



**Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

# **Water Sports Centre Safety Guidelines**

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## **Introduction**

Hong Kong is surrounded by waters with many places suitable for water sports. There is a rich diversity of water sports and the number of participants increases every year. Hence, the safety of water sports is a matter of public concern.

Through proper and systematic training, water sports participants can acquire the proper skills, realize the potential hazards involved and become more conscious of safe behaviour, thereby raising their awareness of safety in water sports.

To enable the public to enjoy the fun of water sports, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) organizes a wide variety of water sports in its water sports centres. Apart from this, it also compiles this Guidelines on water sports safety to raise water sports enthusiasts' awareness of safety and make water sports activities more enjoyable.

The materials in this Guidelines only cover the general conditions that arise frequently. The participants must respond to the constantly changing weather and the conditions of the sea by making reasonable and safe judgement in light of the circumstances.

Reproduction of the contents of this Guidelines is welcome. The full version can be downloaded from the internet.

(website: <http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/waterport>)

## **Safety Rules**

Dos	Don'ts
1. Acquire basic swimming skills and be able to swim at least 50 metres with clothes.	1. Abandon the boat at will and swim back to the shore.
2. Receive proper training and acquire basic skills. Have basic knowledge in the equipment used. Examine the buoyancy devices of the boat before	2. Panic in the event of accidents.

Dos	Don'ts
setting off.	
3. Properly wear life jacket/buoyancy aid and heel-toe-covered rubber shoes, as well as clothes suitable for water sports such as swimming suits, swimming trunks, sun cap, light, permeable and fit long-sleeved clothes.	3. Overload and randomly adjust the pre-set devices in the boat.
4. Have proper means of making emergency call. Bring water-proof whistle or mobile phone.	4. Overrate your skills and physical strength to show superiority.
5. Always keep alert and take note of the changes in weather and the conditions of the sea.	5. Conduct activities under poor visibility, rapid current or offshore strong wind without any shelter.
6. Have good rest and plenty of water. Keep physical strength for the return journey. Pay attention to sunscreen protection or keep warm.	6. Conduct capsize training in waters with unknown depth.
7. Take note of the traffic conditions of the sea and the safe area for conducting activities.	7. Underrate the weather changes and the conditions of the sea in the offshore waters.
8. Take part in water sports activities with companions and look after one another.	8. Conduct water sports activities in the same waters with high-speed boats.
9. Inform reliable people of your destination, time of return journey and ways of contact with your companions.	9. Take part in activities when you are tired, hungry or overeat.
10. Keep clear of the navigation waterway, mooring area and fishing boats.	10. Set off for the sea in case of any doubt.

### Weather Conditions in Hong Kong

Months	March to April	May to September	October to February
Weather features	Very foggy, visibility at sea probably reduced; frequent light rain; wind direction relatively unstable, mainly easterlies or southeasterlies	Hot; sudden weather changes; more thunderstorms, typhoons and heavy showers. Mainly easterlies in May and September and southwesterlies in June to August.	Lower temperature, brighter weather; fresh wind, more strong monsoon, mainly northeasterlies or northerlies

### Potential Hazards during Water Sports Activities

Heat Exhaustion/ Heat Stroke	Safety Measures	First Aid Targets
<p>The human body will lower its temperature by radiation and sweating during water sports activities. In a very hot environment, failure to replenish in time the water and salt that is lost through sweating may result in heat exhaustion.</p> <p>When the body cooling system fails due to hot and humid climatic conditions and exercising may further generate heat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Drink plenty of water before/after water sports activities.</li> <li>● Wear permeable clothing with sunscreen protection to protect the body.</li> <li>● Take periodic rests as appropriate during the activity.</li> <li>● Watch for signs of illness. Inform your companions at once on feeling unwell or dizzy and get back to the shore for rest and treatment without delay.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Heat Exhaustion</u></p> <p>Move the victim to a cool and shady area to replenish lost water and salt.</p> <p><u>Heat Stroke</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help the victim to lower body temperature as quickly as possible.</li> <li>● Seek medical assistance.</li> </ul>

