



Operation of Powerboats during COVID-19 Restrictions

Version 10.2 – 16 Sept. 2020

Version 1 was produced by the FPSC Return to Racing Sub-Committee : Ian Gregory (Sub-Com. chairman), Megan Pascoe, Rob Anstey, Alastair McEwan and Jonathan Dakin (FPSC Member / Consultant in Respiratory Medicine). Subsequent versions have included minor revisions to reflect experience and changing guidelines.

Version 10 is a substantial update as the level of activity at the Club has increased; RYA guidance has changed significantly; and members are more used to the procedures required to mitigate risks. Key changes are i) powerboats are to be cleaned after use by the retiring crew; ii) people from different households can operate powerboats provided they remain more than 1m apart for most of the time or use face coverings; iii) handheld VHF sets are no longer tagged for use on specific days iv) cleaning regime for VHF sets, key and kill cords has changed. Authors of V10: Rob Anstey, Megan Pascoe and Stefan Bennett; reviewed & approved by the GC.

1) Introduction

This document sets out changes to the advice and procedures detailed in Section 13 “Safety Boat Documents” of the Club’s Handbook necessitated by the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It continues to be updated in line with the restrictions as these are adjusted by relevant authorities. Where there are conflicts then procedures in this document take precedence.

COVID-19 is a long term problem that the Club will have to live with so existing (familiar) operating procedures are followed as far as possible with suitable adaptations.

It is important that FPSC is does not feel constrained in operating its powerboats and so increase the risk of a serious incident during organised sailing activities.

The procedures require a Duty Officer with access to the Clubhouse to be on site – normal Club procedure during scheduled Club activities. The DO might double up as the Authorised Powerboat Helm or the Race Officer.

It is a prerequisite for all activities at FPSC that anyone who is unwell or suspects that they may be infected with COVID-19 DOES NOT attend the Club until they have been free from any symptoms for a period of two weeks.

A critical defence against COVID-19 is for members to wash / sanitise their hands on arrival at the Club and before touching anything and at regular intervals thereafter.

Under Government guidelines there is no requirement for the Club to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the normal operation of powerboats. However, these operating procedures include steps to mitigate risks and in some circumstances individuals are advised to use their own PPE. The Club does provide PPE where general cleaning needs to be undertaken or powerboats are being cleaned by people other than the retiring crew.

2) Aim

The aim is to reduce the chance of spreading viral infection through the use of powerboats including between :

- Helm and crew manning a powerboat;
- Successive crews;
- Powerboat crews and any sailors needing assistance;
- Crew and anyone maintaining the powerboats (including fuelling).

3) Risk factors

3.1 Proximity

Key mitigation is social distancing unless people are from a household group. This is the most significant factor to contend with when operating powerboats.

3.2 Contamination of equipment

Key mitigations are preventing contact; leaving for 72 hours between use if possible; cleaning by the operator after use, concentrating particularly on contact points; cleaning by someone else.

3.3 Contact time between people

Key mitigation is keeping contact time as brief as possible.

3.4 Enclosed spaces

Key mitigations are minimising the use of enclosed spaces; limiting the number of people inside at the same time; and regular cleaning, particularly of contact points. Members spend most of their time at the Club out of doors which greatly reduces risk.

4) Current Guidance Applicable

4.1 Cleaning hard surfaces

Wipe down using a combined detergent and disinfectant diluted in water. Splashing to be avoided as far as possible. Wear gloves and overalls as a minimum, which should be bagged with any cleaning clothes used, stored for 72 hours, and then disposed of as normal rubbish. *(N.B. this guidance covers a cleaner cleaning facilities used by other people who could be carriers; FPSC's view when compiling V1 of this document was that PPE is not therefore required when someone is cleaning a hard surface which they may have contaminated themselves.)*

(Ref: [COVID-19: Cleaning in a non-healthcare setting by Public Health England 15 May 2020](#))

4.2 Personal hygiene

Good personal hygiene is key and the Government's guidance is to wash hands for 20 seconds or use sanitiser regularly; or use gloves and then dispose of them safely to avoid spreading or picking up contamination; and to avoid touching your face.

4.3 Social distancing

The Government's general guidance is to maintain a minimum distance of 2 metres from anyone not from the same household if at all possible, or 1m with mitigation. In enclosed public places (not including those serving food or drink) face coverings are now required.

The RYA have developed specific guidance on transmission between people from different households in the same boat. Its risk assessment states that separation of between 1m and 2m (between heads) is low risk requiring no mitigations provided people are not face to face. This applies to both sailing boats and powerboats. If the distance falls below 1m – e.g. in small boats or a rescue situation – then face coverings should be used subject to exposure time (and “where conditions permit” with sailing boats).

