

PROCEDURE 29 - Small Boat Safety

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Synopsis

The purpose of this procedure is to establish requirements relative to safe operation of small boats. This procedure applies to all NWS work locations and employees where small boats are owned/operated, leased or rented by an NWS personnel.

Initial Implementation Requirements:

- **Analyze Site Operations versus Procedure Requirements**
- **Develop/Obtain Documentation/Information required for Site**
 - Complete small boat registration with NOAA Small Boat Program Manager (29.3.8)
 - Obtain copies of Small Boat Operator(s) training certificates and Operator Qualification Checklist(s) (29.3.1c(4))
 - Prepare written checklists of start up and shutdown procedures (29.3.2b, d)
- **Designate Person to Administer Small Boat Safety Procedure Requirements**
- **Provide Local Training for Site Personnel**
 - USGC or Equivalent Training of Small Boat Operator (SBO) (29.3.11c(2)i)
 - NOAA Component Course (29.3.1c(1)ii)
 - Training for Crewmembers (if applicable) (29.3.1c(5))
 - CPR/First Aid Training (29.3.1c(2))
- **Inventory Material/Equipment (Procure as needed)**
 - Minimum Equipment as specified in 29.3.3

Recurring and Annual Task Requirements:

- **Perform Inspection/Assessment/Testing**
 - Perform annual risk assessment and operation risk assessments prior getting underway (29.3.2a(3))
 - Conduct routine and annual Small Boat inspections/evaluations (29.3.5)
 - Testing of survival equipment monthly (29.3.5a)
 - Perform Preventive Maintenance of all required equipment (29.3.10)
- **Review/Update Documentation/Information required for Site**
 - File Float Plans prior to departure (29.3.2a(5))
 - Maintain logbooks (as applicable) (29.3.2b(2))
- **Provide Refresher Training for Site Personnel**
 - NOAA Component Refresher course (29.3.1c(1)ii)
 - Operator Qualifications Letters validated by VOC annually to ensure currency of training requirements (29.3.1c(6))
 - Refresher CPR/First Aid Training
- **Inspect/Replace/Maintain Material/Equipment**
 - Minimum Equipment as specified in 29.3.3

Small Boat Safety Checklist

Requirements	Reference	YES	NO	N/A	Comments
Are provisions of NOAA Small Boat Standards and Procedures Manual being met?	29.3.1a				
Do only personnel who meet NOAA training and certification requirements operate small boats?	29.3.1c				
Are all Small Boat Operators Qualification Letters validated annually by VOC?	29.3.1c(5)				
Are annual Small Boat Risk Assessments and re-departure operational risk assessments being performed?	29.3.2a(3)				
Are Float Plans being completed and filed with the field office prior to departure?	29.3.2a(5)				
Are proper start up and shutdown procedures being followed?	29.3.2 b, d				
Are appropriate personal flotation devices (Type I, II or III) being worn by boat personnel?	29.3.3a(4)				
Are all boats, equipped with the minimum equipment requirements as stated in this procedure?	29.3.3				
Are boat accidents being reported using NOAA web based Accident/Illness Reporting System?	29.3.4				
Are annual and routine boat inspections conducted?	29.3.5				
Are emergency procedures developed for applicable emergency situations?	29.3.9				
Are periodic maintenance checks of each boat being conducted and recorded?	29.3.10a				
Is scheduled preventative maintenance conducted regularly on boats, trailers and engines?	29.3.10b				

Requirements	Reference	YES	NO	N/A	Comments
Is initial and annual review of this procedure conducted and documented?	29.4.2				

29 SMALL BOAT SAFETY

29.1 Purpose and Scope

As part of its goal to provide a safe and healthful workplace, the National Weather Service (NWS) is promulgating this procedure related to hazards associated with the operation of small boats. This procedure applies to all NWS work locations and employees where small boats are owned/operated, leased/rented or chartered by an NWS personnel.

29.2 Definitions

Crewmember. An individual designated in writing and capable of assisting in operation of the small boat.

Demise (bareboat) Chartered Boat. A lease of a vessel in which all control is relinquished by the owner to the charterer, and the charterer bears all the expenses of operation.

EPIRB. Emergency position indicating radio beacon.

Field Office. A Field Office may include the following: Weather Forecast Office (WFO), River Forecast Center (RFC), Weather Service Office (WSO), or a Data Collection Office (DCO).

