

MAN OVERBOARD

Ioannis Maragkoudakis, HORC Commodore

There are numerous ways of retrieving a person overboard, mainly depending upon the weather conditions, the boat type and the crew handling ability.

The fact is though that rescuing a person from the sea is usually more complicated than expected, especially when there is limited crew onboard.

Thus, prevention is far more important than cure.

For this reason, in rough conditions, it is required the use of lifejackets, safety harness and jackstays.

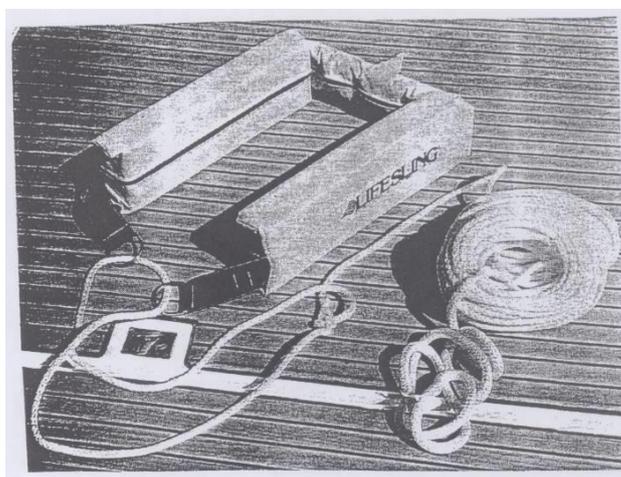
The first seconds when someone goes overboard are of critical importance. The crew must act immediately and in cooperation:

1. Shout loud «MAN OVERBOARD!» to activate the crew while one must watch the person overboard all the time. Please also note that the person overboard must also shout as loud as possible to attract crew attention.
2. Put your GPS/Plotter in MOB (Man OverBoard) state, (please note OSR directions). Inform your crew in advance where the MOB button is on your device (e.g. the red button on top right). In nighttime it will not be easy to locate it.
3. Throw the life buoy with the self-igniting light as well as the dan buoy and any other floating object to visually mark the position.

NOTE: There are two options:

One is that the life buoy must be fastened to a floating rope of 45 m length 9mm thick that must be fasten on the boat, so the person overboard can grab it to remain attached to the boat.

The other option, which is practically considered more efficient, is the life buoy not to have a rope attached to it, because if the person overboard cannot grab it immediately, then it will sail away with the boat. Alternatively, the boat may have a safety feature such as a life sling that includes a floating rope which can be used to retrieve the person overboard when the boat approaches the person at sea.



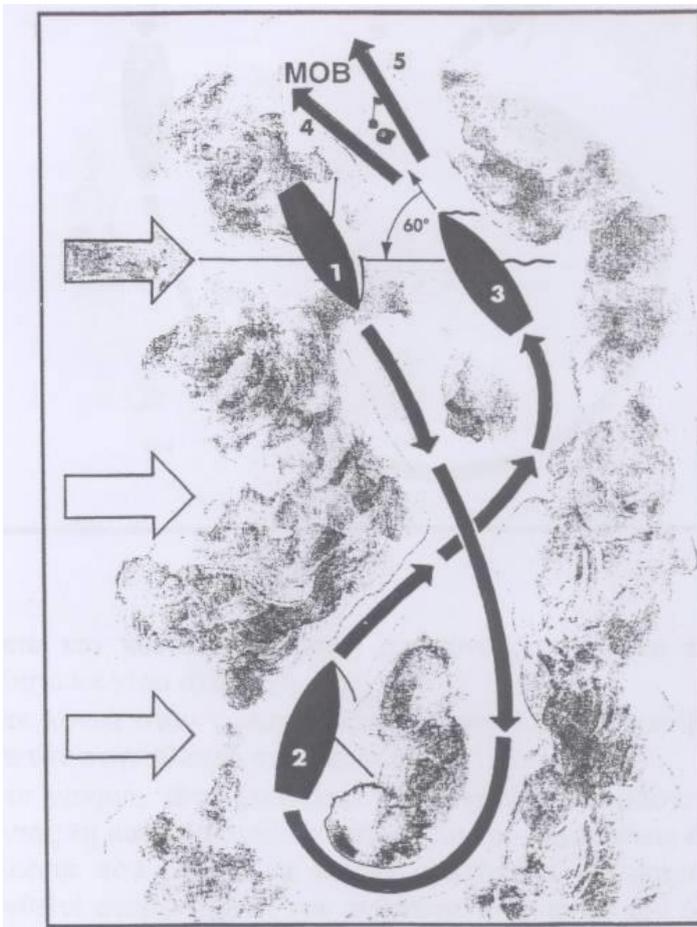
4. Stop the boat the soonest possible to remain close to the person at sea.
5. In rough weather conditions or low visibility, if you fail to locate the person at sea, send DSC distress alert MOB and voice MAYDAY.