(Ref: RYA Guidance on sailing & racing with participants from different households during COVID-19 in England 21 August 2020)

4.4 Exposure time

The Government's contact tracing system is based on tracing anyone who has been within 2m of someone with a positive test result for COVID-19 for longer than 15 minutes. It can be inferred from this that transmission is unlikely from brief proximity.

Where physical distancing of **under 1m** cannot be maintained then the RYA guidance distinguishes between “fleeting contact” (under 3 seconds); “non-fleeting contact” (over 3 secs); and “cumulative contact” where short periods of exposure add up to more than 15 minutes. The detail is in the RYA document but is summarised in 4.6 below as it applies to FPSC's use of powerboats.

4.5 Viability of COVID-19

There is no definitive answer but the Government has stated that COVID-19 is “unlikely” to be viable after 72 hours even in an enclosed / protected environment. An exposed environment (outside) subject to UV and weathering is less favourable.

4.6 IN SUMMARY.....

The RYA's guidance provides specific detail dependent on circumstances but for the purposes of FPSC's operation of its powerboats the following applies :

- Obviously there is no problem if people are from the same household.
- As long as at least 1m can be maintained between people from different households then normal operation of powerboats is a low risk activity requiring no further mitigations. 1m is possible in most of FPSC's powerboats.
- It is still low risk and requires no mitigation if people from different households come within 1m of each other **provided that** this is for no more than 3 secs at a time; the cumulative contact time does not exceed 15 minutes; and people are not face to face. If any of those conditions are breached then face coverings should be used.
- In a rescue situation the same applies except where physical assistance to recover a casualty into their boat or the safety boat is required. In that situation face coverings should be worn and face to face positions avoided if possible.

5) Operating Procedures

As a general point, following these procedures will require more time than people were used to before COVID-19 restrictions came into force. In particular, there is more input required from the Duty Officer and powerboat crew are going to have to be patient if the Duty Officer is not immediately available.

5.1 Fuelling

FPSC's normal procedures for storing, filling tanks and fitting them to the powerboats apply but hands are to be washed or sanitised prior to touching any keys, door handles or equipment.

Currently Alastair McEwan is responsible for ensuring the Jerry cans in the fuel store are replenished regularly.

5.2 VHF Sets

VHF sets are required for safety related communication and race organisation. They present a risk of COVID-19 transmission because the microphone has to be held close to the mouth.

The Club has twelve handheld VHF sets for general use, with more available from the RYA Training Centre if required. Sailability has its own sets. In addition, Safety 1, Lionheart II and the Race Hut use fixed VHF sets.

The Club has provided (in the Flag Room, Humber's shed and the Race Hut) :

- Plastic bags with seal (to contain a VHF set or microphone as appropriate);
- Alcohol wipes;
- Hand sanitiser;
- Disinfectant detergent in a hand spray bottle;
- Rubbish bin and liner.

The procedures for the management and operation of VHF sets are contained in Appendix 1. Note that they are slightly different depending on whether a handheld or fixed set is being used.

5.3 Keys and kill cords

The key and kill cord for the powerboat allocated to safety duty will be issued by the Duty Officer. Powerboat crew should not enter the Clubhouse to collect these.

The key and kill cord are to be sanitised as part of the powerboat cleaning procedure after use (section 5.6 below). They are to be left in situ in the powerboat and sprayed with disinfectant detergent, then rinsed with the rest of the powerboat.

If the powerboat is being handed over to another crew then the key and kill cord should be left in situ.

When a powerboat is put away the key and kill cord must be given to the Duty Officer, who will return them to the key press.

5.4 Manning Powerboats for Safety Cover

The Safety Committee recommends maintaining the standard FPSC operating practice of crewing safety boats with two people. One must be an adult but the other may be a young person aged 14 or over as long as they are able to assist someone in the water.

Under RYA guidelines issued on 30th July and updated on 21st August powerboats can be crewed by people from different households as detailed in section 4.6 above.

In order to increase the pool of Authorised Powerboat Helms available whilst the restrictions are in force authorised helms aged 16 and 17 years are permitted to helm powerboats during racing (this varies normal Club practice detailed in the Club Handbook).

5.5 Launching & Recovery

Powerboats will be launched and recovered in the normal manner by their crew.

Ideally the powerboat crew will launch the powerboat but additional assistance to launch and recover powerboats can be sought from anyone provided that they maintain 2m distance from the powerboat crew and that they sanitise their hands immediately before and after assisting. The ropes used to pull powerboats up the slipways are sufficiently long to allow 2m distancing.