NOAA Small Boat Program Manager (SBPM). The NOAA manager who is the functional head and communications focal point of the NOAA Small Boat Program (SBP). SBPM is Chair of an appointed board (Small Boat Safety Board) of representatives from the NOAA Line and Staff Offices.

Operating Unit. For the purpose of this procedure, Operating Unit includes the National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP), National Data Buoy Center (NDBC), NWS Training Center (NWSTC), National Reconditioning Center (NRC), Radar Operations Center (ROC), or the Sterling Field Support Center (SFSC).

Operational Risk Assessment. A process involving identification of risks associated with a NOAA small boat's operations and consideration of actions to reduce those risks. Supervision, communication, and overall support, operating area, operator experience level, personnel physical and mental fitness, weather, and complexity of mission may be factors in the assessment.

Operator-in-Charge. An NWS qualified employee responsible for safe operation of a small boat.

Personal Floatation Device (PFD). Life preservers, buoyant vests, special purpose water safety devices, buoyant cushions, or ring buoys and work vests, each of which must be United States Coast Guard (USGC) approved.

Program Director. An NWS management personnel responsible for ensuring implementation and compliance with all policies and for the safe use and management of small boats within a Program (e.g., Station manager would be a Program Director for NWS-owned small boat operations).

RSM. A NOAA Regional Safety Manager.

Small Boat Safety Board (SBSB). The SBSB is the final technical authority within NOAA on matters relating to interpretation and application of NOAA Administrative Order 217-103 "Management of Small Boats," the superseding NAO 209-125, the NOAA Small Boat Standards and Procedures Manual and all small-boat matters raised to the SBSB for an opinion or interpretation. NWS is currently represented by OAR/NWS Vessel Operations Coordinator (VOC) on SBSB.

Small Boat Operator (SBO). A National Weather Service (NWS) employee who meets certification requirements per NOAA Small Boat Standards and Procedures Manual.

Station Manager. For the purpose of this procedure, the Station Manager will be either the NWS Regional Director; Directors of Centers under NCEP (Aviation Weather Center, NP6; Storm Prediction Center, NP7; and Tropical Prediction Center, NP8); Directors of the NDBC, NWSTC, and Chiefs of NRC, ROC and SFSC facilities; or Meteorologist in Charge (MIC), Hydrologist in Charge (HIC), or Official in Charge (OIC).

Small Boat. Watercraft less than 300 gross tons capable of being used as a means of transportation of persons on water including boats owned, operated or maintained by NWS. The term includes boats leased, loaned, demise (bareboat) chartered, or operated under cooperative agreement with other government agencies, universities or scientific organizations. It does not include boats time chartered by NWS personnel.

Small Boat Inspections. Documented, formal evaluations of a small boat's material condition, inventory, and compliance for which inspection criteria, frequency, and format are defined in the NOAA Small Boat Standards and Procedures (SBSP) Manual.

Time-Chartered Boats. A time charter is when NWS facility hires someone to provide and operate a boat for a given period of time at a given "rate," usually a daily rate. The boat is owned and operated by someone other than NWS.

Vessel Operations Coordinator (VOC). An individual responsible for implementing all requirements in accordance with NOAA SBSP Manual. Each VOC shall ensure that personnel are trained to achieve the stated qualifications and to maintain the level of proficiency and currency necessary to safely and effectively accomplish their assigned duties.

<p>NOTE: NWS VOC is currently Dennis Donahue, who represents OAR and NWS on NOAA SBSB.</p>

29.3 Procedure

29.3.1 Operating Boats

- a. The provisions of the NOAA Small Boat Standards and Procedures (SBSP) Manual found on NOAA Small Boat Program web site (<http://www.sbp.noaa.gov/manual/index.html>) are the basis for all safety and health procedures involving the operation of NWS-owned or leased/rented small boats. Compliance with these standards and all other applicable regulations is required.

