



SAFETY BOOKLET

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SAFETY BOOKLET

SAILING SAFELY

Cowes Week is one of the world's biggest regattas and takes place in the busy waters of the Solent. Reading this booklet is an important step for all competitors. Skippers should make every effort to ensure that all their crew give every consideration to its contents.

Whilst sailing is not a sport without risk, by and large it is conducted without incident. You will however be aware that in 2018 there was an incident which cost the life of one of the competitors. Although the safety plan worked well and assistance was on hand very quickly, the safety of you and your crew is predominantly in your own hands and it is vital that this responsibility is taken seriously.

We try to run a regatta which gives everybody exciting sailing and there are occasions when conditions can deteriorate beyond what is forecast and, in that situation, it is always the responsibility of the skipper and crew to decide whether to begin or continue racing.

Please read this Safety Booklet and local harbour authority advice from ABP, KHM and CHC, including the useful guide found at <https://www.southamptonvts.co.uk/media/kdjf00m4/marine-leisure-guide-2026-abp-southampton.pdf>, and contact the Regatta Office if you have any questions or concerns.

We wish you a fun, but most of all, a safe regatta.

The Support Team

Cowes Week Ltd appoints a dedicated 'on-water' support team. This team is based at the Royal Yacht Squadron and works closely with the Principal Race Officer (PRO) to coordinate safety oversight for the Regatta and help enable the smooth running of the week. The success of a safe regatta is not only in the planning but also in the ability to execute those plans when needed. Information management is a key enabler and the on the water support team are invaluable in providing the PRO with the 'live picture' and the ability to make timely decisions. RIBs will be identified to act as marshal & patrol boats and will assist as appropriate. Competitors should contact the support team, if required, on CH 77 using the call sign, 'Cowes Control'. Please note they are all volunteers and working hard to ensure your safety.

The 'on water' support team is set up to assist competitors where it is safe to do so and to help optimise your regatta experience. Boat skippers remain responsible for their own safety and decision making. Emergency services are available to respond and should be the first point of contact for serious incidents. The event support team will support the emergency services as appropriate.

Skipper's responsibility to their crew

The safety of the boat and crew is the responsibility of both the skipper and the crew. Skippers have a duty of care to their crew and need to sail and race within the capabilities of crew and boat. This responsibility is enshrined in maritime law and a skipper can be prosecuted if the Maritime Coastguard Agency believe that a crew has had their lives endangered through the action or inaction of their skipper. In extreme cases this can result in a substantial fine or even a jail sentence.

For some, especially those with smaller, less seaworthy craft or with less experienced crew, this might on occasion mean that a cautious approach needs to be taken. For example, it might not be sensible for such a boat to carry their spinnaker downwind, especially in wind against tide conditions. There may also be occasions when a skipper decides that the conditions are too tough for them and that they should not race, even though other boats in their class are still competing. **These are difficult but important decisions.** Of course, if the Race Committee feels that the conditions are too extreme for one or more classes, they will cancel racing for those boats. However, this in no way implies that, if a race is started, any particular boat should herself start.

Personal flotation

On occasion the Race Committee will fly flag 'Y' for one or more classes to indicate that flotation devices must be worn by all crew members. However, it is often sensible for crew members to wear their flotation devices regardless of whether the flag is flying or not, particularly when sailing dayboats without inherent buoyancy or when working on the foredeck. If flag Y is flying then competitors must wear the type of flotation device required.



'Y' FLAG

For dayboats, class rules may also apply and a personal flotation device can be an appropriate, in date, dinghy style buoyancy aid. For Black Group boats it must be a lifejacket as defined in the World Sailing regulations. As the RNLI slogan says, "lifejackets are useless unless worn".

Collisions

If you are unfortunate enough to be involved in a collision with another boat (whether the other boat is racing or not) and there is any possibility of danger or injury to the crew on the other boat, you MUST stand by them until you are sure that your assistance is no longer required. If the collision was not your fault, you will probably be able to claim redress for time spent standing by. If the other boat is not involved in the regatta and damage has or might have occurred, you should at least exchange contact details (for possible future insurance claims). All collisions should be reported to the Regatta Office. Please also note local harbour authority regulations regarding the reporting of collisions.