The MultiMover will not normally be available for recovering powerboats as this complicates access and cleaning arrangements. However, there is nothing to stop the MultiMover being used if the 2.4s are operating it (provided the 2.4 sailors continue to operate it, not the safety boat crew).

5.6 Cleaning of Powerboats

Given the level of activity at the Club it is no longer feasible to mitigate viral spread by leaving powerboats for more than 72 hours between use. **Therefore, as of 12 September 2020 powerboats must be cleaned after use as detailed in Appendix 3.**

Handheld VHF radios, keys and kill cords are to be cleaned at the same time as powerboats in accordance with the procedures in Appendix 1 and Appendix 3.

For avoidance of doubt powerboats, keys, kill cords and VHF sets must be cleaned whenever a powerboat is being handed over directly to a new crew or being used for consecutive duties.

5.7 Assisting Dinghies and their Crew

It is important to note that :

- i) The need for powerboat crew to be within 2m of anyone requiring assistance is minimal; and in almost all circumstances a distance of 1m to 2m can be maintained.
- ii) Where close proximity under 1m or contact becomes essential then it is usually brief, but in this circumstance then safety crews should wear a face covering and avoid face to face situations if at all possible. Crews should bring their own face coverings as this is safest and most hygienic but masks are available in the first aid kits on board the powerboats if required.

- iii) Life threatening incidents requiring prolonged contact are extremely rare at Frensham (and as far as anyone can remember have only occurred ashore).
- iv) If assistance is needed in a life threatening situation then infection is a lower risk – in this situation do not hesitate to help even if it compromises mitigations.

The main interventions required at Frensham Pond are :

- **Lifting mast which is stuck in the bottom.**
*No need for safety boat crew to be near the dinghy crew.
The safety boat crew lift using the top of the mast and then the forestay; so as long as the dinghy crew are in the vicinity of the dinghy cockpit they are going to be more than 1m (and normally at least 2m) away.
The risk of viral contamination from contact with the dinghy/equipment/sails should be minimal as the crew only have brief contact with parts of these as they rig; and the mast, rigging and sails will also have been immersed in pond water for some minutes before help is provided.*
- **Towing back to shore.**
*Powerboat crew to throw across towing line whilst maintaining at least 1m (and preferably 2m) separation and tow the dinghy behind, not alongside, if at all possible.
Risk from contamination of towing line is minimal.*
- **Repatriating crew separated from their boat.**
Ideally the sailor should board the powerboat without assistance from the crew. The time spent by the sailor on the powerboat should be kept to an absolute minimum and 1 metre + separation should be maintained where possible, otherwise face coverings should be worn – section 4.6 above is pertinent here. There are masks in every safety boat first aid kit.
- **Assisting helm/crew to board their dinghy after a capsize.**
Whilst there are ways to do this without compromising distancing recommendations there are circumstances where physical contact becomes inevitable because of more pressing safety concerns. However, there is a low risk of transmission from a brief encounter (see section 4.6).

The last two situations need to be avoided as far as possible and the following mitigations are to be applied :

- The Race Officer / Duty Officer will abandon racing / organised activities if the number of boats sailing and weather conditions are such that they would normally think of mobilising a second safety boat.
- All sailors must understand that the safety boat is not available to help them re-board their dinghy except in extreme circumstances.
- All sailors must be fit enough and strong enough to be able to re-board their boat without assistance.
- Anyone who capsizes repeatedly should return to shore before they are likely to run low on energy and find it hard to re-board their boat. The Race Officer and safety boat helm have the authority to instruct them to do this if necessary.

- Junior (U14) followed by elderly sailors most commonly require help to re-board their dinghies. These groups should therefore exercise particular caution about sailing and are advised to use mast floats. If they have had to be helped in the past then they should not sail if there is even a modest risk that they may capsize.
- Where the dinghy is capsized then the crew should be told to position themselves so that they can be scooped back in as the mast is raised by the safety boat crew.
- If assisting someone back into their dinghy is unavoidable then face coverings should be worn and it is preferable to lift the straps on their buoyancy aid from behind with them facing their dinghy.

5.8 Swimmers

In the current circumstances there is a high incidence of swimmers venturing out of the buoyed swimming areas into the main body of the Pond. Powerboat crew should :

- Keep a sharp look out for swimmers and to ask them to return to the bathing area or keep within the shallow areas close to the banks (easy standing depth) where dinghies are unlikely to venture.
- Be very alert to the dangers of running over swimmers whilst operating a powerboat, especially if it becomes necessary to drive at any speed.