NOTE: Although the SBSP Manual does not specifically address procedures for rental boats, all relevant requirements for personnel training, boat inspections, Float Plan, and use of emergency equipment should be followed to ensure safety of NWS personnel involved in boats operation. NWS VOC (Dennis Donahue) can be contacted to address any specific questions or concerns.

b. Small Boat Categories

Small Boat Category	Definition
Class A	less than 16 feet length overall
Class I	16 to less than 26 feet length overall
Class II	26 to less than 40 feet length overall
Class III	40 to 65 feet length overall
Small Research Vessel (SRV)	greater than 65 feet length overall but less than 300 gross tons

c. Personnel Authorized to Operate NWS Small Boats

Only NWS personnel whose credentials meet training and certification requirements as per NOAA SBSP Manual will be authorized to operate NWS small boats. A NOAA Boat Operator Qualification Letter (Appendix E of NOAA SBSP Manual) must be completed by VOC for each qualified NWS Small Boat Operator, identifying the specific operations and small boats, or class of boats, for which that operator is qualified. The authorization certificate must be signed and maintained on file by the VOC.

(1) *Small Boat Operator Training:*

i The *USCG Auxiliary Boating Skills and Seamanship (BS&S)* or equivalent. An equivalent course must cover all of the significant topics of the USCG Auxiliary’s BS&S curriculum and must be, at minimum, of equivalent duration (approximately 24 hours dependent on location). The topics are available at:

http://nws.cgaux.org/visitors/pe_visitor/classes/boating_skills_and_seamanship.html

ii *NOAA Component Course*. The NOAA Component Course is developed by the SBSB and updated as policies, procedures and standards change. It consists of three sections with accompanying exercises and a test. The NOAA Component Refresher Course will be required. It will be taught by regional instructors or posted on DOC e-learning web site. The course may be customized by location. Section topics include:

- NOAA small-boat policy, procedures and standards
- Operational Risk Assessment
- Team Leadership

(2) *CPR and First Aid Training*

All Small Boat Operators shall have current Red Cross or equivalent certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), including the use of Automated External Defibrillators (AED) instruction, when available, and First Aid training.

(3) *Personnel Qualification Standards Checklist*

i Small Boat Operators must successfully complete a checkout process with VOC (or designee) for each type of mission and for each specific small boat on which the personnel will be employed.

ii Upon completion of the checkout process, the VOC must complete an Operator Qualifications Checklist form (Appendix F of NOAA SBSP Manual) for each person who will be operating any NWS small boat(s).

(4) *Documentation*

Copies of all training certificates and operator qualification checklists for all NWS Small Boat Operators will be maintained by the VOC and at the specific field office.

(5) *Training for Crewmembers (if applicable)*

All crewmembers are required to meet the training requirements defined in NOAA SBSP Manual. Crewmembers are required to receive small boat-specific training and must demonstrate knowledge of the procedures and equipment carried aboard the small boat(s) on which they will be employed.

(6) *Currency Requirements*

All NWS Small Boat Operator Qualification Letters shall be validated annually by the VOC to ensure currency of certifications, training requirements, and a measure of proficiency.

d. *Minimum Safe Manning Levels*

For all Class A, Class I, and Class II manning-level baselines (minimum safe-manning-level requirements) are set by the NWS VOC based on, but not limited to, the minimum manning levels as determined by the small boat's Pre-departure Risk Assessment and as approved by the Station Manager or designee.

29.3.2 General Safety Procedures

All NWS facilities that own and operate small boats or intend to acquire a small boat to support the mission, shall inform the NWS VOC. According to NOAA SBSP Manual, compliance with each of the following procedures for motorized small boats is mandatory for all trips, whether planned or unplanned.

a. *Prior to Engine Start-Up*

(1) *Crew Reporting (if applicable)*

Crewmembers for each mission shall report to the Operator in Charge at a specific, pre-determined time and place prior to departure.

<p>NOTE: Small Boat Operators are considered Operators in Charge if they are the only qualified operators aboard.</p>
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(2) *Pre-departure and Safety Briefings*

i The Operator in Charge shall conduct a pre-departure briefing that should review any prior mission planning and preparation and cover any updates. This briefing shall be conducted far enough in advance to enable the crew to prepare adequately for any last-minute adjustments.

ii The next senior-most Small Boat Operator or crewmember must be identified during this briefing, and must be prepared to take command of the small boat in case of Operator in Charge incapacitation.

iii The Operator in Charge, Small Boat Operator, or crewmember must also conduct a thorough safety briefing with all embarked personnel prior to getting underway. The briefing shall include general small boat familiarity and the locations of all safety systems and equipment carried aboard (fire extinguishers, life rafts, life rings, personal floatation devices, immersion suits, EPIRBs, etc.).

iv The embarked personnel shall be apprised of the procedures to follow during fire, abandon ship, man overboard, and other emergencies.

v The use of a formal, written checklist detailing all of the topics to be covered during each safety briefing is strongly encouraged. (See Appendix G of NOAA SBSP Manual for an example).

