devices come in two main forms buoyancy aids and lifejackets. Worn correctly a personal flotation device could save your life.*

The RYA recommends that you **wear a lifejacket or buoyancy aid unless you are sure you don't need to.**

You can base this decision on factors such as weather conditions, the type of activity you are doing and your level of experience. If you are a beginner or still relatively inexperienced, making these judgements is often not that easy, so if this is the case, wear one at all times.

The RYA strongly recommends that you should always wear personal buoyancy:

- If you are a non-swimmer and there is any possibility of entering the water
- When the skipper deems it necessary
- When abandoning ship
- When you feel you want to wear one or if you are not totally sure that you do not need to wear one

Selection of the correct personal buoyancy is critical and needs to be appropriate to the activity.

**What is the difference between buoyancy aids and lifejackets?**

**Buoyancy aids** are simply that - an aid to buoyancy that generally relies on help being close at hand.

It assumes that the wearer is able to help themselves to some degree by swimming to safety or by keeping themselves afloat while assistance arrives if required.

Buoyancy aids are suitable for personal watercraft (PWC), dinghies, windsurfing and generally for activities where the wearer might reasonably expect to end up in the water.

A **lifejacket** is intended for use where a high standard of performance is required. It will turn an unconscious person into a safe position and requires no subsequent action by the user to maintain this position.

You should consider whether an automatic lifejacket or manual inflate lifejacket, both with sprayhood, light and whistle, is appropriate to the boating activity you are undertaking. Ideally you should fit or buy a lifejacket that is fitted with crotch straps; these will stop the lifejacket riding up over your head. You should also consider a lifejacket that

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<sup>1</sup> Copied from <https://www.rya.org.uk/knowledge-advice/safe-boating/look-after-yourself/Pages/buoyancy-aids-lifejackets.aspx> accessed 3 Dec 18.

is fitted with dye-markers and personal locator beacon to aid location and harness D ring for harness attachment to stop you falling off in the first place.

Lifejackets are suitable when on an open boat (e.g. powerboat or RIB), when going ashore in a yacht tender, on a sailing yacht or motor cruiser and generally where you do not expect to enter the water.

Lifejackets come in different styles and sizes and some will work better for different body styles than others. Where possible test your lifejacket in a controlled environment to check that it will work for you.

### **Levels of buoyancy**

In addition to selecting between a lifejacket and a buoyancy aid, consideration also needs to be given to the level of buoyancy that is required.

Buoyancy aids and lifejackets have different levels of buoyancy. These levels of buoyancy should be considered and influence your choice. There are four main buoyancy levels: 50, 100, 150 and 275.

In general terms, Level 50 is a buoyancy aid designed for when help is close at hand, whereas Level 150 is a general purpose lifejacket used for offshore cruising and motor boating.

The levels of buoyancy information sheet includes further information on levels of buoyancy and the labelling of personal floatation devices.

Specialist lifejackets are available for infants and children.

Remember that inflatable lifejackets and buoyancy aids are useless unless they work. They must be checked regularly and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.