

Boats and Safety Report- December 2015

College sailing programs in NEISA are taking steps to make the sport safer to play.

Cold water sailing by crews who are dressed inappropriately for the conditions remains a significant danger in New England as host schools must be vigilant with a chase boat always ready to render assistance. Often we have witnessed sailors who are too sapped of energy and lacking upper body strength to get themselves back into a righted dinghy after swimming. It appears to be a situation which has become less frequent with drysuits but often sailors choose to not wear them or don't own them. If the host school does not mandate wearing them in the NOR (scheduling bulletin) then they must be prepared to; 1. Have a roaming chase boat operated by capable personnel; 2. Request the sailors to return to shore immediately after rescue; 3. Only allow the sailors to return to competition with PRO approval. It is critical that host schools hold sailboats ashore until the motorboat is on the water and appropriately staffed. Sailors who are competitors should consider standing by and rendering assistance when racing more often than we have seen.

Head Injuries continue to impact college sailors. John Pearce just circulated a survey from Doc Sullivan trying to gather data on this debilitating injury. This was distributed to the icsa coaches list on Thursday. On Tuesday I will send a reminder to those coaches who have not yet completed it. By the end of next week an email will be sent to the NEISA list requesting the information from any team participant with a list of schools which have not yet completed the survey. There is no data collected on this and this will be a great start to help with understanding if we have a problem and different steps which might be taken to address it. Please contribute.

Tufts and MIT have specified that their mast heights on new boats be extended to raise the boom higher to reduce the likelihood of head trauma. LP, Zim, and Whitecap Composites have all confirmed that the extra length spar will cost nothing additional on the price of a new boat. Mast extension kits are available from Dwyer aluminum masts for \$32 each and would take about an hour to install and move the gooseneck up.

Bowdoin and MIT sailors wear helmets at practice and in competition. Many other schools mandate helmet usage *after* a sailor has experienced a concussion and is cleared to participate again. Professional sailors, Olympic sailors, High School sailing and youth sailing have many participants wearing helmets now. It certainly seems that there is no appetite to mandate helmet usage by our organization. However, what is your team doing to make sailing safer for your students and reducing the likelihood of head injuries? Does it take more students getting hurt before leadership understands their responsibility to change the equipment we use? Are we just kicking the can down the road for future coaches and student leaders to deal with because we don't want to?

At MIT we have seen many students prior to mandating helmet usage who were injured so badly that they had to withdraw from school. After a couple of seasons our sailors are quite comfortable with wearing them and often are thankful when they take one to the forehead and are uninjured. The higher and lighter booms can't hurt, either. Looking forward to some discussion on this topic and reading the results of Doc Sullivan's survey which I hope I don't have to embarrass you into completing. Will Smith's movie Concussion will be released at Christmas time, too. Many thanks and respectfully submitted,

Franny Charles, MIT Sailing Master