

Organising a Regatta

More and more sailors with disabilities are participating in racing. This is either in special events involving only people with disabilities or at open club or class events. Organising a regatta for disabled sailors is much the same as any other. Some additional points however require extra planning.

Notice of Race - The Notice of Race (NOR) should include all the usual information about date, venue, programme and rules. It should also answer the following questions:

- Will it be a closed or open regatta?
- Is it just for people with disabilities?
- What classes are to be included?
- Who will provide the boats - the sailors or the organising committee?

Accommodation - If participants require overnight accommodation, it is helpful if organisers can:

- Send out local tourist organisation information with the NOR including reference to a range of accommodation suitable for people with disabilities.
- Negotiate special financial deals for the event. Participants should make their own bookings directly with the B&B/Hotel so that they take responsibility for ensuring that it suits their particular needs.

Race Management Personnel - In addition to normal race management personnel it is helpful if there is:

- At least one member of the race committee (RC) with previous experience of events involving people with disabilities.
- A beach master to control the rate at which boats come alongside the jetty and to allocate help as needed.

Making Decisions - Normally, if the Race Committee has decided to run a race, the crew must decide if they will participate. This convention also applies to regattas involving disabled sailors. However in rare situations, where conditions and level of disability increase the potential for an incident, it may be necessary to ask a disabled person to stay ashore or to leave the race. It is sensible to nominate a skilled person for this delicate task.

On-water Support - If problems occur between leaving the jetty and the preparatory signal, disabled sailors may need on-water assistance. It is generally accepted that normal sailing rules apply, and that a crew in difficulty should retire from the race. Where possible:

- Use inflatable boats for support and rescue. Ensure that they are manned by two people at all times.
- Provide a signalling system (e.g. a flag) to enable a disabled crew to attract attention. Remember, some crews may have difficulty with the usual method of signalling - lowering the mainsail.

Support Ashore - The individual sailor must check with organisers and ensure that support is available to meet his/her needs. In an open 'able-bodied' event,

disabled participants may have to provide their own 'helpers'. Where disabled sailors are taking part in an event, the organisers should communicate what (if any) able bodied support is available.

Timing

- If many competitors are disabled, allow extra time for activities such as embarkation, disembarkation and moving around the venue.
- Consider running two shorter races back-to-back to reduce the number of transfers into and out of boats.
- It is recommended that sailors be on the water for no more than four to five hours during any one sailing period. It may be possible to consider additional, shorter sailing periods on the same day.
- If necessary, shorten races early to allow plenty of time to get ashore.

Sailing Instructions - If the regatta involves disabled sailors, the sailing instructions should include notes on:

- **Sailing Conditions.** Sailing should take place only in winds up to Beaufort 6 (11 m/sec; 22-27 knots). This rule may be varied according to the type of boat sailed, the venue and weather conditions.
- **Reefing.** It must be made clear who will decide about reefing, how the sailors will be informed and whether this will be mandatory for all boats.
- **Positions in the Boat.** In disabled only events, the guiding principle is that no crew should gain a racing advantage (e.g. through hiking) over others crews who do not have the physical ability to do the same.
- **Length of Races.** When most participants are physically disabled, allow a maximum of 1.5 hours for the first boat to cross the line, and then allow a maximum time for remaining boats to finish.

Club Facilities - The host club may consider temporary arrangements to:

- Waive normal club rules about car parking to allow disabled sailors to park close to facilities.
- Allow trailers to be parked close to the launching facilities.
- Provide overnight moorings to avoid unnecessary launching and retrieving.
- Provide an official notice board at a suitable height, accessible to wheelchair users.

Publicity - To encourage more people to become involved, take every opportunity to publicise sailing activities involving people with disabilities. Send reports to the yachting press & ISA.