(3) *Operational Risk Assessment*

i Annual Risk Assessment

Every NWS office that operates small boats shall conduct, document, and review an Annual Risk Assessment for small boats. The assessment shall be based on an evaluation of operational risks to personnel, small boat, environment, mission, and public relations. Guidelines for performing an Annual Risk Assessment can be found in Appendix B of NOAA SBSP Manual.

ii Prior to getting underway, the Operator in Charge and crewmember(s) shall conduct an Operational Risk Assessment (See Appendix H of NOAA SBSP Manual) and confirm that the mission, personnel, and small boat all meet the assumptions made within the Annual Risk Assessment. If there is any indication that an unacceptable level of risk exists, the Operator in Charge shall take actions to reduce existing risks to an acceptable level.

iii Actions taken might include requiring additional crewmembers, reducing the scope of the mission, or carrying additional equipment aboard. Any modifications to the mission, personnel, or small boat completed in an effort to mitigate risks shall be documented in both the Float Plan and the small boat's log and provided verbally to the Vessel Operations Coordinator prior to departure.

iv The total score of the Operational Risk Assessment shall be recorded in the Float Plan or the small boat's log. The Operator in Charge has the authority to cancel the operations in question if risks cannot be

reduced to a level that will ensure the safe, successful outcome of the mission.

(4) *Weather Briefing*

i The Operator in Charge is responsible for reviewing and being familiar with both prevailing and anticipated weather conditions for the area in which the mission is planned.

ii The Operator in Charge shall obtain a briefing by NOAA weather radio, National Weather Service office personnel, web site, local USCG reports, etc.). The briefing information shall consist of, at a minimum, current weather, sea state, trends, and forecasts for the departure location, proposed route, destination, and any alternate working areas.

iii Based on weather and sea-state forecasts, the Operator in Charge will determine if conditions are suitable for operations.

iv The Operator in Charge has the authority to cancel operations if it is determined that personnel safety or the safety of the small boat will be subject to unnecessary risk.

(5) *Float Plan*

i All use of NWS small boats shall be documented in a Float Plan. All Float Plans must be filed prior to departure, and shall conform, at a minimum, to the standardized Float Plan. A sample of the plan is contained in **Attachment A** of this procedure.

ii In addition, the Operator in Charge shall ensure that the name and contact number of a family member, significant other, or legal guardian is available for all embarked personnel prior to the small boat's departure.

iii All Float Plans must be submitted in writing or electronically, regardless of voyage duration. The Operator in Charge shall tender the Float Plan, prior to departure, with the Vessel Operations Coordinator or designee as follows:

a. The Plan shall establish a specific tracking and communications procedure that requires the Operator in Charge to report the small boat's position and an operations update at least once daily on multi-day trips;

b. The contact person shall be responsible for determining whether a small boat is overdue for arrival or check-in, and shall take appropriate action to either determine the location of the small boat or initiate emergency response.

<p>NOTE: If the Operator in Charge cannot prepare a written Float Plan prior to departure, the Vessel Operations Coordinator or designee shall be notified to communicate the Float Plan over the phone. The Vessel Operations Coordinator or designee shall then put the information in writing and manage the Float Plan as required by this Manual.</p>

(6) *Communication Plan*

- i A specific Point of Contact (POC) must be identified and established prior to departure, whether that departure is planned or unplanned. The POC must be available by phone or radio throughout the duration of the mission.
- ii The communication plan shall be incorporated into the Float Plan, and must identify specific times at which the Operator in Charge will check in and the means of communication to be used.
- iii A back-up emergency phone number(s) shall be included in the event the primary means of communication fails.

(7) *Fuel Planning*

Fuel planning for each voyage should be based on efficiency and economy, but shall not compromise safety. Careful considerations must be given to the weather conditions at the planned destination, and distances to alternate ports shall be taken into account.