Assisting others

It is a primary and absolute responsibility to go to the assistance of any other craft or crew which is in danger. This is included in the Racing Rules of Sailing as the very first rule (1.1). We have heard of occasions when a boat has been swamped and sunk, with others in her fleet sailing by as if nothing had happened. This is unacceptable. Again, if you do go to the assistance of another boat in trouble (whether or not they are racing), you will normally be able to claim redress for reasonable time lost. If you pick up a person who has fallen into the water from another boat, you will not be penalised for having too many crew.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Dealing with casualties while afloat

If a crew member is unfortunate enough to sustain an injury while out racing, it **is up to you to determine the level of assistance you may require. If you need rapid assistance to come to you, then you should use your marine band VHF radio transceiver** (a mandatory piece of safety equipment for all competitors in the regatta) to call the Coastguard on channel 16 or 67, make an emergency DSC call or dial 999 and ask for the coastguard.

Landing a casualty

If you are going to land a casualty ashore yourselves, the closest and preferred place to do this is at Trinity Landing (in front of Cowes Parade). This provides the best access for the emergency services.

If you are not confident about landing at Trinity Landing and want one of the launch service boats to come to you in the river fairway to disembark a casualty, you should call the launch service on channel 8, using the call-sign Tenacity. This is only for minor conditions, anything serious will be handled by the emergency services. If a crew member needs a stretcher to get off the boat, you will either need to come ashore at Trinity Landing or call the Coastguard and request a lifeboat or helicopter. Cowes Harbourmaster may also be tasked to support. The Regatta hires a private ambulance during core racing hours which may also be available to support in Cowes.

Incidents may occur a considerable distance away from the Medina River however and you should consider other Solent Ports to access the emergency services if appropriate. **It is worth pre-thinking these options whilst reading this document.** It may be the right solution is to keep the casualty on board until emergency services can provide the necessary support. Transfer to a support RIB may make the situation worse. Expert advice should be sought as necessary.

First Aid ashore

Any of our front office staff will be able to assist guiding you to the appropriate level of support. If urgent attention is required, call the emergency services on 999 as usual, otherwise 111. If you need a doctor, the Cowes Medical Centre number (working hours) is 01983 295251. The hospital and A&E is at Newport.

SHARING OUR WATERS IN SAFETY

The Solent is home to two of the nation's major ports, Southampton (operated by Associated British Ports (ABP) and Portsmouth (controlled by the Kings's Harbour Master (KHM)). As a result, the Solent sees all sizes of vessel and it is vital that they are able to navigate up the Solent safely while causing the minimum disruption to regatta competitors.

During the regatta, volunteer ABP pilots, the Cowes Harbour Master (or his Deputy) and one of the Red Funnel Ferry masters assist the Race Officers on the Platform of the Royal Yacht Squadron (RYS), communicating shipping movements to help with race planning and escorting ships through the race areas. Throughout the year the harbour authorities work closely with yacht clubs, safety committees and CWL to plan carefully for the regatta, including mark laying and advice on regatta organisation.

Southampton's VTS makes succinct Traffic Information Broadcasts on channel 14 every hour. These contain details of current and expected movements of large vessels as well as other safety information. All major vessel movements within Cowes Harbour are announced on channel 69.

If you have a problem (such as being becalmed in a shipping channel with no alternative means of propulsion) then it is fine to make a quick contact either with Southampton VTS on channel 12, Cowes Harbour on channel 69, or the Cowes Week Race Team on channel 77 as appropriate, to let them know of your situation. You can legitimately use your engine to avoid a collision or a dangerous incident as long as you report this to the Race Committee (see the Sailing Instructions).

KING'S HARBOUR MASTER PORTSMOUTH AND ABP HARBOUR MASTER SOUTHAMPTON DIRECTION NO. 1/25

1. Mariners are advised that the King's Harbour Master has made the following General Direction under the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth Order 2005:
That any marine casualty or marine incident occurring within the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth is to be reported as soon as practicable to the King's Harbour Master. A marine casualty or marine incident is an event or sequence of events that has occurred directly by, or in connection with, the operation of a vessel and has resulted in:
 - The death of, or serious injury to, a person.
 - The loss of a person from a vessel.
 - The loss, presumed loss or abandonment of a vessel.
 - Material damage that significantly affects the structural integrity, performance or operational characteristics of the vessel.
 - The vessel requiring emergency towage or shore assistance.
 - The stranding or disabling of a vessel, or the involvement of a vessel in a collision.
 - Material damage to marine infrastructure external of a vessel that could endanger the safety of the vessel, another vessel, or any individual.
 - Pollution
 - Movement of, or damage to, navigational marks.
2. In these circumstances a verbal report is to be made to the King's Harbour Master, on VHF Ch 11 or by telephoning 023 9272 3694. Additionally, a written report shall be submitted at www.royalnavy.mod.uk/khm/portsmouth/safety-and-regulations/report-an-incident.
3. Any marine casualty or marine incident within the area of Portsmouth International Port should also be reported to the Harbour Master, Portsmouth International Port on 023 9285 5900.

