

# Learning from accidents

Fortunately, accidents at RYA training centres are few and far between. However, when they do occur it is essential that we all benefit from the lessons arising from the investigation that follows. Unfortunately, there have been a couple of notable accidents in recent months that have resulted in formal investigations and substantial penalties for the instructors involved.

## When pacing goes wrong



At the end of a safety boat course, an instructor devised his own session which required two boats to play follow the leader. The lead boat was a Jeanneau Rigiflex Newmatic 400

powered by a single 20hp outboard. On board were the powerboat instructor and three students. The following boat was a 5.25m Osprey Viper RIB with a 75hp outboard. On board were four students.

No formal briefing was given. The instructor simply beckoned the larger RIB, using hand signals, to follow and get as close as possible to the stern of the smaller, leading boat. This resulted in the two boats coming into contact and the engine on the lead boat becoming dislodged.

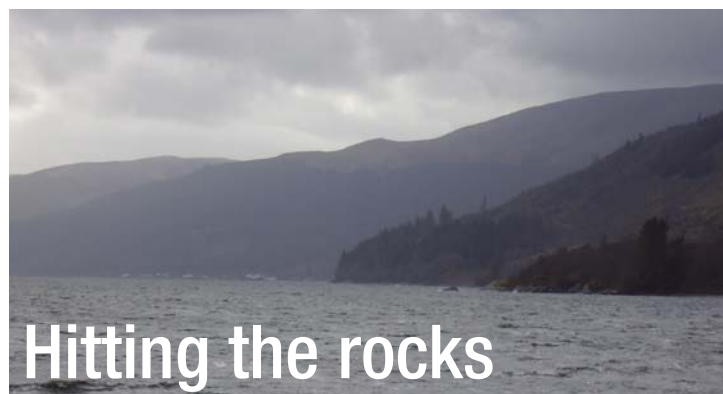
Having reattached the engine, the exercise continued at high speed. The next time that the boats were in collision, the lead boat capsized losing all overboard. All but one of the following boat's crew were also thrown into the water. Fortunately, the only injury sustained was to the instructor, who broke his leg.



This was a very serious incident and, following a formal investigation, a disciplinary panel was convened. The panel concluded that the accident was caused by the instructor conducting an inappropriate and reckless exercise with insufficient regard for the safety of the students. The instructor's qualification has been withdrawn.

### So, what can we learn?

- Instructors are reminded to keep to the RYA syllabus and not introduce their own exercises into their teaching programme.
- Pacing and driving powerboats in close proximity of each other is not to be carried out at RYA training centres.
- The Safety Boat course syllabus includes pacing alongside sailing dinghies for the purpose of giving instructions and coaching. Again, it should not be practiced using two powerboats.
- Each session should have a clear aim and safety precautions should be explained before the task.



## Hitting the rocks

The second incident occurred whilst an advanced instructor was conducting a night navigation exercise on an advanced powerboat course. The students had already completed other courses with the instructor and arranged to do this course on their own boat.

The course was progressing well until the night navigation passage, when the boat struck a well charted rock, resulting in injuries to the crew and severe damage to the vessel.

Once again, the RYA was obliged to instigate a formal investigation and, on this occasion, so did the Maritime

and Coastguard Agency (MCA). A disciplinary panel was convened by the RYA/MCA Yachtmaster® Qualification Panel to consider the competence of the instructor. The panel concluded that the instructor showed incompetence as both a skipper and instructor prior to the accident. His RYA advanced powerboat qualification has been withdrawn, along with his RYA advanced powerboat instructor qualification.

To regain the qualifications he may retake the advanced powerboat examination after 6 months. Having

### So, what can we learn?

- When carrying out own boat tuition, please ensure that you are fully familiar with the type and size of craft.
- Maintain a good lookout at all times, by all means necessary.
- Maintain a safe speed, according to the prevailing conditions.
- Make the owner aware that they need to advise the boat's insurers that the vessel will be used for tuition.
- Avoid charted hazards. Check passage plans and suggest safer routes if necessary.
- Make sure that, as an instructor, you are working within your capability. Remember, your students will look to you for guidance based on your experience.

successfully completed this assessment, he may attend a two day advanced powerboat instructor course and, if successful, he will regain his advanced powerboat instructor qualification.

These two incidents, whilst rare, highlight the need to consider all eventualities before setting exercises for students.

*On both of these occasions the RYA co-operated with the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) who decided that they would use the RYA investigation instead of commissioning their own. The MAIB may also publish their recommendations in the future.*



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