

RS600 lockdown sailing – safety considerations

Since the start of the lockdown sailors have been dreaming of when and how they will get back on the water. Events and plans have been cancelled one by one however clubs are to open, mostly with free sailing and probably without any formal 'safety' cover.

This means that some may be heading out without some of the usual back-ups and may be feeling apprehensive or quite understandably cautious. Some maybe have an RS600 as a 'second boat' and using this time to get to grips with it or some may have recently bought an RS600 to see what all the fuss is about.

Most would agree the RS600 is a challenging boat which is part of what makes it so rewarding! However this also means they are easy to capsize and can take time to master (or at least get some hold on what's going on). In these times safety and pre-planning is of an even higher priority than usual for reasons listed above.

Below are some tips and advice of things to consider before going and whilst afloat and even for those that can't sail yet, to being doing with your usual sailing time. **This guidance shouldn't take place of common sense and isn't exhaustive. Your local club should have individual guidance and regulations that should and will have different considerations depending on the venue.**

Tidal Clubs:

- The obvious factor here being All tidal sailors should be checking tide times, wind direction and local forecasts and would be sensible to consider staying up tide unless confident they can make against the tide or get home if they can't.
- Worth considering how far you will be from your trolley at any state of the tide and whether that will limit your ability to land safely or retrieve your boat from the water! This will vary from club to club but you can capsize your 600 onto the rack where it will often rest quite happily on the shore however you may lose a bit of paint depending on where you land. (Clubs may have guidance on hours either side of the tide to launch in)

Inland clubs:

- Again making sure you can retrieve your boat on your own is also a factor especially at clubs with very steep ramps/sides e.g. Queen Mary

- If you're lucky enough to sail on a large body of water it may be sensible to stay close to your start point should you run out of wind and have to paddle home!
- May be worth sticking to days/times when you know other are likely to be around e.g. weekends if you're less confident or just getting back into the boat.

Sensible precautions:

- If possible organise a buddy to go sailing with so you can keep an eye on each other and tow the other home worst case scenario.
- Make sure you don't make out like you're 'working from home'! Tell someone where and when you're going, your plans and then let them know you're back in so they don't organise the cavalry.
- If the wind is forecast to build significant or already at a level where you are questioning your ability to manage, it maybe a day best spent on the shore.



Equipment:

- Safety knife: fortunately never had to use mine, there are a plenty out there and the [Rooster](#) one is easily stored in buoyancy aid
- Radio/phone: especially if sailing somewhere tidal should the worst happen. I carry my phone in a dry bag (it's supposedly water resistant but...). Obvious ensure, if you have a radio that there is someone on the other end inland.
- Painter/tow line
- Spare dyneema: 1-2m of 3mm, should the worst happen you can lash up most things and get home
- [Race bib](#) (personal preference): just started wearing one but keeps everything tangle free and prevents the tiller extension finding its way through the shoulder straps of my buoyancy aid (rare but unpleasant experience)
- Helmet (personal preference): becoming more common in sailing and a few of the fleet where them anyway, again if you're new to the boat and wary of the boom maybe a sensible precaution.
- Spare tiller extension (mine is tied inside the boom)

Maintenance!

If all else fails and the club is shut or there's no wind or too much and or..... why not actually sort out all those little bits that weren't working so well. Check everything!

- Check all the lines at wear points (boom eyes, kicker eyes and trapeze lines) and treat yourself some new ones, no excuses needed
- Check any and all fittings and consider resealing/riveting. replacing them. Special focus to rudder pintles, if they wobble get them sorted! It may even be worth replacing the pintles and gudgeons as the metal can fatigue over time and go without much in the way of warning
- Check the deck joints for splits especially around the trolley arms
- Make sure it all works! The boat is much easier if everything work and it reduces your risk of capsize
- Check and maybe treat yourself to a new universal joint: they wear out and if they fail can ruin a race and or a tiller extension

There's lot of info on the RS 600 facebook page and if in doubt lots of friendly people to answer any questions.

Happy sailing

George Smith

Adapted from article originally written by Peter Barton and the RS Aero fleet

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