SOUTHAMPTON - EXTRACT FROM NOTICE TO MARINERS NO. 5 OF 2026

All vessels navigating within the Port of Southampton shall ensure that a vessel greater than 220m in length overall shall be given a 'clear channel' in the area between the Hook Buoy and the Prince Consort Buoy - 'The Precautionary Area' (see Diagram 1). Be advised that Cowes Week works very closely with the Harbour Authorities to run a safe regatta and we will not hesitate to disqualify competitors who fail to take appropriate action. The term 'clear channel' is defined as: 'a clear and unimpeded passage ahead of a vessel when transiting the Precautionary Area'.

Southampton Harbour Byelaw 11 of 2003 enforces the requirement that **all vessels over 150m, when navigating within 'The Precautionary Area' are automatically allocated a 'Moving Prohibited Zone' (MPZ).** The MPZ is defined as an area extending 1,000m ahead of the bow and 100m from the ship's side on both sides.

A small vessel (defined as any vessel of less than 20m in length or a sailing vessel) shall not enter an MPZ. To indicate the presence of the MPZ, vessels of over 150m shall display a black cylinder during the day and three all round red lights in a vertical line at night.

Tracks followed by Large Vessels

The tracks followed by large vessels within The Precautionary Area will vary considerably depending on the tidal and wind conditions and the manoeuvring characteristics of the vessels themselves. The tracks shown in Diagrams 1 to 3 are indicative only and inbound and outbound vessels may use the full extent of The Precautionary Area. Unless prevented by an emergency circumstance, small vessels should give all large vessels in The Precautionary Area a wide berth and avoid impeding their passage and, in particular, they should ensure that they do not enter a vessel's MPZ.

DIAGRAM 1 • OUTBOUND TRACK



DIAGRAM 2 • INBOUND TRACK DURING FLOOD TIDE

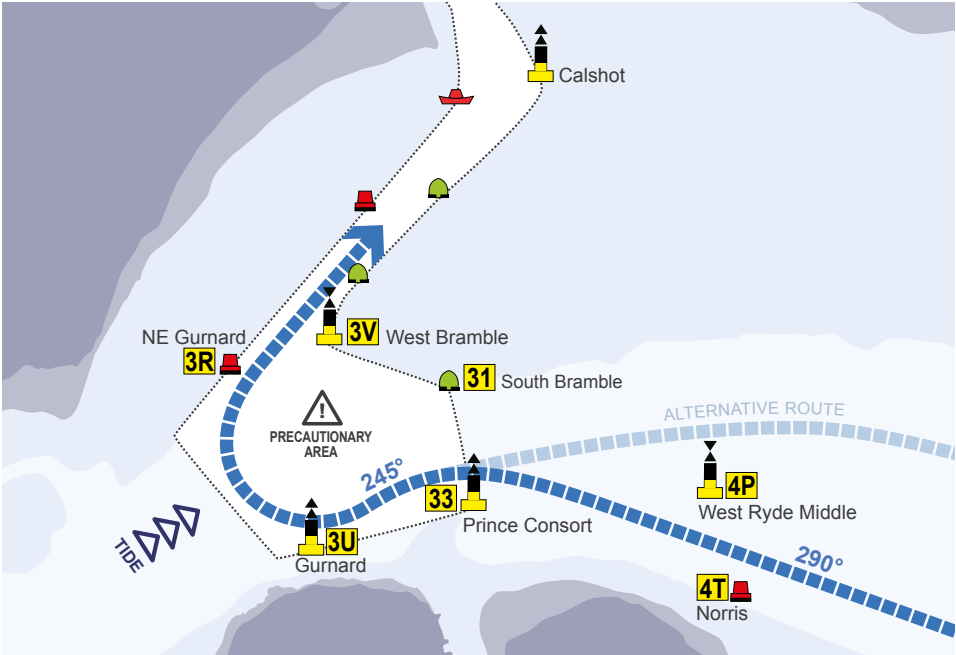


DIAGRAM 3 • INBOUND TRACK DURING EBB TIDE



Outbound vessel tracks - Flood and Ebb tide

All ships leaving Southampton via the Thorn Channel start their turn to port as soon as West Bramble Buoy has been cleared, in order that on steadying-up, their final heading is north of Prince Consort Buoy and directly towards the main channel south of Ryde Middle Bank. However, in ebb tide conditions the ship will be set to the west during the turn and may use the full extent of the south eastern quadrant of The Precautionary Area (see Diagram 1).

