

MAN OVERBOARD  
PROCEDURES  
FOR  
FISHING VESSELS



**SAFETY**  
**W** ON THE  
**WATER**

## WHO WE ARE:

### **DEPARTMENT OF THE MARINE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6785444

### **IRISH COAST GUARD**

Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6785444

***Emergency Tel: Ring 999  
or 112\* and ask for  
Marine Emergency.***

### **IRISH WATER SAFETY**

The Long Walk  
Galway  
Republic of Ireland  
Tel: (091) 564400

### **ISA**

Irish Sailing Association  
3 Park Road  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: (01) 2800239

### **RNLI**

Royal National Lifeboat Institution  
15 Windsor Terrace  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: (01) 2845050  
Registered Charity  
No. CHY 2678

### **BIM**

PO Box 12  
Crofton Road  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: (01) 2841544  
\*New European standard  
emergency number.

## WHAT WE DO:

We are the Government Department responsible for the safety of life at sea and the prevention of pollution from ships.

We are the Division/Service of the Department of the Marine responsible for search and rescue, intervention in shipwreck and casualty and response to pollution at sea. We provide commercial marine communications and maintain 50 coastal rescue stations manned by volunteers available to respond to marine emergencies.

We as a statutory body have a responsibility to promote through education a nationwide water safety awareness.

We are the governing body representing sailing, windsurfing, powerboating and personal watercraft in Ireland. We can advise on all aspects of boating safety. We have a network of clubs and recognised teaching establishments that operate training courses for all types of leisure craft.

We exist to preserve life from disaster at sea. This is achieved by providing a fleet of lifeboats, with 24 hour cover, and crewed by well-trained volunteers. In addition, we work with other national organisations to promote sea safety. We are funded entirely by voluntary contributions.

We are the principal development agency for the seafood industry and promote safe working practices for the industry which involves Fisheries Training for both new entrants and practitioners, developing codes of practice, production of training materials and trials of preventative measures against risk on board fishing vessels.



Department of the Marine  
and Natural Resources

*Roinn na Mara agus Acmhainní Nádirtha*



Bord Iascaigh Mhara  
Irish Sea Fisheries Board

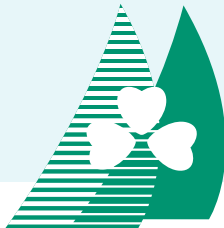
**Irish Coast Guard**  
*Garda Cósta na hÉireann*



**Lifeboats**  
Ireland



**HEALTH AND SAFETY  
AUTHORITY**



**IRISH SAILING  
ASSOCIATION**

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Advice on the information detailed in this booklet and on the requirements of current safety legislation, recommended safety provisions and training is available from the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources..

### **DEPARTMENT OF THE MARINE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6785444

### **HEALTH & SAFETY AUTHORITY**

10 Hogan Place  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6147000

### **NATIONAL FISHERY TRAINING CENTRE**

Greencastle  
Co. Donegal  
Tel: (077) 81068

### **BORD IASCAIGH MHARA**

PO Box 12  
Crofton Road  
Dun Laoghaire  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: (01) 2841544

### **KILLYBEGS FISHERMENS ORGANISATION**

Bruach Na Mara  
Killybegs  
Co. Donegal  
Tel: (073) 31089

### **IRISH SOUTH AND WEST FISHERMENS ORGANISATION**

East End  
Castletownbere  
Co. Cork  
Tel: (027) 70670

### **IRISH FISH PRODUCERS ORGANISATION**

11 Elgin Road  
Dublin 4  
Tel: (01) 6687077

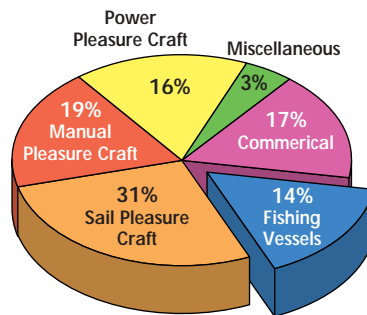
### **IRISH FISHERMANS ORGANISATION**

Cumberland House  
Fenian Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6612400

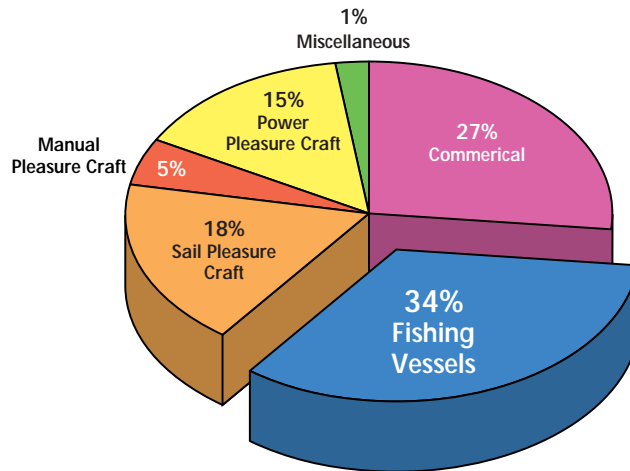


## THE STATISTICS

**Man Overboard – an ongoing problem!**



All Launches to Man Overboard incidents (1995-2000)



Based on RNLI Statistics

Lives lost in Man Overboard incidents (1995-2000)

**During the last six years Man Overboard situations have resulted in 99 launches to fishing vessels and 45 lives lost.**

**Don't become one of these statistics!**

## FOREWORD

Whether your boat is large or small, commercial or pleasure, this booklet provides useful basic guidance on preventing and, if necessary, dealing with Man Overboard situations. The intention is to cover the principles so that readers can develop them for use aboard their own boats where equipment and circumstances will differ.

