



Safety Thursday

April 25, 2013

First Aid Kit, First Aid Training, and Ditch Bags

The Mac safety regulations require yachts competing in the Mac to carry First Aid Kits and First Aid Manuals (Monohull MSR 45 & 46, Multihull MSR 49 & 50).

Skippers are responsible for ensuring that a kit suitable for the race and the number of people on board is carried and maintained. Remember that many medical supplies have expiration dates, and standards change, so that 10 year old kit may no longer be 'suitable' for the conditions of the race. Take the time to examine and inventory your kit. You should consult with a healthcare professional to determine the appropriate contents of a kit for your boat, but many commercially-prepared kits are available.

Spring is also a good time to check the expiration date on the medications and supplies in your first aid kit. Expired medications, in particular, can do more harm than good.

In addition to bandages, splints and the like, most kits carry much routine items which may be of use - bandages, allergy pills, anti-itch cream, seasickness pills, sunburn pain relief lotions and the like. Each crew member should be familiar with the location of and contents of the kit, since virtually anyone could be called to use it.

Your kit should also contain a good first aid manual, as is required by the MSRs. Many are available, either as part of the kit or from Amazon or similar bookstores. You should familiarize yourself with the manual now, before you really need it. The last thing you want to do is be thumbing through a table of contents in a real emergency!

If assembling your own kit, we strongly encourage you to discuss it with a health care professional. Good resources for learning include:

<http://www.boatingmag.com/boatingsafety/tips/safety-tip/marine-first-aid-kits>

<http://www.equipped.com/medical.htm>

<http://www.thesailingfoundation.org/SAS2012Docs/SAS%20Medical.pdf>

Kits do not carry prescription drugs or other advanced equipment, such as AEDs. If your particular crew requires such equipment, you should consult with a physician now,

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before you go. Take into account the medical needs of your crew. If crew members have specific health concerns, they should be discussed with the skipper in advance. A written medical history from any crew member with any medical condition, allergy or the like is an excellent idea. If privacy is a concern, the crew member can put the history in a sealed envelope, to be retained by the skipper and opened only in the event of need. An example of a medical history form is here:

http://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/316056/Medical_history_form.pdf

In addition to an appropriate medical kit, you should encourage your crew to have proper first aid training. Although our race is not governed by the ISAF Offshore Special Regulations, they are instructive. They require that 3 members of the crew have medical training equivalent to or greater than the Red Cross First Aid course. This is probably a good standard for most Mac boats as well. Find out in advance who on your crew has this training. If no one does, we encourage you to get trained.

Good sources for basic first aid training include:

The Red Cross (for basic First Aid training): <http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class>

NOLS (for more advanced wilderness first aid): <http://www.nols.edu/courses/find/byskill/wildernessmedicine.shtml>

Ditch Bags

The Multihull MSRs require multihulls to carry a ditch bag (“calamity pack”) (MSR 14). While not a requirement for Monohulls, having one on such yachts is also a good idea. Multihulls are required to carry pyrotechnic signals per MSR, a handheld VHF, a GPS, a flashlight, cutting tools and an EPIRB/PLB. This equipment would be invaluable in the case of a capsize, and it would be also of tremendous value if your crew was forced to abandon ship into a life raft.

The MSRs list minimum equipment requirements, but good sailors would supplement this list. Other items to consider carrying in the ditch bag include a first aid kit, ‘space’



blankets, a knife, spare batteries for the flashlight and handheld VHF, a signal mirror, a whistle, and sunscreen.

A good article (with link to related articles) on ditch bags is at <http://www.equipped.com/abandonship.htm>

Note: The purpose of this article is to highlight some of the Mac Safety Regulations and how your crew can race the Mac as safely as possible. As always, ultimate responsibility for the safety of the crew and the decision whether to race or to stop racing is that of the skipper (RRS4, MSR2). This email is meant as a courtesy only and you should always refer to the Race Documents section of the website for the Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions and Mac Safety Regulations, which govern the race. Nothing in this article should be considered medical advice, and you should always consult with a physician prior to commencing any physical exertion including sailing to ensure that you are safe to do so.

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