(8) *Boat Inspection*

The Operator in Charge shall ensure that a pre-mission inspection of the boat is completed in accordance with the applicable start-up procedures. In addition to the start-up procedures, the Operator in Charge shall also:

- i Inspect the log for maintenance discrepancies that have not been addressed;
- ii Not accept the boat if it has been identified as not operational in the logbook or during the inspection until the mechanical or structural problem has been corrected;
- iii Ensure that all required safety, survival, and communication/navigation equipment specified in Appendix J and Appendix K of NOAA SBSP Manual are aboard and in good working order;
- iv Ensure that the boat is properly fueled for the mission;
- v Ensure all fluid levels are normal (e.g. oil, coolant, steering, etc.) and that adequate reserves are onboard;
- vi When applicable, ensure that the back-up motor or secondary means of propulsion is operational.

b. Start-Up Procedures

(1) *Start-Up Procedures Checklist*

All NOAA small boats are required to have a written checklist of start-up procedures, specific to each small boat, to ensure safe operations. The Operator in Charge is responsible for ensuring the use of the checklist prior to each and every voyage.

(2) *Start Logbook Entries*

For all small boats except small boats without enclosed cabins, the Operator in Charge shall ensure that all start-up procedures are appropriately entered in the

official logbook, and shall identify the information to be logged while underway. Logbook entries should include but are not limited to:

- i Operator in Charge, Small Boat Operators, and Crewmembers;
- ii Name/description of the mission;
- iii Date and Time Underway;
- iv Date and Time of Arrival;
- v Items of Operational Interest;
- vi Problems or Incidents;
- vii Operational Area and/or Destination;

The Operator in Charge of a small boat without enclosed cabins may prepare a trip report instead of maintaining a vessel logbook.

c. Underway Operations

(1) *Weather Updates*

The Operator in Charge shall ensure that destination and en-route weather forecasts are obtained prior to departure from the pier. Detailed weather updates shall be obtained at appropriate intervals, as well as any time the weather conditions appear threatening or conflict with forecasted conditions, and/or any time that en-route plans change.

(2) *Operations Under Adverse Conditions*

- i Adverse weather conditions include, but are not limited to, low visibility, high winds, and/or high sea state, which could cause equipment or personnel emergencies or system malfunctions. NOAA small boats shall not be operated in known or forecasted conditions that exceed small boat or personnel limitations.
- ii The Operator in Charge has the authority and responsibility to cease operations, return to port, or not depart from port if it is determined there is unnecessary risk to either personnel or the safety of the small boat. Any such decision should be based upon the results of the Operational Risk Assessment Form.

(3) *Float Plan Updates*

The filed Float Plan shall be updated whenever the small boat will exceed the estimated time of arrival by more than 60 minutes, or whenever en-route plans or operations change substantially.

(4) *Radio Transmissions*

Use of the small boat radios shall be professional and limited to the conduct of normal marine radio traffic and government business.

d. Shut-Down Procedures

(1) *Use of Checklists*

All NOAA boats are required to have a written checklist of shut-down procedures specific to each small boat. The Operator in Charge is responsible for ensuring the use of the checklist at the conclusion of each and every voyage.

(2) *Logbook Completion*

i The Operator in Charge shall ensure that all logbook entries are completed in a timely manner after the boat has been shut down. Entries shall include, at a minimum, actual time of arrival, final fuel information, ending engine hours, and any changes to the original Float Plan.

ii If a Trip Report is to be filed it shall be prepared and sent to the VOC or his designee in a timely fashion upon completion of the voyage or operation.

(3) *Equipment Malfunction Reporting*

All equipment malfunctions shall be logged in the small-boat logbook (or Trip Report) on the day of discovery. The Operator in Charge shall report the malfunction to the VOC on the day of discovery.

(4) *Float Plan Closure Procedures*

Float Plans must be closed and notification of arrival must be made with the shore based designee within thirty minutes of arrival.

e. Small Boat Clean-Up Procedures

A post-mission inspection shall be made in accordance with the Shut-Down Procedures Checklist in a timely manner after the boat is docked. The small boat shall be left in a state in which it could be immediately used if necessary.

f. Office Float Plan Maintenance

Station Manager is responsible for maintaining and monitoring active Float Plans within NWS. The Operator in Charge shall communicate directly with the Station Manager or designee to amend or close a Float Plan.

g. Float Plan Delinquency

If a small boat is delinquent (has not returned within 60 minutes of estimated time of arrival), the Station Manager or designee shall:

- (1) Attempt to contact the small boat by satellite/cell phone or HF/VHF radio;
- (2) Check the boat slip personally or ask the local marina manager, Coast Guard, or any on-site personnel to do so, if practicable;
- (3) If no contact is made after 2 hours of delinquency or if sunset is near, notify the appropriate Program Director;
- (4) When appropriate, notify the USCG of delinquency and be prepared to provide Float Plan information;
- (5) Remain in the office or at the station until the boat has been contacted and either returns to the dock or has reached an alternate safe location;
- (6) If the boat is delinquent 4 hours or more and communications cannot be established with the small boat by the USCG, the NWS VOC should be contacted.