Inbound vessel tracks - Flood tide

If the tide is flooding, this will set an inbound ship to the east as it turns into the Thorn Channel. As it approaches The Precautionary Area, in the vicinity of the Prince Consort Buoy, the ship will make a substantial alteration to port, of up to 40 degrees to the southwest towards Gurnard Buoy in order to give the maximum turning area into the Thorn Channel. The turn to starboard may not be commenced until the ship is very close to or just passed Gurnard Buoy, thus allowing some set to the east in the approach to the Thorn Channel entrance (see Diagram 2). In flood tide conditions, small vessels are advised to closely monitor the bearing of a large vessel as it approaches The Precautionary Area and to allow for the alteration of course to port.

Inbound Track - Ebb Tide

If the tide is ebbing, the ship will be set to the west in the turn and thus the turn to starboard into the Thorn Channel will commence much earlier and as much as five to six cables from Gurnard Buoy, in other words as early as when the stern practically clears the Prince Consort Buoy. In this case, the alteration to port at Prince Consort Buoy may be less obvious (see Diagram 3).

Southampton Harbour Master's Patrol Launch

When operationally possible, the Southampton Harbour Master's Patrol Launch (VHF Call Sign "SP" watching VHF Channel 12) will precede all vessels over 150m within The Precautionary Area and will show, in addition to the normal steaming lights, an all round blue light. The absence of a patrol launch does not invalidate the implementation of a vessel's MPZ.

Within The Precautionary Area all instructions given by the Southampton Harbour Master's Patrol Launch should be acknowledged and promptly carried out. Note that during Cowes Week, **the Patrol Launch may be assisted by one or more RIBs whose instructions must also be obeyed.** Failure to follow instructions is highly likely to lead to action by the race committee against competitors ignoring said instructions, as well as potential enforcement action by the Harbour Authority.

See www.southamptonvts.co.uk/Yachting_and_Leisure/Notices_to_Mariners/ for the full text of this and all other ABP Notices.

RECREATIONAL SAFETY - LEE ON SOLENT AND STOKES BAY

The attention of all mariners is drawn to the following precis from the appropriate Borough of Gosport Byelaw: "Boats shall not be sailed in a manner likely to be dangerous to or without reasonable consideration for swimmers and other water users between the western end of the sea wall at Lee-on-the-Solent to a point opposite the junction of Dolphin Way with the sea wall at Royal Naval Hospital Haslar".

Additionally, there is a line of ten yellow buoys between the Gosport Inshore Rescue Services Headquarters (Posn 50°46.7'N: 001°08.9'W) and the outfall (Posn 50°47.1'N: 001°10.0'W) at a distance of 50m from the shore. No vessel should pass inside the line of yellow buoys.

COWES HARBOUR - LOCAL NOTICES TO MARINERS

Sailing in the Medina river takes place alongside considerable commercial ferry operations. Competitors must at all times be vigilant for these vessels entering the harbour and take appropriate action to stay clear. Cowes Week works very closely with the ferry companies and with the Cowes Harbour Master to ensure, as much as possible, racing can take place at the mouth of the Medina river and ferry captains will adjust their course and speed to try and minimise their interference. It is vital, however, that competitors take a prudent approach to ensure that all boats using the water do so safely and harmoniously.

The Fairway

The Cowes Harbour fairway has been divided into two distinct areas; the 'outer fairway' and the 'inner fairway'.

All mariners are reminded of the requirements under Rule 9 of the Merchant Shipping Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions Regulations 1996 (COLREGS) as amended, in particular part b) 'A vessel of less than 20 meters in length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within a narrow channel or fairway.'

The Cowes Fairway extends north of No 1 and 2 buoys, and is referred to as the 'outer fairway'. Small craft should be vigilant for regular ferry traffic and large commercial traffic which cannot safely navigate outside of the outer or inner fairway, and are reminded again of their duty under Rule 9 of the Collision Regulations; compliance with the Collision Regulation is also a requirement of the Cowes Harbour Commission General Directions.

Vessels under sail especially in light winds may be unable to comply with Rule 9, for this reason sailing vessels when navigating in or near the main fairways are required, under Cowes General Direction 4.6, to have their engines, if fitted, ready for immediate use.

Breakwater

The Cowes detached breakwater is marked with two buoys and five beacons. In addition to the permanent marks, two temporary North Cardinal marks will be instated to mark the surplus shingle that remains in temporary storage along the north face of the breakwater. Mariners are strongly advised to remain 50 metres to the north of the breakwater crest to avoid the surplus gravel which reduces depths below those charted.

