

## FSC OPERATIONAL CODES OF PRACTICE

### No. P5: SMALL BOAT SAFETY FOR INSHORE WATERS

**Essential for:** All UMs  
All FSC employees, designated as boat handlers or coxswains, at Units using vessels of any description in estuarine or coastal waters.

**Discretionary:** All other appropriate FSC employees at Units using vessels of any description in estuarine or coastal waters.

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1. This FSC OCoP is produced primarily because of the use of a Rigid Inflatable Boat [RIB] at Dale Fort Field Centre.

That boat and its usage complies with the requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Code of Practice for the safety of small workboats & pilot boats (otherwise known as the Brown Code).

2. Units using, or intending to use, vessels of any description in estuarine or coastal waters **must**:
  - a. Notify the CEO of such usage or intention to use.
  - b. Confirm the requirements for such vessel and its intended use to comply with any regulations such as described in section 1. above. The UM **must** ensure that, whether or not there is any requirement for such compliance, it is documented.
  - c. If the use or intended usage of the vessel is approved by the CEO, then the vessel **must** be operated in compliance with this FSC OCoP, unless the regulations noted in section 1. above require otherwise. The UM **must** ensure that any variation from this FSC OCoP in the usage of the vessel so required is:
    - i. Notified to and approved by the CEO in writing.
    - ii. Documented in a USO with appropriate referencing to the regulations [establishing the requirement for variation] and this FSC OCoP [indicating the nature of the variation].

**NB.** In the context of notifying the CEO of usage or intention to use, a 'vessel of any description' includes the following:

    - Inflatable or hard boats regardless of the means of propulsion.

The following types of vessel are specifically excluded from this OCoP and must not be used without prior ratification by AALA (or its equivalent standard where AALA does not apply):

- Rafts.
- Surf boards and wind surf boards.
- Canoes and kayaks.
- Jet skis.

3. The use or intended use of vessels by Units on inland waters is not determined by this FSC OCoP [see instead FSC OCoP No.P6: Use of Boats on Inland Waters].

#### 4. **The Boat Handler**

(Area category 6), within 3 miles of land and not more than 3 miles from either the point of departure to sea or from the seaward boundary of protected waters.

- 4.1. Whenever the vessel is operated a duly qualified member of the party **must** be appointed boat handler / coxswain.
- 4.2. The boat handler **must** have been instructed on the handling of the vessel, likely engine faults and their repair, the dangers of tidal streams, basic seamanship and the procedure to be followed in the event of complete engine failure. All persons appointed as boat handler **must** hold at least:
  1. RYA/DOT Certificate of Competency or Service as Coastal Skipper (motor), or
  2. DOT Boatmasters' Licence grade 3 (modified) for the appropriate area, or
  3. A Local Authority Licence for the appropriate area (only those Local Authorities that have the approval of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) may issue such licences under this code), or
  4. A Certificate of competency for the appropriate area issued by a competent authority as defined in Section 2 of the Brown Code, or
  5. RYA/DOT Advanced Powerboat certificate, or
  6. RYA/DOT Powerboat Level 2 certificate (for daylight service only).

Every vessel should carry at least one person holding a Radio Operator's Certificate suitable for the radio equipment on board. The skipper or another member of the crew should hold an HSE approved first aid certificate. NB. Single-handed operation is not recommended by the MCA but it is permissible given the parameters detailed in Annex 11, section 2.2.6 "Single Handed Operation" of the Brown Code.

- 4.3. The boat handler **must** ensure that the responsibilities and procedures given below are adhered to:
  - a. The boat handler's primary concern at all times shall be the safety of the vessel's occupants and then the safety of the vessel itself.
  - b. The boat handler is responsible for the preparation, mobilisation and demobilisation of the vessel and its ancillary equipment.
  - c. The boat handler is responsible for ensuring that the vessel is correctly loaded and equipment secured.

#### 5. **Equipment**

- 5.1. The following equipment **must** be carried:
  - a. An alternative method of propulsion for out-board motor driven vessels: paddles or oars. For an unaccompanied vessel working more than three kilometres from the launch site or in areas where predicted tidal streams exceed three knots, a spare engine is desirable. In case of battery failure (as there is no other means of starting the engine) a spare marine spec. battery is carried.

- b. Anchors, chains and warps. A strong anchor (8kg) with at least 10 metres of 6mm ground chain and 30m of suitable (12mm) warp. A spare anchor (4kg) with chain and warp is compulsory. The anchor lines **must** be attached to the vessel.
- c. The engine[s] **must** be attached to the vessel by a suitably strong means eg. Bolted on to the transom.
- d. A boat pump [for inflation] **must** be carried.
- e. There **must** be a sealed, waterproof container for flares, etc. It **must** be attached to the vessel.
- f. Mandatory flares: two red hand-held, two orange smoke.
- g. There **must** be a sealed waterproof container for emergency spares and tools, etc. It **must** be attached to the vessel.
- h. Spare parts: Engine spares including: [where appropriate and as relevant to engine] shear pins, split pins, new spark plugs in a waterproof safe container, nylon starter pawl, length of cord for starting, self bailer, bungs.
- i. Tools: Heavy duty screwdriver, light screwdriver, plug spanner, suitable spanners for engine nuts, pliers, WD40, abrasive paper, cable ties, spare blade for propeller [or as appropriate to engine and vessel].
- j. First-Aid kit, Category "C" sealed.
- k. Compass.
- l. Bailer / bucket, attached to vessel.
- m. Boat board, with radio procedures on the reverse.
- n. Waterproof torch.
- o. A small portable VHF radio in a waterproof container.
- p. Thermal Protective Aids (TPAs) for all.
- q. Lifebuoys, solid, two. One must have at least 18m of buoyant line attached, the other must have a lifebuoy light.
- r. Lifejackets (must have retro-reflective tape, light and whistle) for all (plus 10%).
- s. Life-saving Signals Table 2X SOLAS No. 2.
- t. Fire extinguisher to BS EN 3:1996, plus two fire buckets.

- u. A RADAR reflector.

**NB.** There is a mandatory requirement that the vessel carries a life raft unless “equivalence” is applied for from the MCA and is granted. Dale Fort holds such “equivalence” and the criteria for this are appended below.

## 6. Operating Procedures

- 6.1. Before setting out, land-based colleagues or coastguard [or both where appropriate] **must** be notified of operating times and area and when you expect to return. [NB. Restrictions imposed by “equivalence”.]
- 6.2. Have knowledge of local conditions and hazards.
- 6.3. Before setting out, the local weather forecast **must** be obtained and if necessary plans modified.
- 6.4. Suitable clothing and a life-jacket or closed neoprene diving suit **must** be worn by all persons in the vessel. All persons **must** be instructed on the use of lifejackets.
- 6.5. The back-up engine [if carried] **must** be tested before leaving the launch site.
- 6.6. All persons on board **must** obey the instructions of the boat handler. There is a requirement for a safety briefing before putting to sea detailing the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency.
- 6.7. At least two people **must** be involved in the launching and recovery of the vessel to and from the water.
- 6.8. A check must be made that all the equipment, listed in section 5.1.above, is present and securely stowed on the vessel.
- 6.9 People **must not** be towed on or through the water while attached to the vessel except when riding on a purpose built diving sled and while in communication with the vessel.
- 6.10 Navigation lights. Vessels under 7m require all round white light and sidelights when underway, they also require a means to make an efficient sound signal.