This booklet has been produced by the Marine Safety Working Group which has representatives from the following Government Departments and National Institutions:

Department of the Marine and Natural Resources  
Irish Coast Guard  
Department of Education  
Department of the Environment  
Department of Enterprise and Employment  
Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht  
Health and Safety Authority  
Irish Water Safety  
Royal National Lifeboat Institution  
Irish Sailing Association.  
Bord Iascaigh Mhara

In addition the booklet has been approved by:-

Irish Fishermen's Organisation (IFO)  
Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation  
Irish South and West Fishermen's Organisation  
Irish Fish Producers Organisation

Further copies are available from any of the organisations/agencies mentioned above. See back pages for addresses and telephone numbers.

### Let's Face Facts

**Quote from an ex-fishing skipper who is a serving lifeboat coxswain.**

**"Could you as a skipper of a fishing vessel cope with the reality of tragedy at sea?**

**Could you come ashore and tell a wife or mother that their loved one has been lost?**

**Would you be filled with doubt on how you reacted to a 'Man Overboard' situation?**

**Would you keep asking yourself 'Could I have done more? Should I have reacted differently? Just where was that piece of life saving equipment that would have made all the difference?'"**

## PREVENTION

- Many lives are lost from cold shock and drowning or through loss of consciousness brought on by hypothermia. You can reduce the risks by wearing:-
  - effective protective clothing - a waterproof outer covering plus several thin layers will give better protection than one thick layer.
  - a suitable working lifejacket or buoyancy aid fitted with a **safety harness** and D ring. The lifejacket should be fitted with retro reflective tape and a light to assist location at night.
  - choose a lifejacket or buoyancy aid which will withstand the rigours of your workplace and which will not snag on deck machinery or fishing gear.
- Many fishing vessels are fitted with shelter decks which provide a safer working area for fishermen - this does however make it more difficult to recover a person who has gone overboard.
- When working on deck be aware of the potential hazards - blocks, wires, fishing gear. Make sure loose gear not being used is securely stowed.
- Never stand in a bight of rope or hold on to gear which is deployed over the side.





## RECOVERY

- A parbuckle can be improvised using ropes or a net in order to recover a person from the water.
- All the options mentioned are greatly assisted if the person in the water is wearing a lifejacket and harness onto which a line can be easily clipped to provide assistance from the deck - **Remember** lives have been lost because of delays in recovery after successfully getting alongside people in the water.
- Crew members effecting the rescue of a person from the water should wear a lifejacket complete with harness and lifeline to ensure they do not get pulled into the water as well - this is vital if a crew member goes over the side to assist in a rescue.
- A rescuer should only enter the water as a **last resort**. **Don't** compromise your own safety and do not leave your vessel dangerously undermanned.

## RECOVERY



- A conscious person in the water can be recovered using a rigid ladder, scrambling net or any device which can be climbed. A scrambling net has the further advantage of allowing the person in the water to make themselves fast in it so that you can haul them on board.
- A lifting strop passed round the back and under the arms of a person in the water, attached to a suitable recovery rope can prove invaluable. Recovery on board can be assisted by using a creel net hauler or a mechanical lifting device.
- An inflatable dinghy or liferaft provides another option for recovery. Partial deflation of part of the sponson can assist the recovery of the person into the dinghy or liferaft.



## PREVENTION

- In heavy weather or other potentially dangerous working situations on deck when there is a risk of being thrown overboard, consideration should be given to using a safety line.
- Man Overboard drills should be practiced regularly  
- **Practice makes perfect!**
- Training courses in basic sea survival and fire fighting are recommended for all fishermen. More information about them can be obtained from the **BIM Tel (01) 2841544** and the **Department of the Marine and Natural Resources Tel (01) 6785444**

In recent years considerable research, backed up by extensive sea trials, has been carried out to identify suitable close fitting inflatable lifejackets, buoyancy aids and protective clothing for use within the industry.

## ACTION

### If you see somebody go overboard in good visibility

- Raise the alarm by shouting **“Man Overboard!”** to alert all on board
- Immediately throw the lifebuoy together with its smoke float/light unit overboard. The person in the water may not be able to reach it, however it will mark his approximate position.
- Ensure that the helmsman is aware of the situation. He should mark the vessels position - most nav aids have a MOB function. It may prove vital if contact is lost with the person in the water.
- Act as lookout, or ensure that somebody else does. Watch the person in the water and point at them continuously. Keep the helmsman advised.
- If it is safe and depending on how the fishing gear is deployed the helmsman should start to turn as quickly as possible. Delay increases distance and the possibility of losing sight of the person in the water.
- In most circumstances and weather conditions, recovery of a person from the water should be carried out from the weather side of your vessel. This prevents the vessel from drifting down on top of them and reduces the risk of ropes and heaving lines, being used for the recovery, from fouling the propeller.
- Deploy a scrambling net or ladder if possible.
- Have a heaving line ready to throw to the person in the water in case it is difficult to manoeuvre alongside them.
- A boat hook can assist in getting the person back alongside.



