

(Hu)Man Overboard (MOB)

What is MOB?

- MOB is where one or more people fall overboard while underway
- Distinctions: MOB vs. Capsizing vs. Injuries
 - All have some of the same causes
 - All have the same “cure”: safe sailing
- Person in water (PIW) instead of “victim”

The Most Important Factor in MOB Responses?



Prevention is the most important Factor

- Be alert to risky conditions and take precautions
 - Strong winds and big waves can cause excessive heeling and rolling
 - Reef, less aggressive sailing, keep weight balanced, PFDs
- Be alert to “risky” behavior and minimize it or prevent it
 - Standing in the cockpit
 - Working on deck underway
 - Sitting on the cockpit sidewalls
 - Impaired or intoxicated crew
 - It's all relative to the conditions

Before you depart from the dock

- Have throwable floating cushion in cockpit
- Brief crew on safety rules to prevent MOB (PFDs, tether for deck work, etc.)
- Brief crew on steps for MOB response
 - **S**ight
 - **T**hrow
 - **T**urn
 - **U**pwind
 - **C**onnect
 - **R**etrieve



How to respond to a MOB - Overview

- First crew to see MOB yells “man overboard,” and immediately points to PIW and keeps sight of PIW (**Sight**)
- Another crew member throws a floating throwable cushion toward PIW (**Throw**)
- Helmsman executes a maneuver to turn around toward PIW (**Turn**)
- Helmsman brings boat to a stop on upwind side of PIW (**Upwind**)
- Somebody throws a line with a loop at the end to the PIW (**Connect**)
- Crew gets the PIW back onto the boat (**Retrieve**)

MOB Response - Sight

- First one to see the person fall off the boat should yell “man overboard” and become the “sighter”
 - This solves the problem of who’s going to be the sighter
- It’s important that this person does *nothing else* but keep sight of the PIW and continue to point to him or her
 - It’s easy to lose sight of a small object like a head in even mild waves
 - The helmsman will depend on the sighter’s pointing to quickly return to PIW

MOB Response - Throw

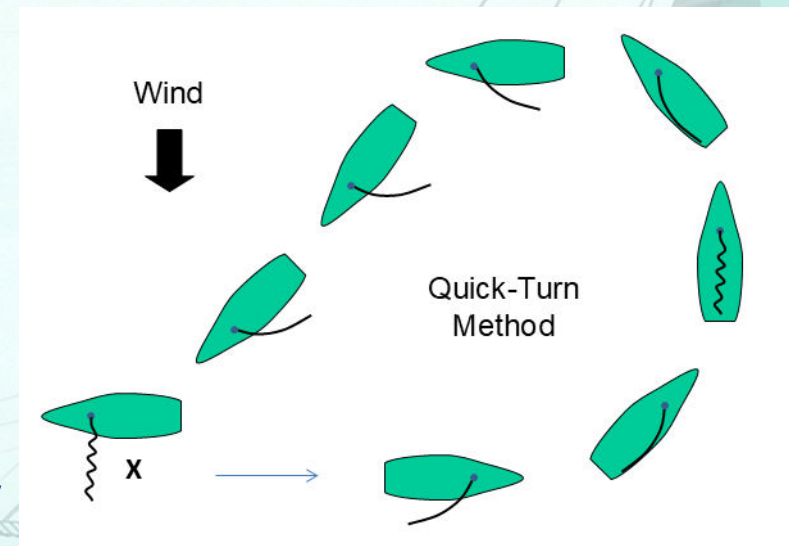
- Another crew member immediately throws a floating cushion or similar object toward PIW
 - This gives the PIW something to swim toward for more floatation
 - The more quickly it can be thrown, the shorter the distance to the PIW
 - Throwable floatation device should always be at the stern ready to deploy
- In reality, depending on crew size, this may be done by sighter
- What about “Life Slings”
 - Is it untied and ready to deploy?
 - Can it be thrown as far as a cushion?
 - Will the fact that the horseshoe is tied to the boat interfere with maneuvering? How much line does it have?

MOB Response – Turn and Upwind

- Recommended maneuver for turning around is the “quick-turn” method
 - Regardless of point of sail, head up and tack
 - Fall off to return to PIW
 - Get a line ready and tie a large bowline
 - Adjust steering as needed, aiming **upwind** of PIW and adjusting trim to control speed
 - Stop when along side of PIW and assume safety position
 - If crew is available, furl jib to prevent luffing (reduces chaos)
 - If not under sail, make sure engine is **off** or **in neutral** when near PIW
 - Why Upwind? (we’ll discuss in a minute)

CREW
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CREW
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MOB Response – Connect

- Once boat is adjacent to PIW, throw a line with a loop on the end to PIW
 - This “connects” the PIW to the boat and provides a great deal of peace of mind
 - If the PIW doesn’t have a PFD on, give them one
 - PIW puts loop around their body, and uses feet to keep a safe distance from hull
 - If PIW is unconscious, a crew member should jump in the water to place loop on their body, and otherwise protect them
 - Use a bowline to tie the loop. Never use a “lasso” loop, which constricts when tightened

MOB Response – Upwind Pickup?

- Which side of boat to pick up the PIW is a long-standing controversy

	Windward Pickup (PIW is on windward side of boat)	Leeward Pickup (PIW is on leeward side of boat)
The Concept	The boat stops downwind of PIW. The PIW is on the high (windward) side of the boat.	The boat stops just upwind of the PIW. The PIW is on the low (leeward) side of the boat.
Drift Mechanics	The boat drifts away from the PIW.	The boat drifts toward the victim.
Main Advantage	Safety. There is virtually zero risk of the boat drifting over, crushing, or hitting the PIW with the hull.	Proximity & Freeboard. The wind naturally closes the gap. The leeward side sits lower to the water, making it much easier to pull PIW up.
Main Risk	Missing the PIW. If you stop even a few feet short, the wind will quickly blow the boat away, forcing you to circle back for another try.	Crushing injury. In heavy seas, a multi-ton keelboat can slam down on top of the PIW or trap them underneath the hull.



MOB Response – Upwind Pickup? (cont'd)

- The best approach depends on weather and sea conditions
 - **In Calm Seas:** A **leeward pickup** (PIW is on boat's leeward side) is highly efficient because the boat drifts into the person, and the lower freeboard makes the heavy lift much easier. Also, how much time is wasted circling around if boat drifts away?
 - **In Heavy Seas / Big Waves:** A **windward pickup** (PIW is on boat's windward side) is strictly preferred. The risk of the boat tossing violently and crushing the PIW outweighs any benefit of a lower freeboard or drifting closer
- For most of the local sailing we do leeward pickup is preferred
- For cruising, sea state is the most important variable
- See references for more information

MOB Response – Retrieve

- Getting a wet, full-size adult into any boat is not easy, and choosing a technique depends on crew size, size of boat, condition of PIW, and sea and weather conditions
- Methods include
 - Pulling PIW on to leeward deck with PIW kicking and pulling to assist
 - Using swim platform or swim ladder
 - Lifting with halyard and winch
 - Cleat and winch (approx. 4-6ft apart) rope “elevator”
 - Anything else that will do the job safely (it’s time to be creative!)
- Be sure engine is off or in neutral, or if engaged, that PIW is safe
- Beware of stern crashing down because of wave action!

References

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