5.9 Waste Disposal

Rubbish bins and (pink) liners are provided in the Flag Room, Race Hut and Humber's shed.

The bin liners will be removed and sealed weekly. They will be stored for a further three days before being disposed of in the normal rubbish collection bins outside the gate.

APPENDIX 1 : Procedures Ashore

PREPARATIONS :

- 1) Hands are to be sanitised prior to touching any keys, door handles, equipment or anything else. This applies to the Duty Officer, Race Officer and both powerboat crew.
- 2) Follow normal FPSC procedures except where varied here.
- 3) VHF sets pose the most significant risk of transmission of COVID-19 because they have to be held close to the mouth in use. Please take particular care to follow the procedures below.
- 4) To reduce the number of people accessing the Clubhouse VHF sets, keys and kill cords will be issued by the Duty Officer. Powerboat crew should not enter.
- 5) The Duty Officer will unlock Humber's shed and disarm the intruder alarm as usual.
- 6) The Duty Officer will seal a VHF set in a new plastic bag (stored in the radio press) and hand it to the powerboat helm along with the keys to the allocated powerboat.
- 7) The VHF set will be kept in its bag and operated through it at all times. Only the helm should operate the VHF set.

LAUNCHING & RECOVERY :

- 1) Powerboats will be launched and recovered in the normal manner by their crew.
- 2) Anyone can help to launch or recover a powerboat provided that they maintain 2m distance and sanitise their hands before and after. The tow ropes are sufficiently long to allow this.
- 3) The MultiMover will not normally be available for recovering powerboats unless it is being used by the 2.4mR fleet, when it may be used provided only the 2.4 sailors operate it.

AT THE END OF A DUTY :

- 1) Crews are to follow the cleaning procedure detailed in Appendix 3 after every use. Note that this includes cleaning the key, kill cord and outside of VHF bag.
- 2) The helm should sanitise their hands before removing the VHF set from its (washed) bag – bag to be disposed of in the rubbish bin provided (pink liner).
- 3) If the powerboat is being handed over to another crew immediately then it must be recovered ashore for cleaning. The key and kill cord are to be left in situ; and the VHF set is to be put in a new bag by the new helm (bags stored in Humber's shed). Otherwise.....
- 4) The helm should return the VHF set, key and kill cord to the Duty Officer, who should also sanitise their hands before touching them.
- 5) The Duty Officer will wipe the VHF set thoroughly with an alcohol wipe before putting it on charge in the radio cupboard. The keys and kill cord will just be returned to their key press.

VARIATION FOR FIXED VHF SETS – SAFETY 1, LIONHEART II & RACE HUT

- 1) The helm/RO must sanitise their hands immediately before first touching the VHF set.
- 2) Before use the VHF microphone is to be sealed in a plastic bag (new bags stowed in console / Race Hut). It will be kept in this bag and operated through it at all times.
- 3) At the end of a duty the PB Helm shall wash/sanitise their hands again and remove the microphone from the bag in such a way as to minimise the risk of contaminating it.
- 4) The bag must be placed directly into the rubbish bin in Humber's shed.
- 5) The VHF microphone and controls on the set must be wiped thoroughly with an alcohol wipe, which will also be binned.

APPENDIX 2 : Guidance for Powerboat Helm and Crew Afloat

This is in addition to advice contained in the Safety Boat - Reference Guide in the Club Handbook.

PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO A DINGHY AND ITS CREW

- 1) Powerboat crew should maintain 1m (and preferably 2m) distance from dinghy sailors at all times except in extreme situations when there is a risk of serious injury or worse.
- 2) If operating close to a dinghy then make sure its crew are on/at the opposite side /end of the dinghy from the powerboat (they should be well away from the prop. anyway !). Face coverings should be worn by the powerboat crew if there is any likelihood of them coming within 1m of the dinghy's crew for more than 3 seconds.
- 3) When helping to right a dinghy then approach from the top of the mast and pick up the mast / forestay as normal.
- 4) Whilst the Club is taking a cautious approach and people should not be sailing if they cannot get back into their dinghy unassisted, it may become necessary to help them directly to avoid a more dangerous situation developing. In this case EITHER :
 - Ask them to position themselves so that they will be scooped back in as the dinghy is righted by the powerboat crew OR
 - Assist them physically, preferably by lifting the straps on their buoyancy aid from behind with them facing their dinghy to avoid face to face contact. In most instances close proximity will be brief but wear a face covering if conditions permit.
- 5) If anyone capsizes repeatedly then the Race Officer and Authorised Powerboat Helm both have the authority to instruct them to return ashore in the interests of their safety and the safety of other sailors.
- 6) If a dinghy needs to be towed then use the heaving line and tow astern, not alongside unless this is unavoidable.
- 7) Wash or sanitise your hands thoroughly after touching a dinghy or its equipment, and/or after using the safety boat heaving line.