## RECOVERY



RECOVERY

In recent years a lot has been written about the problems of recovering fishermen who have either fallen or been washed overboard.

There are a variety of proprietary MOB rescue systems which are adaptable for most vessels and circumstances.

For fishing vessels without a dedicated MOB rescue system the undermentioned options should be considered:-

- A technique of circling a person in the water whilst towing a lifebuoy on a line is an effective way of making contact particularly in heavy weather. Never throw a lifebuoy directly at a person in the water.

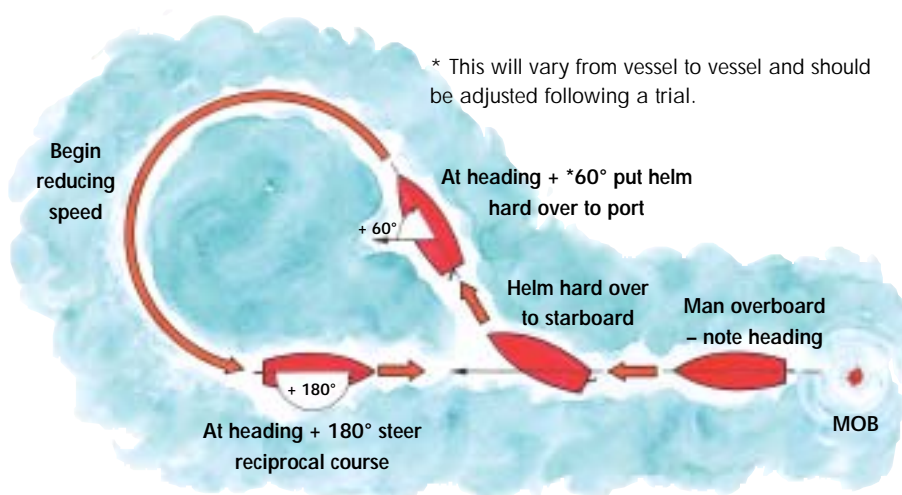
## IN THE WATER

- It is essential to conserve as much energy as possible – you will need it to assist with your recovery from the water.
- If wearing a lifejacket remember to activate the light at night. Use the whistle to assist those searching for you. You can increase your buoyancy with some types of lifejacket by additional oral inflation – in cold water you may need to do this.
- What ever your situation conserve your body heat – the greatest threat to your survival is from the cold. **Remember** in Irish waters during the winter your ability to assist in your rescue will be greatly diminished after ten to fifteen minutes.
- If you are not wearing protective clothing or any of the safety equipment advised in this booklet – **Good Luck, you'll need it!!**



### If you see somebody go overboard in poor visibility

- Raise the alarm by shouting **“Man Overboard!”**.
- Immediately throw the lifebuoy together with its smoke float/light unit overboard. The person in the water may not be able to reach it, however it will mark his approximate position.
- Ensure that the helmsman is aware of the situation. He should mark the vessels position - most nav aids have a MOB function. It may prove vital if contact is lost with the person in the water.
- In poor visibility or when the weather and sea state are heavy, the ‘Williamson Turn’ is a good way for the helmsman to get back on to a reciprocal course which will take you back down the track.
  - Put the helm hard over to starboard and add \*60° to your initial course.
  - On the new heading, put the helm hard over to port.
  - When the compass is reading the initial course + 180° steer a reciprocal course and the casualty should be ahead of you.
- In heavy weather the reciprocal course may bring the sea astern or on the quarter in which case a short approach head to sea may be more appropriate.



## ACTION



ACTION

- During the hours of darkness a white parachute flare, which will pick up the retro reflective tape on clothing, can be used to illuminate the area. Remember night vision will be impaired if you look at the flare.

### **Additional follow-up action**

The following additional actions should also be considered depending on the circumstances:-

- Make a sound signal that cannot be confused with any signal authorised by the Collision Regulations.
- Initiate a Mayday broadcast.
- Hoist O (Oscar) flag meaning Man Overboard.
- Advise Marine Rescue/Coast Radio Station of the situation.
- Consider starting an appropriate search pattern if the person in the water is still missing.



## IN THE WATER



IN THE WATER

If you fall or are washed overboard the actions mentioned below will assist you to survive until you can be recovered:-

- Tighten up the wrist, ankle and neck fastenings of your protective clothing to reduce heat loss and the onset of hypothermia. Do not attempt to swim back to the vessel for the same reasons.
- In rough conditions, turn your back to the waves to keep your mouth and nose clear of spray.
- Look for the lifebuoy which may be close by. If you can reach a lifebuoy, invert it over an upraised arm thence over your head and shoulders. Remain calm, keep your legs close together and restrict your movements to stop flushing cold water under your clothing.