

Recovering people from the water

Recovery of a person from the water into a boat can be a challenge, even to the most experienced crew. Unless the boat carries specialist recovery equipment, the operation relies upon the strength and skill of the crew. **Paul Mara** gives a few tips for teaching safe recovery of a casualty, and an alternative approach to the traditional dunking and dragging onboard methods.

I remember, many years ago, being taught how to recover a person from the water. On that occasion, against my better judgement, I volunteered to be the casualty. Now, correct me if I am wrong, but I thought ducking witches was banned centuries ago. Needless to say, it was not a pleasant experience!

Safety First

- Never demonstrate or practise a moving MOB exercise with a person, always use a dummy.
- Switch off the engine when there is a casualty alongside the boat.

Teaching recovery techniques on RYA courses

If you demonstrate recovery of a person from the water, ensure that you have suitable conditions and are appropriately dressed. Then apply the following principles:

- Never demonstrate or practise a moving MOB exercise with a person, always use a dummy.
- Ensure the boat is stationary with the engine off and killcord removed.
- Choose a safe area to practice.
- Keep a good look out.
- Always wear suitable buoyancy.
- The demonstrator should carefully enter the water.
- Consider making this the last exercise of the day.

Think ergonomically

Consider the effects of the recovery process on the casualty and yourself, with equal importance. Good technique prevents injury.

- Ensure you have a good footing.
- Use your body efficiently.
- Avoid twisting.
- Avoid relying on pure muscle power.
- Recover the casualty at the lowest part of the boat.
- Use a boarding ladder or rig a short rope with a bowline as a foot loop.
- With the engine off and killcord removed, use the engine's anti-ventilation plate as a step.

The following method of recovering a person from the water is relatively new and has a number of advantages over other methods. In particular, if the person in the water is wearing a trapeze harness, this method avoids snagging the harness on the side of the boat.



In this instance the person in the water is brought alongside the boat. Ensure that the engine is off and the killcord

removed. With the person facing towards the back or front of the boat grasp the hand nearest to the boat. Position the person's legs on the tube, so that they are now facing the boat.



Now grasp their other hand and gently lean back into the boat, pulling



the person on to the side of the boat into a seated position.

