OSR 5.02 Safety Harness and Safety Lines (Tethers)

To recommend the use of the shortest tether length

A submission from the Chairman of the OSR Committee on behalf of RORC

Purpose or Objective

To stress the importance of using a short tether or the midpoint snaphook, whenever possible, especially when on the foredeck, to reduce the possibility of the torso being immersed in the event of man overboard while tethered. In addition: to delete the note in 5.02.5 because it has not been accomplished.

Proposal

5.02.5 It is strongly recommended that:-

a) static safety lines should be securely fastened at work stations;

b) A harness should be fitted with a crotch strap or thigh straps. Crotch straps or thigh straps together with related fittings and fixtures should be strong enough to lift the wearer from the water.

Note: Before the end of 03/10 ISAF will publish recommended minimum breaking strains which for equipment purchased on or after 01/11 will be mandatory. Effective January 2011, a harness shall be fitted with crotch or thigh straps.

c) to draw attention to wear and damage, stitching on harness and safety lines should be of a colour contrasting strongly with the surrounding material;

d) snaphooks should be of a type which will not self-release from a U-bolt (see OSR 5.02.1(a)) and which can be easily released under load (crew members are reminded that a personal knife may free them from a safety line in emergency);

e) a crew member before a race should adjust a harness to fit then retain that harness for the duration of the race

5.02.6 Warning - a safety line and safety harness are not designed to tow a person in the water and it is important that the **shortest safety line length possible be used with** a harness to minimise or eliminate the risk of a person’s torso becoming immersed in water outside the boat, especially when working on the foredeck. 1m safety lines or the midpoint snaphook on a 2m line should be used for this purpose. The diligent use of a properly adjusted safety harness and the shortest safety line practicable is regarded as by far the most effective way of preventing man overboard incidents.

Current Position

As above

Reason

1. The harness and tether must be viewed as a unit to prevent a person’s torso becoming immersed in the event of man overboard while tethered. To promote the use of short safety
line of the use of the midpoint snaphook wherever possible. The note following 5.05.2b is deleted because the action contained therein has not been enacted.

Note: This submission is tendered in the light of recommendations made by the UK Marine Accident Investigation Branch following an incident when the Person in Charge went overboard and lost his life. He was using a long tether, he was immersed and drowned.