that will result in excessive rise in body temperature, the body temperature adjustment mechanism may not be able to function properly, thus resulting in heat stroke.		
<b>Hypothermia</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>	<b>First Aid Targets</b>
A heavy shower or strong gusts of wind during water sports activities may result in a fall in body temperature, thus causing hypothermia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do not start any water sports activity when you are hungry and tired.</li> <li>● Pay attention to the change in weather and feel the temperature of wind to decide whether it is necessary to wear wet suit or warm clothing.</li> <li>● Avoid intake of alcoholic beverages, which will speed up the loss of body temperature, before taking part in water sports activities.</li> <li>● Bring along spare warm clothing and high-energy food such as chocolate.</li> <li>● Be alert when feeling cold. Get back to the shore as early as possible if necessary to restore</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prevent further loss of body heat.</li> <li>● Help the victim to get warm and to retain normal body temperature.</li> </ul>

	<p>energy and keep warm.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Once back to the shore for rest, replace wet clothing, which will speed up loss of body temperature, with dry warm clothing.</li> </ul>	
<b>Common Injuries</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>	<b>First Aid Targets</b>
<p>The most common water sports injuries include sprain, dislocation of joint, laceration and crush injury. Falling into water due to loss of balance may result in crush injury. Crush injuries to the head are more serious and may lead to unconsciousness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be fully rested before taking part in water sports activities. It helps to maintain good mood and heighten alertness.</li> <li>● Warm up before activity to maintain elasticity of muscles and flexibility of joints.</li> <li>● Receive proper and formal training to acquire the right techniques and skills.</li> <li>● Put on suitable protective gear such as non-slippery shoes, gloves and helmet.</li> <li>● Never attempt to do more than you can handle. During practice, follow the procedures step by step.</li> <li>● When falling into the water, try to protect your face and head with your arms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear the airway of the unconscious victim or keep him/her in a supine position for recovery.</li> <li>● Maintain breathing. Perform respiratory resuscitation if necessary.</li> <li>● Maintain blood circulation. Perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR, if necessary.</li> <li>● Control bleeding.</li> <li>● Treat for shock.</li> <li>● Stabilize the fracture.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remain calm and be alert. Don't rush to resurface.</li> <li>● When floating back to the water surface, protect your head with one hand while the other hand stretches towards the water surface to feel for any obstacles.</li> </ul>	
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Thunderstorm	Safety Measures
Participants of water sports activities should note that lightning usually strikes the apex of the tallest object on the sea such as the mast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pay attention to the signals issued onshore, including public announcements and flag signals.</li> <li>● Upon sighting of lightning in the nearby waters, the centres will hoist the red flag immediately and stop all activities.</li> <li>● Dinghy sailors should immediately check whether their life jackets or buoyancy aids have been properly buckled and make sure all accessories that will come off easily such as rudder and dagger board are securely attached. Then overturn the dinghies gradually and drop the masts into the water, with the undersides of the hulls facing skyward. Lie prostrate on the hulls.</li> <li>● Windsurfers should drop the sails into the water immediately and lie prostrate on the board to avoid the body and mast to become the lightning target.</li> <li>● Canoeists should raft together along the shoreline. Remain calm and wait for rescuers</li> </ul>

	to assist them to get back to the shore.
<b>Rainstorm</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
Rainstorms are usually accompanied by strong gusts of wind, blurring everything on the sea. The currents in river mouths and water outlets will be turbulent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When the Amber Rainstorm Warning Signal or Red Rainstorm Warning Signal is issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, the centres will review whether the activities should proceed in light of the actual circumstances.</li> <li>● If the Hong Kong Observatory issues the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal, the centres will stop all water sports activities. Participants should get back to the centres as soon as possible.</li> <li>● If participants have difficulties in returning to the shore, they should, as far as possible, sail their crafts close to the shore to avoid staying in the middle of the waters and keep away from any dangerous places. Besides, they should remain calm and wait for rescuers to come and assist them back to the centres.</li> </ul>
<b>Damage of Equipment</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
There is designated staff responsible for the maintenance and repair of equipment in the centres. However, accident may occur occasionally during water sports activities, causing damage to the equipment. Fortunately, in most cases, participants can apply self-rescue technique to help themselves. It is only in a very small number of cases that participants have to rely entirely on others for rescue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check all the equipment before Setting off. In case of irregularities found, replace or repair as soon as possible.</li> <li>● Assess whether the equipment on board is suitable for the prevailing weather and sea conditions.</li> <li>● Correctly assemble the equipment. Do not modify.</li> <li>● Check whether the boat is fitted with backup power, e.g. backup paddle (for dinghies only).</li> <li>● Receive relevant training and learn the skills. The water sports centres will provide training courses of various categories and levels</li> </ul>



