

Failure to recover a man overboard

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Issue

A 20-stone man fell overboard from a keelboat. Although the accompanying rescue boat arrived within seconds, the man quickly lost the ability to assist his rescuers and they were unable to get him aboard the rescue boat. He died in the water in a startlingly short length of time and before a rescue helicopter could winch him to safety.

Outcome

There is merit in practising the recovery of heavier people. Obvious situations are sailing, windsurfing, canoeing, kayaking etc but it may equally apply to other activities. Scenario based training may be the most effective way of identifying both the extent of the problem and possible solutions.

In some cases providers may feel that it is necessary for leaders to have specialist skills and/or equipment to hand. At least one provider has come up with what they describe as a boarding net which can be secured to the boat when needed, to assist recovery.

Great care must be take with all scenario based training to ensure that you don't recreate the problem but fail to recreate the solution.