Annual Report from the Chair of the Safety Commission to the Board

Safety Commission Members

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1. Summary

During 2026 the Commission focused on turning its role of promoting a safety culture and analysing incidents into practical tools. The main output is the Event Safety Management System (ESMS) and its normative core, the Sailing Safety Management Code (SSMC), now being developed in levels starting at club level, as indicated by the Board. Incident reporting remains the main area of concern: the number of reports has decreased, but the Commission considers that this reflects reporting behaviour as much as risk.

2. Progress against the 2026 Work Plan

- Safety Policy review – in progress. The review led to the proposal to integrate the core of the ESMS into the Safety Policy (P1) as an annex. Carried forward to 2027.
- Guidelines for incident reporting – partially completed. Comparison with IMO principles was taken forward through the SSMC; the update of the guidelines is carried forward to 2027.
- Risk assessment and crisis management templates – developed into the ESMS (consultation draft August 2026; stakeholder documents September 2026).
- Co-ordination with stakeholders – Mid-Year memorandum to the Board (May 2026), Supporting Paper to Committees and Commissions, and monthly incident summaries to members.
- Safety equipment and standards – ongoing, including impact protection and the retention of personal flotation devices (ISO 12402), raised with the International Regulations Commission.
- Incident analysis – monthly review of incidents by the working teams in closed session.

3. Event Safety Management System

The Commission thanks the Board for its feedback following the initial presentation of the ESMS. In line with that feedback, the work continues as a safety management system structured in levels: it starts at club level, with the essential safety elements that any club event should have in place, and each higher level of event adds a further layer of requirements.

To keep the system simple and usable by volunteers, its core has been drafted as the SSMC (Draft 0.1, October 2026), based on the structure of the IMO International Safety Management (ISM) Code. It defines four cumulative levels – Club & Regional, National, World Sailing Events, and Olympic & Paralympic – with verification proportionate to each level. The

detailed ESMS manuals become a library of guidance and templates. The Code is being reviewed by the Commission clause by clause, and relevant Committees and Commissions will be consulted as each level is developed. The documents remain consultation drafts; any future proposal will follow the World Sailing governance process.

4. Incident reporting and trends

The number of incidents reported to World Sailing has decreased over recent years. A significant proportion still comes to the attention of World Sailing through public and media sources, or with some delay, and awareness of the reporting requirements is not yet consistent across MNAs, classes and Organising Authorities. Most incidents occur outside World Sailing events and classes, but they influence the perception of the sport as a whole.

There are also positive signs. Direct reporting through the Incident Reporting System by MNAs, classes, Organising Authorities and participants has increased, World Sailing classes now report more consistently, and fatal incidents have been fewer than in previous years. Recurring themes include head injuries, collisions involving foiling craft, entanglement, sudden changes in weather, keel and rudder failures offshore, support boats and youth training, and the recovery of persons from the water.

The Commission continues to follow the outstanding fatal incidents through the Executive Office and the MNAs concerned, recognising that some are subject to proceedings by national authorities.

5. Developments across the sport

The Commission notes with satisfaction the safety progress made by other bodies: the Racing Rules of Sailing 2025–2028 (personal flotation devices by class rule, tracking devices not to be switched off, quick-release harnesses), the Offshore Special Regulations 2026–2027, the Marine Megafauna in Sailing guidelines published with the Marine Mammal Advisory Group, and the reinforcement of helmets and impact vests in foiling classes, with work under way on high-visibility helmets.

6. Matters for the attention of the Board

- Resources. The development of the ESMS and the analysis of incidents rely largely on the voluntary time of Commission members, with valuable but limited support from the Executive Office. The Commission would welcome the Board's consideration of the support available for this work in 2027.
- Incident reporting. A message from World Sailing to MNAs, classes and Organising Authorities reminding them of the reporting requirements, and of their purpose of learning and prevention, would support a more complete picture of safety in the sport.
- Regulatory references. The reference to the Safety Reporting Regulation in the SSMC will be confirmed with the Executive Office against the edition of the World Sailing Regulations in force.

7. Work Plan 2027

The 2027 Work Plan is submitted for the Board's approval. Its objectives are: the revision of the Safety Policy and the integration of the SSMC; the development of the ESMS in levels, starting at club level; incident reporting awareness, guidelines and data quality; safety awareness and education, including material for the World Sailing Academy; the monitoring of safety equipment and standards; and co-ordination with World Sailing stakeholders.

8. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of the Commission for their time and commitment, the Board liaisons for their support, and the Executive Office for its continued assistance throughout the year.

A special word of thanks is due to Katrina Ham, World Sailing Offshore and Safety Manager, whose dedication, organisation and constant support to the Commission – from the preparation of meetings and incident summaries to the follow-up with MNAs and event organisers – have been essential to the work achieved this year.

Eurico Teodoro
Safety Commission Chair