29.3.3 Minimum Equipment

The safety, survival, and communication/navigation equipment specified in Appendix J and Appendix K of NOAA SBSP Manual are the minimum required for safe operations.

All survival equipment shall be maintained and, at a minimum, inspected or tested monthly in accordance with best-management practices and guidance in Appendix M of NOAA SBSP Manual (Drills and Frequencies). Additions and changes to these requirements may be necessitated by such considerations as small boat configuration, type and duration of missions, area of operations, and proximity to search and rescue assets. Individual survival gear shall be placed in areas accessible to all Small Boat Operators and crewmembers personnel so as to be readily available in an emergency.

a. Emergency Equipment

(1) See Appendix J of NOAA SBSP Manual for the minimum required safety, firefighting, and lifesaving equipment that must be on board and maintained in a ready and serviceable condition before any NOAA small boat is operated. All lifesaving and firefighting equipment shall be USCG or Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) approved, or conform to military specification (with SBSB approval), or otherwise be approved by the SBSB, when applicable.

(2) Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB)

All EPIRBs must be properly registered with the NOAA Search and Rescue Satellite (SARSAT) program, and registrations must be current. Prior to departure, the Operator in Charge should ensure that the EPIRB battery has not expired and that the monthly test has been completed. In addition, EPIRB beacon identification registration information shall be reviewed at least annually to ensure that it contains valid emergency contact information.

(3) Life Rafts/Floats

Life rafts/floats of sufficient capacity to accommodate all embarked personnel shall be carried onboard all NOAA small boats in accordance with Appendix J of NOAA SBSP Manual.

(4) Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and Immersion Suits

All personnel must have a PFD and or an Immersion Suit available in accordance with the NOAA PFD Policy (Appendix L of NOAA SBSP Manual). All personnel on board and operating NWS small boat shall wear a Type I, II or III PFD.

b. Communications and Navigation Electronics

(1) The minimum communication and navigation equipment requirements for small boats are generally based on the distance from shore, support vessel or inhabited land that the small boat will operate from. (See Appendix K of NOAA SBSP Manual)

(2) It is NOAA's intention that no NOAA small boat will be without a method of direct verbal communications with a shore facility or support vessel.

(3) Before any NOAA small boat gets underway, communication and navigation equipment must be maintained in a ready and serviceable condition.

c. Other Equipment.

(1) Personal Protective Clothing and Footwear. All persons aboard NOAA

- (2) Special operations may require the wearing of other safety equipment such as safety glasses, gloves, hard hats, safety harnesses, steel-toed shoes, etc., based on the operational risk assessment.

29.3.4 Reporting Boat Accidents

- a. The Station Manager or his/her designee shall notify the NWS VOC and NOAA SECO about small boat accident or incident using NOAA Accident/Illness Reporting System web site. The web site can be accessed via Internet Explorer at:
 - <http://www.seco.noaa.gov>
 - https://ops13web.nws.noaa.gov/accform/acc_info.info_scn

The following accidents shall be reported:

- (1) Unintentional grounding for greater than 24 hours;
 - (2) Explosions;
 - (3) Sinking;
 - (4) Fire;
 - (5) Collisions involving breach of hull integrity;
 - (6) Incapacitating injury requiring professional medical attention or hospitalization, or loss of life of any person;
 - (7) Unintentional and extensive flooding (self-bailing boats excluded);
 - (8) Discharge of oil or any substance violating local, State, or Federal Regulations;
 - (9) Failure of gear and equipment and any other damage that may affect or impair a small boat's seaworthiness; or
 - (10) Damage/harm to a protected or endangered natural resource or species.
- b. When the cause of the accident is not clearly evident, the Station Manager shall initiate an investigation. Findings and recommendations resulting from the investigation shall be made available to NWS VOC, NWS Regional Environmental/Safety Coordinator, NWSH Environmental and Safety staff, OMAO Small Boat Engineer(s), and the OMAO Director.
 - c. Findings and lessons learned from an accident or accident investigation shall be distributed by the NWS VOC to the NOAA small boat-user community. The identity of the small boat, personnel, and program or facility associated with the accident will remain anonymous.
 - d. SBSB requests minor incidents of equipment damage and close calls to be reported for the purposes of lessons learned and safety metrics. Minor incidents and close calls may be reported using the reporting forms available on the SBP web site (www.sbp.noaa.gov).