Inner Harbour Cross Current

Between HW -3 hours and HW, vessels transiting the Inner Fairway between the Island Sailing Club and the Small Craft Channel may experience a westerly setting tidal flow of up to 1.5knots particularly on spring tides; this cross current will have a tendency to set vessels down towards the western shore. Small craft when outbound should be prepared to alter their heading so as not to be set across the fairway when transiting this area and avoid impeding the safe passage of commercial shipping and ferries.

See LNTM 5 of 2025 for more information.

Other General Directions of note

General Direction 3.2 - Every vessel navigating the Inner Harbour of Cowes or within 100 metres of the Mean High Water Mark shall unless otherwise authorised by the Harbour Master in writing, subject to the requirements of maintaining adequate steerage way and control, be navigated at a speed not exceeding 6 knots through the water.

General Direction 3.3 - A vessel shall not be navigated or manoeuvred in any part of the Inner Harbour or within 100 metres of the shore in a manner or at a speed so as to cause wash to be generated that may cause damage to or endanger the safety of other persons, vessels or property.

General Direction 3.6.1 - No person shall navigate or attempt to navigate a vessel when unfit by reason of drink or drugs.

General Direction 3.7 - The Master of any vessel leaving a marina area or mooring within the Harbour shall give way to vessels already underway and navigating in the harbour.

General Direction 5.6 - Vessels must not anchor in the fairway, small craft channel, or in any of the areas containing small craft moorings due to the presence of ground chains. These areas are clearly identifiable on the navigational charts for the area.

All other General Directions are available at www.cowes.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CHC-General-Directions-Amend-Oct-2025.pdf

Chain Ferry

The rules regarding the Chain Ferry are detailed in Cowes Notice to Mariners number 20 of 2024, the following being an extract from that notice:

1. The Chain Ferry is situated on a blind bend at the narrowest stretch of the river.
2. The Chain Ferry has right of way over all river traffic, unless you contact them on VHF Ch. 69 to arrange an unimpeded passage, which must be done in advance and acknowledged by the Chain Ferry.
3. If the yellow lights are flashing, the ferry is about to move or is already moving, therefore you must give way.
4. Do not pass the Chain Ferry when it is in motion, as clearances over the chains are reduced.
5. Be aware of strong tidal flows if travelling in the direction of tide, especially during spring tide cycles, and be prepared to give way to the Chain Ferry in plenty of time.
6. Once the Chain Ferry is berthed, please pass at slow speed. Do not pass too close to the Chain Ferry or too close to the shore.

Please also make the time to read all the relevant Cowes Local Notices to Mariners that are available in full at www.cowes.co.uk/Intms/

SAFETY REGULATIONS

White Group (Dayboat) Safety Regulation for Cowes Week

Application

- a. These regulations apply to all boats racing in the White Group at Cowes Week.
- b. One-design classes shall additionally comply with their Class Rules (if any).

General

All safety equipment shall be of a suitable size and type for the boat and the conditions, and all equipment and fittings (including outboard engines if carried) shall be securely fastened.

Buoyancy

Each boat shall either be self-draining or be equipped with a suitable means for bailing or pumping.

Personal buoyancy

A personal flotation device (PFD) adequate for the conditions shall be carried for each crew member.

Radio

Each boat shall carry a suitable marine band VHF transceiver for use in an emergency.

Flares

Each boat shall carry a means of attracting attention in the case of emergency. We recommend two smoke flares or a white LED or another way of attracting attention in the case of emergency. All flares shall be in-date.

Anchor

Each boat shall carry a suitable anchor and sufficient chain/warp to hold the boat in 20m depth of water in the expected racing conditions.

Compass

Each boat shall carry a marine compass.

Fire extinguisher

Boats carrying fuel shall carry a fire extinguisher.

First aid

Each boat shall carry a waterproof first aid pack with instructions.

Man overboard

Each boat shall carry a rescue quoit or throw-bag with at least 15m of floating line.

Towing

Each boat shall carry a length of throwable line suitable for taking a tow.

Knives

Most sailors are aware of the need to have a serviceable knife close at hand in case it is needed. Whilst Cowes Week does not specify the number and location of said knives, all competitors should be aware of the risk of entanglement and take appropriate steps to mitigate these risks.

Black Group Safety Regulations - World Sailing Offshore Regulations for Category 4 races

The World Sailing regulations are available as a pdf download from the World Sailing website at www.sailing.org.

DIAGRAM 4 • COWES FAIRWAY & COWES OUTER BREAKWATER