	<p>including those teaching self-rescue methods in times of equipment failure and navigation skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If the boat is running out of control or has a power breakdown, stay calm and try to keep the boat stationary in a safe location. Summon assistance from other participants or rescuers by any means including maritime distress signals.</li> <li>● If any equipment is found to be damaged after activities, centre staff should be informed immediately for repair.</li> <li>● Don't abandon your boat at will. A boat is definitely larger than a human being and is easier to be noticed by rescuers.</li> </ul>
<b>Loss of Balance</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
<p>The potential hazard of losing balance is that participants may fall into the water, hit himself against hard objects and get hurt. If a boat sailing at high speed comes to a halt abruptly and capsizes, or if the sailor fails to keep his balance due to strong external forces, he may easily be thrown forward. In the absence of any psychological preparation, the sailor may hit against hard objects like the hull or the mast.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take good rest before taking part in any water sports activities. It helps you enjoy the activity more and stay alert.</li> <li>● Protect your face and head with your arms if you fall into the water.</li> <li>● Keep calm and be alert, do not hurry to get to the water surface.</li> <li>● When ascending to the water surface, protect your head with one arm and reach out the other to check whether there is any obstacle on the water surface.</li> </ul>

<b>Blown Offshore or Deviated from Designated Sailing Area</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
When offshore wind is blown, the wind may be stronger than expected and the boat may easily be blown offshore.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Avoid as far as possible from taking part in water sports activities in area where offshore wind is blown.</li> <li>● If necessary, sail in company with other boats so that help can be sought.</li> <li>● Windsurfers should choose small sails in light of the onshore wind conditions; dinghy sailors should reef their sails before setting off; canoeist should keep their activities near the shore.</li> </ul>
<b>Cut by Rope</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
Hands will easily be cut or burnt by rope (such as the mainsheet) while taking part in water sports activities particularly in strong wind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Put on gloves when taking part in water sports activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Entangled in Rope/Hit by Rope</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
Dinghy sailors may be entangled in rope or hit by rope.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Put away unwanted rig properly after fixing a sail.</li> <li>● Bring a folding knife to cut off the rig if you cannot untie yourself after being entangled in a rig.</li> <li>● Wear a cap to prevent your eyes and face from being hit by the rig.</li> </ul>
<b>Trapped inside a Capsized Boat</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
Under certain circumstances, participants may be trapped in a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learn the skills of boat recovery before taking part in water sports activities and ensure that</li> </ul>

capsized boat.	<p>you can handle a capsized boat with the proper procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If the boat capsizes, stay calm and conduct a head count before recovering the boat.</li> </ul>
<b>Head Injuries caused by Hard Object in a Capsized Boat</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
Your head may hit against the seabed or protruding rocks if your boat capsizes in shallow water where the seabed is rocky and uneven.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Must check the depth of the water and the presence of any foreign objects around before practicing boat recovery.</li> <li>● Wear protective helmet when taking part in water sports activities in shallow water or area where underwater condition is unknown.</li> </ul>
<b>Suspected Shark Sightings</b>	<b>Safety Measures</b>
Sharks are found in Hong Kong waters in summer and they are active when the seawater is warm at the temperature of 24 °C . Sharks usually prey in the morning and evening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● On sighting of sharks or hearing announcement of shark sighting broadcast by the water sports centres, participants should remain calm and follow the instructions issued by the centres.</li> <li>● Dinghy sailors should stop their dinghies immediately and lower the sails and stay inside the boats. Windsurfers should drop the sail and sit on the board. Canoeists should raft together along the shoreline. Remain stationary and wait for the rescuers and instructors to come to help.</li> </ul>