The first three actions are easy and is a matter of reflection. Stopping the boat and approaching the person overboard is difficult and depends on many conditions.

Practice before hands is of major importance for the effectiveness of the method used.

For information only, it is hereby cited the following methodology.

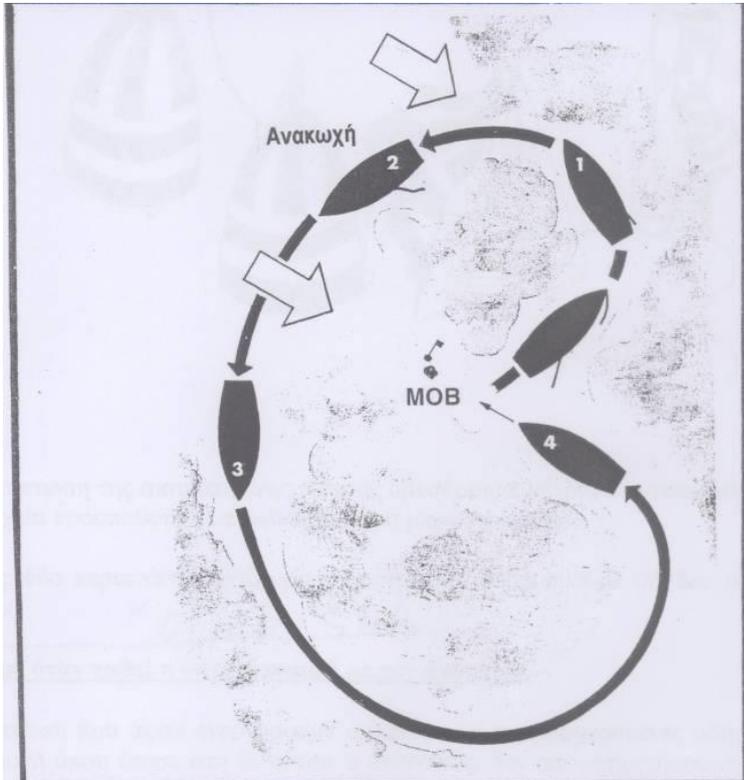
Mainly small sailing boats with no use of engine on a reach



- Bear away to a broad reach and when possible tack towards the person at sea. Control your speed by fill and spill your sails. If you approach too fast, bear away and then head up to reduce speed.
- Approach for the leeward side of the person, as it is easier to control and watch. Try to retrieve the person amidships.
- On larger boats it is preferable to approach from the windward side of the person and retrieve them from the leeward of the boat, paying special attention not to hit the person.