29.3.5 Boat Inspections

- a. All survival equipment shall be maintained, inspected or tested monthly, at a minimum, in accordance with best management practices and guidance in Appendix M of NOAA SBSP Manual.
- b. Station Managers or their designee(s), in cooperation with the NOAA Small Boat Program, are responsible for ensuring that small boats are inspected in accordance with the provisions of NOAA SBSP Manual.
- c. The NWS VOC shall ensure appropriate routine inspections are conducted by Operator in Charge. The NWS VOC will also ensure that all annual inspections are reported to the NOAA Small Boat Program Manager in a timely manner.
- d. Inspection Procedures for Class A, Class I and Class III boats and all boat trailers are as follows:
 - (1) NOAA Inspection policy is Appendix N of NOAA SBSP Manual.
 - (2) Annual Small Boat Evaluation (ASBE) checklists are available on the web site <http://www.sbp.noaa.gov/resources/inspection.html>
 - (3) Small boat examinations shall be conducted for Class I, II and II Boats in accordance with NOAA Inspection Policy. Description of Qualified Personnel to conduct Small Boat Examinations (SBEX) is available on the website: <http://www.sbp.noaa.gov/resources/inspection/sbex.html>

29.3.6 Small Boat Acquisition

- a. Station Managers or their designees, shall assess the suitability of a new or used small boat, or a small boat design, in relation to cost, mission requirements, operational risk, safety, and environmental compliance prior to initiating a small boat purchase. The cost assessment and any required marine survey shall be forwarded to the respective senior management and budget official prior to any commitment.
- b. Station Managers or their designees, shall notify the NOAA Small Boat Program Manager:
 - (1) Prior to a planned small boat acquisition that would require significant alteration or modification to the small boat after its delivery in order to meet mission requirements; or
 - (2) Prior to any commitment to build a small boat to Government-furnished technical specifications.

29.3.7 Alteration and Repair of Small Boats

- a. All proposed alterations to NOAA small boats shall be reviewed by the Station Manager or VOC to assess their potential impact on safety and mission of the boat.
- b. Alterations and repairs shall be performed in accordance with applicable marine-engineering standards, rules, instructions, and regulations. A listing of current and

potentially applicable standards, rules, instructions, and regulations is provided on the NOAA Small Boat Program web site.

- c. For all significant alterations, Station Manager or NWS VOC shall seek marine engineering services through OMAO or a professional marine engineer
- d. Records, such as drawings or weight and moment reports, resulting from the alteration of boats shall be maintained at the appropriate program office.

29.3.8 Small Boat Visual Identification and Registration

- a. NOAA facilities that own small boats are responsible for:
 - (1) Complying as closely as practicable with the visual identification guidelines listed in NOAA SBSP Manual.
 - (2) Registering any new small boat or existing small boat not already registered with the NOAA Small Boat Program Manager.
- b. The NOAA Small Boat Program Manager shall be responsible for issuing hull-registration numbers.
- c. Display of the NOAA emblem is intended to promote public awareness of NOAA programs. Questions relating to the placement of the NOAA emblem shall be directed to the NOAA Small Boat Program Manager.

NOTE: Additional information related to small boat visual identification and registration can be found in NOAA SBSP Manual. NWS VOC can be consulted if necessary.

29.3.9 Emergency Procedures

NWS office that owns and operated small boat shall develop small boat-specific emergency procedures for applicable emergency situations.

- a. Abandon Ship
- b. Fire
- c. Man Overboard
- d. Flooding
- e. Launching a Raft
- f. Donning Immersion Suits and PFDs
- g. Donning SCBA and Fire Suits (if so equipped)
- h. Making Distress Calls and Using Distress Signals
- i. Activating the General Alarm
- j. Reporting Inoperative Alarms

29.3.10 Maintenance and Repair

- a. Periodically check the condition of the following items as applicable: ropes, anchor chain, wiring and electrical connections, hull, nuts and bolts, prop, the trailer tongue, tires, lights, structural members, rollers and guides, bearings, and winch lubrication. An entry shall be made into the boat record after each periodic check, even when the check was unscheduled.