## **International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea**

You should not only pay attention to your own safety, but also obey the Rules of the Road during water sports activities. Some of the basic rules and common situations are as follows:

1. When encountering another boat, pay attention to the tacks of both boats if they will cause a collision. If you cannot determine whether it is safe, just assume that there might be a collision.
2. When two boats are on the same tack and continued sailing may lead to a possible collision, the windward boat should keep clear of the leeward boat.
3. When two boats are on the opposite tacks and continued sailing may lead to a possible collision, the boat on the port tack should keep clear of the one on the starboard tack.
4. When one boat is overtaking another, the faster boat must keep clear of the one being overtaken.
5. Power boats should give way to boats driven by wind or manual force. The latter should give way to vessels out of control, vessels with limited control and fishing boats.
6. The boat that has the priority for continued sailing should keep its course and speed. But be prepared to give way to avoid collision if another boat does not alter its course in time.
7. If in doubt, always give way first for the sake of safety.

## **Maritime Distress Measures**


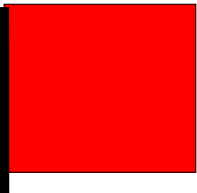
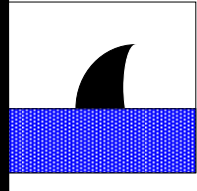
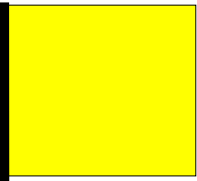
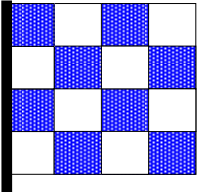
- If case of maritime distress and help is needed, keep calm, stay on the boat as far as practicable and raise and lower both arms at each side of the body slowly and repeatedly.



- If you are not able to get back on the boat, hold the boat as a floating support with one hand, and raise the other hand straight above the sea in a fist to signal for help.
- If a waterproof whistle is available, give hand signal and blow the whistle simultaneously in order to draw attention for help.
- If there is no other tool to produce any sound signal, cry out and beat the boat to call for help immediately.
- If you see anyone giving these signals, please inform the rescuers or, under safe circumstances, provide assistance as far as possible.

## Flag Signals Issued by the Centres

For the sake of safety, participants of activities organized by the water sports centres of the LCSD should familiarize themselves with the meanings of the following flag signals and pay attention to the flag signals hoisted by the centres.

	<p><b>Windsock</b> — means the centre is open.</p>
	<p><b>Red Flag</b> — means it will be dangerous to carry out any water sports activities. All water sports activities should stop immediately. All participants are required to return to the centres as soon as possible.</p>
	<p><b>Shark Warning Flag</b> — means there is suspected shark sighting reported in the nearby waters. All participants should stop their water sports activities and those who are at sea should sit inside their crafts and wait for the rescuers to convoy them back to the centres.</p>
	<p><b>Yellow Flag</b> — the weather is beginning to worsen or there is danger in offshore waters. Hence, all water sports activities should be carried out in the waters near the shoreline.</p>
	<p><b>N Flag</b> — means the time for the current session of water sports activities is ending soon or the next session has yet to begin.</p>

**Chong Hing Water Sports Centre**

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**Stanley Main Beach Water Sports Centre**

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(Closed on Wednesday)  
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**St. Stephen' s Beach Water Sports Centre**

Wong Ma Kok Path, Stanley, Hong Kong  
(Closed on Tuesday)  
Tel:2813 5407  
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**Tai Mei Tuk Water Sports Centre**

Main Dam, Plover Cove, Tai Po  
(Closed on Wednesday)  
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**The Jockey Club Wong Shek Water Sports Centre**

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