

DEALING WITH A SERIOUS INCIDENT

This advice is adapted from RYA guidance to training centres (TG14-15).

This planning document contains useful information, advice and guidance concerning the response to an emergency or crisis arising at an RYA recognised training centre or RYA affiliated club. If you are an event organiser and unfortunate enough to have to deal with a major incident, refer to the guidance that follows.

Definition of a Major Incident

A Major Incident is an event where there is loss of life, a serious injury, or there is substantial damage to property and/or the environment.

The following are examples of serious incidents or accidents:

- ☐ An incident leading to a fatality, serious or multiple fractures, amputation or other serious injury leading to hospitalisation;
- ☐ Major damage to vessels afloat or property ashore;
- ☐ Loss of contact with group or individual, overdue groups or individuals;
- ☐ Other circumstances in which a group or individual might be at serious risk of harm;
- ☐ Life threatening illness of an individual or group;
- ☐ Any adverse situation in which the media are or may be involved.

In the event of any major incident, **your immediate priority** is the safety of the participants, volunteers and instructors involved. Once you have dealt with those involved it is likely that you are going to have to deal with the authorities and the media. You should immediately contact the emergency services as appropriate.

Incidents may sometimes occur when those involved do not consider the circumstances to be serious. However, to the inexperienced observer or because of statements or information released by the Emergency Services, a perception of seriousness may be created. If the Emergency Services become involved or the incident attracts media attention, it is good practice to be prepared to deal with an incident under the media spotlight.

However, once this is done you need a strategy to deal with the authorities and the press.

Incident Co-ordinator

Appoint an Incident Co-ordinator (this may be yourself until relieved by a Committee member) to take overall control and responsibility and to co-opt other members as necessary to deal with the incident such as securing the incident area and equipment, rendering first aid, preventing further injury or damage and taking appropriate photographs, preparing plans of the incident, gathering the names of those involved and taking witness statements.

The Incident Co-ordinator should inform a Committee member of the incident as soon as possible. The RYA Communications team should be contacted for advice and assistance (numbers are Incident Room 07789 556080; Communications Team: Tel: 023 8060 4209 Mobile: 07789 556080; Tel: 023 8060 4215 Mobile: 07880 744425; Tel: 023 8060 4208 Mobile: 07900 248850), particularly where there is media interest.

Incident Control Room

Set-up an incident control room. This could be in the Race Office. Keep a log book and a record of whom you have spoken to, who has contacted you and what was said.

In the Immediate Aftermath

- ☐ Get a statement from competent witnesses as well as recording their names and contact details
- ☐ Remove the key witnesses to a place you can talk to them away from onlookers
- ☐ Explain that statements are being taken to obtain an accurate account of the incident, as these may be required for insurance, or other purposes
- ☐ Notes need to be taken and agreed by the witness

Securing Evidence

- ☐ Photograph the incident location, boats, equipment etc.
- ☐ Keep and secure any relevant equipment e.g. clothing, buoyancy aids, lifejackets, logbooks etc.
- ☐ Secure any boats and equipment

Emergency Services

In the event of Emergency Services becoming involved, they will take control of the incident response and be responsible for situations relevant to them e.g. Police (fatalities, abduction of and search for lost children), Coastguard (marine rescue), Fire and Rescue Service (fire/rescue incidents), and Ambulance (casualty treatment). In the event of a major multiagency incident, a Lead Agency will be appointed, usually the Police, to ensure a coordinated response.

Site organisation

- ☐ If necessary, control access to and from the site to those with a legitimate reason for being there
- ☐ Identify a separate gathering area for relatives of any injured persons – this may be the Clubroom.
- ☐ Arrange for a supply of hot/cold drinks and/or food
- ☐ Keep media away from gathering area for relatives
- ☐ If possible, have a separate briefing area for the media where they can be addressed by the club representative; be courteous and ensure they also have a supply of hot/cold drinks and/or food

Incident Management Committee

The Committee member contacted should appoint a small incident management committee, with outside advisors if required, to deal with the incident in the days to come. The committee may well have to deal with the media, rumour and speculation, parents, relatives, emergency authorities and club members.

Dealing with Relatives or Aggrieved Parties

It is important to be sympathetic with relatives and aggrieved parties, without admitting liability. Remain calm and say that every effort is being made to get to the bottom of the incident and that the appropriate authorities, with whom you are co-operating, are investigating the incident.

Fatalities

If there has been a fatality the police will inform the next of kin, similarly with injured people when a criminal offence or traffic collision occurs. Do not publicise the name/s of the casualty/casualties until you know this has been formally carried out by the Police, even if the press appear to know who it is.

Dealing with the Press

If contacted by the press or other media representative, the initial response is to acknowledge that an incident has occurred and that the club will issue a press statement as soon as possible once it knows the facts.

Direct statements and interviews are to be avoided unless authorised. Remember any interview you give may well be seen or heard by those involved and next of kin. If it becomes necessary to give an interview, unless confident in being able to cope with unexpected questions, it is better to prepare and read a statement:

e.g. "Chanonry Sailing Club regrets to announce the death of a member (What, When, Where). We extend our deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of (named individual). We will publish a full statement as soon as the facts are known (give yourself time to collate the information). In the meantime we would like to thank the emergency services during this difficult time."

Notifications

Consider who must be notified in accordance with the requirements of your location.

- ☐ If it is water-based incident, you must inform the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) within 24 hours
- ☐ If it involves work-related fatal or major injury you must inform the Health and Safety Executive

Closure

- ☐ The primary phase of the incident is closed when any injured parties have been moved from the location and all property damage has been secured so that it no longer presents a danger to club members or the public
- ☐ A meeting should be held with all those involved in the handling of the incident and any experts who may be required (legal, insurance, structural etc.)
- ☐ This meeting should finalise all records of the event and determine any follow up action that may be required
- ☐ A record should be made of lessons learnt and a plan developed for implementing ways to improve procedures and the major incident response system

TRIGGERS FOR REPORTING ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