- b. Preventive maintenance (PM) to the boat, trailer (if applicable), and engines shall be conducted regularly with the schedule based on engine run time and/or calendar days (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually, etc.).
- c. Routine repairs to the boat, trailer, and engines shall be performed based in part on the information gathered from the periodic checks and from PM inspections.

29.4 Quality Control

29.4.1 Regional or Operating Unit Environmental/Safety Coordinators

- a. Shall perform an annual assessment of the regional headquarters facilities or operating unit to monitor and promote compliance with the requirements of this procedure.
- b. Shall perform assessments or designate personnel to perform assessments of all field offices to monitor and promote compliance with the requirements of this procedure every two years.

29.4.2 Station Manager

Shall review, or delegate review, of this procedure on an annual basis to ensure that the facility is complying with its requirements. Confirmation of this review shall be forwarded to the Regional or Operating Unit Environmental/Safety Coordinator.

29.4.3 NWS Headquarters (NWSH)

Requests for clarification concerning this procedure shall be directed to the NWSH Safety Office and/or NOAA VOC.

29.5 Responsibilities

29.5.1 Regional or Operating Unit Environmental/Safety Coordinators*

Shall assist field personnel with any safety issues related to implementation of this procedure, when required.

29.5.2 Station Manager*

- a. Shall have oversight over the implementation of this procedure, and ensure that the requirements of this procedure are followed by individuals at the NWS facility.
- b. Shall provide and maintain, as necessary, equipment listed in 29.3.3a-n.

29.5.3 Safety or Environmental/Safety Focal Point*

Shall ensure that any responsibilities delegated to them by the Station Manager are implemented in accordance with the requirements of this procedure.

29.5.4 Employees*

- a. Employees affected by this procedure are required to read, understand and comply with the requirements of this procedure.
- b. Report unsafe or unhealthful conditions and practices to their supervisor or safety focal point.

NOTE: * - Reference NWS PD 50-11 for complete list of responsibilities http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/050/pd05011a.pdf
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29.1 References

Incorporated References. The following list of references is incorporated as a whole or in part into this procedure. These references can provide additional explanation or guidance for the implementation of this procedure.

- 29.1.1 Navigation and Navigable Waters, Title 33 of the Code of Federal Regulations.
- 29.1.2 NAO 209-125, NOAA Small Boat Program (March 2008).
- 29.1.3 The NOAA Small Boat Standards and Procedures Manual (March 2008)
- 29.1.4 NAO 209-115, NOAA Employees Aboard Non-NOAA Vessels.
- 29.1.5 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure #18, “Accident/Illness Reporting and Recording.”

29.2 Attachments

Attachment A. Sample Float Plan

ATTACHMENT A
Sample Float Plan

Date: _____

Vessel Name: _____

FLOAT PLAN				
Small Boat Operator (Operator in Charge)				
Name:				
Telephone Number:				
Registration/Certificate #:				
Small Boat Description				
Type:				
Make:				
Hull Material:				
Color of Hull:				
Color of Trim:				
Most distinguishing identifiable feature:				
Engine Type:				
H.P.:				
Normal Fuel Supply:				
Rafts/Dinghies:	Number _____	Size _____	Color _____	
Persons Aboard (List additional passengers on back)				
Name	Age	Address & Telephone	Swim (Yes/No)	Emergency Contact #
Survival Equipment Checklist: (check as appropriate)				
<input type="checkbox"/> PFDs	<input type="checkbox"/> Flares	<input type="checkbox"/> Smoke Signals		
<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit	<input type="checkbox"/> EPIRB	<input type="checkbox"/> Paddles		
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Extinguisher	<input type="checkbox"/> Boat Hook	<input type="checkbox"/> Knife		
<input type="checkbox"/> Bow Line	<input type="checkbox"/> VHF Radio/Cell Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Bell, Whistle or Horn		

FLOAT PLAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> Anchor	<input type="checkbox"/> Loran/GPS <input type="checkbox"/> _____
Cell Phone # _____	Radio Type: _____
Food for _____ days	Water for _____ days
Itinerary	
Date and time of departure:	
Departure from:	
Departure to:	
Weather condition by shore:	
Purpose for the trip:	
How far out are you going?	
Expected time of arrival: _____ In no case later than: _____	
Return Time:	
Additional information:	