Sailing boat with engine

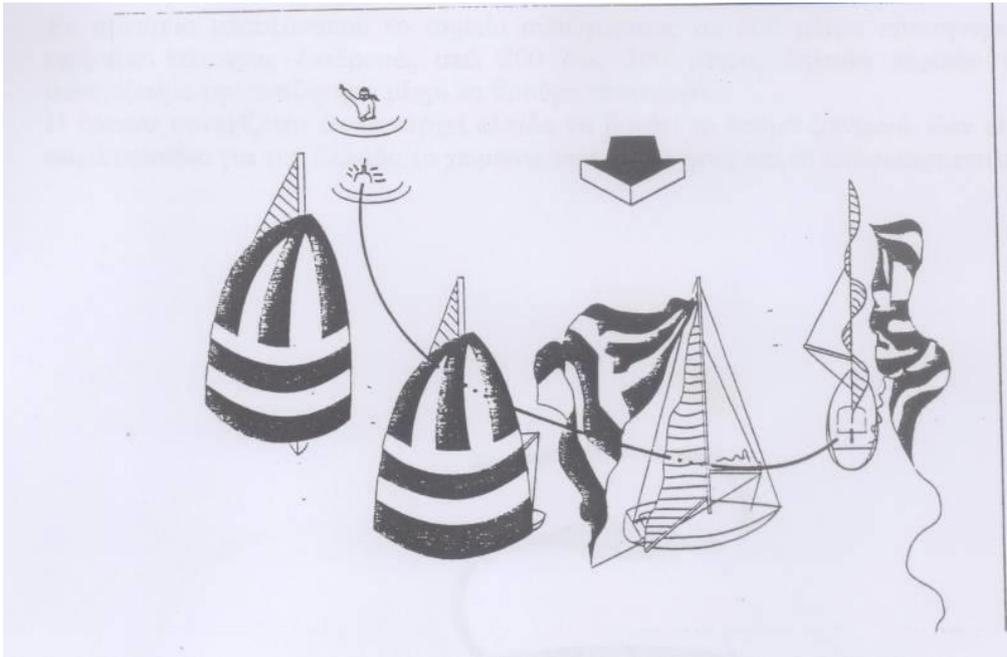
1. Boat under sail (no spinnaker)



- Sheet in the mainsail and heave to in order to slow down the boat.
- **If the boat is still close to the person overboard, throw a life buoy with rope or the Life Sling and drag the person to the boat.**
- If the boat has drifted away, switch on the engine, furl or drop the headsail and make sure there are no ropes in the sea that can clog the propeller. Engage and head to the leeward of the person, disengage and head up to stop. Throw the rope with the lifebuoy or the life sling and pull the person to the side of the boat.
- **Alternatively in strong winds when gybing may be too dangerous, the boat can turn the other way round, tacking and bearing away instead of gybing and then engage the propeller to approach the person.**

2. Boat under spinnaker

Sailing downwind is tricky and the boat may sail fast. It is crucial not to lose contact with the person, so the crew must act quickly to take down the spinnaker and then heading up. In case of emergency, release the guy, the sheet and the halyard and let the sail fly away. The cost of a sail is not comparable to the value of a human life.



***Please see ISAF OFFSHORE SPECIAL REGULATIONS Appendix D**

Ten good practices to avoid man overboard

1 Tighten lifelines and jackstays. These lines are essential for containing a fall safely. Keep them taut, replace any damaged or corroded terminations: specify low stretch flat jackstays and remove them at the end of each season.

2 Provide secure strong points and handholds. Vital at workstations, and for moving and clipping inboard of the jackstay especially on bigger wider decks.

3 Keep a good foothold. Wear footwear that grips well on a heeled deck when wet. Fit non-skid deck patches where necessary.

4 Wear your own combined safety harness and lifejacket. Wearing a lifejacket on its own will not keep you close to the boat after a fall - only a clipped on harness will.

5 Keep it securely fitted. If your lifejacket harness is unfastened or flapping around your waist it can't be a reliable harness or a reliable lifejacket.

6 Wear a safety harness with an overload indicator.

7 As clips can't always be released under load in some special conditions carry a dedicated safety line cutter in case you need to disconnect fast.

8 Always clip on when sailing short handed, at night, in poor visibility or in heavier weather. Novices, children and the less able should clip on at all times.

9 Do it out of consideration for the skipper, fellow crew and those who might have to come to your rescue (or funeral!).

10 Look after your kit. Webbing fibres degrade in strong sun, in damp salt conditions and especially from abrasion. Destroy any safety line showing wear or contamination or after any heavy fall. Store all lifejackets, harnesses and safety lines in a dry place.

11 Trust your own kit. When you look after your own lifejacket harness and safety line you can trust them more than anything borrowed. It is YOUR life on the line.