IF YOU CANNOT AVOID COMING WITHIN 1M OF SOMEONE THEN :

- 1) Contact time needs to be minimised as far as possible.
- 2) Powerboat crews must wear face coverings.
- 3) All involved should thoroughly wash / sanitise hands, face, any exposed skin and clothing as soon as practicable.
- 4) A Flag Officer MUST be informed, stating who was involved, the circumstances, the length of contact, date and time.
- 5) A Flag Officer MUST be informed if anyone involved becomes ill in the following two weeks.

SWIMMERS :

- 1) Keep a sharp look out for swimmers and ask them to return to the bathing area or keep close to the banks where dinghies are unlikely to venture.
- 2) Be very alert to the dangers of running over swimmers whilst operating a powerboat, especially if it becomes necessary to drive at any speed.

APPENDIX 3 : Cleaning a Powerboat

CLEANING EQUIPMENT WILL BE FOUND IN HUMBER'S SHED TO THE RIGHT OF THE DOOR AS YOU ENTER AND IN MAIN WORKSHOP ON THE BACK OF THE DOOR NEAREST THE ALARM PANEL.

Materials / equipment provided:

- Hand sanitiser (in dispenser on outside of building).
- Alcohol wipes.
- Spray bottle of disinfectant detergent.
- Garden sprayer containing disinfectant detergent (Humber's shed only).
- Car washing brush to fit to hose pipe.
- PPE – face shield, disposable gloves and disposable overalls.
- Bin (pink liner)

The disinfectant detergent is effective against coronavirus and is harmless to aquatic life.

Ideally powerboats would be left for 72 hours after use but the amount of activity at the Club now makes this difficult. Therefore this cleaning procedure must always be followed after recovering a powerboat ashore. Note that powerboats must be recovered ashore for cleaning even if they are being used again immediately by another crew.

- 1) Ideally the retiring crew should do the cleaning as the powerboat should only have been contaminated by them. **This removes the need for any PPE to be used.**
- 2) **If a powerboat has to be cleaned by anyone other than the retiring crew then PPE must be used.** The risk is from direct contact and splashing so a face shield, disposable gloves and disposable overalls are to be used. The gloves and overalls are to be disposed of in the bin provided; the face shield will need to be disinfected and rinsed.
- 3) Alcohol based wipes must be used to clean the controls (steering, throttle, switches, VHF set if fitted) and any other parts of the boat they have had close contact with. The wipes are to be put into the bin in Humber's shed immediately after use
- 4) No one other than the person doing the cleaning must be near enough to the powerboat so that they could be splashed during cleaning.
- 5) With the powerboat on its trailer, spray all potential contact areas – even those cleaned with alcohol wipes - carefully with disinfectant detergent. Pay particular attention to the key and kill cord and the bag containing the VHF set/handset – which should all be left in situ – as these are impractical to clean with alcohol wipes.

Note that powerboats should not be cleaned when afloat, even if they are being used again immediately by another crew.

- 6) Leave for 5 to 10 minutes.

- 7) Use the car wash brush scrub over and rinse the entire powerboat, paying particular attention to the console, seat and controls.

APPENDIX 4 : Use of Race Hut

- 1) The Duty Officer will issue the Race Hut key to the Race Officer (to avoid the RO having to enter the Clubhouse).
- 2) The Race Officer must sanitise their hands immediately before entering the Race Hut (dispenser on “shorten course board” support post).
- 3) Only one person should be in the Race Hut at any one time unless 2m distancing is maintained or face coverings are worn.
- 4) Before using the VHF set or the Tannoy both microphones are to be sealed in plastic bags provided for the purpose. They will be kept in these bags and operated through it at all times.
- 5) At the end of a duty the Race Officer shall remove the microphones from the bag in such a way as to minimise the risk of contaminating them (e.g. by carefully tipping/sliding them out onto the table).
- 6) The bags must be placed directly into the rubbish bin.
- 7) The Race Officer should then sanitise their hands again before using alcohol wipes to clean any and all equipment that has been used, paying particular attention to the microphones and any switches / computer keys / mouse used. The wipes must be placed directly into the rubbish bin.
- 8) The surface of the table should be cleaned with the sanitiser foam provided.
- 9) The Race Officer should return the Race Hut key to the Duty Officer, who will wash/sanitise it before returning it to the key press.