

## Pointers on how to execute your role as a buddy boat.

Occasionally when cruising we cruise with others for a day or more. It seems nice that there is someone else out with us so if something goes awry then help will be available. So goes the concept of buddy boats.

This works fine until something does go awry. Then the situation changes quite radically.

Of course if you have thought about this in advance then you will get quite choosy as to who you cruise with as the responsibilities are not insignificant. I do not refer here to liability or insurance matters. I do refer to your responsibilities as a skipper and a fellow seafarer.

Calm, light air conditions present one set of conditions that are far different from rough heavy air sea states. Proximity to obstacles both above and below the surface as well as tide and current states present another set of variables.

I suggest the following 10 (ten) points to remember

1. Prepare for anything within reason, your boat must be fully equipped to be of any help to anyone else.
2. When things "go south" (i.e. awry) they do so quickly, so as soon as a situation occurs, assess the impact (life and death or discomfort), the conditions, your boat and crew's physical abilities and the physical abilities of those you wish to help. Typically they are not as robust as you would wish.
3. First things first, call for help, the casualty probably has other things to do, so call the Coast Guard, call Vessel Assist, state clearly whether it is a "Pan Pan" or a "Mayday". Folks in imminent danger of death to be a mayday. Going on the rocks is a "Pan Pan". Provide the following information
  - a. Calling vessel name
  - b. Location stated as named location, i.e. 4 mile East of Golden Gate Bridge - Lat & Lon are often mistaken with poor results
  - c. The situation - what's happening
  - d. Number of people involved, that you know of
  - e. Description of Casualty, name, type, hull color, etc.
  - f. Assistance required, tow, air evac, medical etc.
4. Stand by the casualty in a safe manner, be ready to coordinate the responses to your call for help and do not hesitate to take command of the scene until a professional arrives. Amateurs and therefore probably more casualties will not help.

5. Consider a backup plan for use if the professionals do not arrive before the situation becomes a "may day". Keep the adrenalin in check. The worst outcomes stem from 'folks in the water' so in preparing this plan take into account everyone's physical capabilities; mistakes and over reaching usually result in folks in the water. Few folks have trained for this. Lines must be passed from one boat directly to the other, no reaching in the water to pick things up.
6. Communicate your plan to the professionals (who may advise as to its practicality) and keep the casualty informed.
7. If necessary execute your plan, note practice a "Man Overboard" situation on your own in safe waters. Do not attempt to get close aboard a person in the water or another vessel unless in dead calm conditions. Folks in the water are heavy, cold and become drowsy and uncooperative after 10 -15 minutes of exposure. Longer if they are wearing a floater suit, shorter in lighter clothing. Be prepared for their uncooperative attitude.
8. Be prepared to hoist them aboard, know how to do it, practice recovering a 200lb soaking wet sack onto the swim grid. Not at all easy.
9. Stay calm, do not panic and keep a level response tone to all questions. Keep the communications channels flowing to all parties concerned.
10. Ensure the safety of your crew and vessel at all times.

These pointers stem from my training and experience with the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary undertaking SAR (Search and Rescue) taskings with the Canadian Coast Guard.