

## Nautical Seminar for Cruising Couples Revised

The popular Nautical Seminar for Cruising Couples, known as *SUDDENLY ALONE* (SA), originally developed by the Cruising Club of America and the Bonnell Cove Foundation has been repackaged as a small scale DIY (do-it-yourself) presentation for sailing clubs and organizations. The curriculum is available on a CD as PowerPoint presentations with speaker notes, references and handouts for local speakers to use and the accompanying workbook “Suddenly Alone – Know You Can Handle It” is available for each student or couple attending. (for additional information go [www.cruisingclub.org](http://www.cruisingclub.org)).

The SA program is divided into five 40-50 minute classroom presentations and three 60 minute hands-on, practical sessions. The five subjects of the program are Introduction and Psychology of *SUDDENLY ALONE*, Stabilizing the Situation, Communicating a Request for Assistance, Navigating to a Safe Haven, and Recovery of an Overboard Person. All of the sessions of the program can all be done in a single eight hour day or divided into five separate sessions (e.g. one a week for five weeks).

An experienced and respected local sailor should be chosen as Coordinator/Moderator. This person should deliver the introduction presentation and monitor the other four topics by introducing speakers and summarizing how their comments contribute to the whole message or goal of the program. Four Instructors are needed, one for each technical subject. They should be experienced and familiar enough with their topic to deliver an interesting, informed presentation following the course outline. Small teams of volunteers can assist instructors during the hands-on sessions. Advice and answers to questions on all aspects of the SA Program are available by phone or E-mail from the CCA Program Coordinator [RonTrossbach@msn.com](mailto:RonTrossbach@msn.com) at (703) 403-8408.

**MISSION.** The mission of *SUDDENLY ALONE* is to provide shorthanded crew members the tools and knowledge that will enable them to handle emergencies. By practicing these aboard their own boats, crew members will develop the confidence and competence that will enhance their enjoyment of cruising.

The program is designed to raise the understanding and confidence of crew members with limited experience. It describes and demonstrates the minimum skills necessary to assume command and it covers the minimum emergency procedures to learn and practice before an incident occurs.

**AUDIENCE.** The SA Seminar was originally focused on the less experienced partner of a sailing/boating couple. It soon became evident that both partners must be aware of the issues and work as a team to make sure that they understand and practice the skills needed to overcome a suddenly alone situation. This often results in changing or outfitting their boat so that either person can operate it while simultaneously carrying out the search and rescue functions of an emergency scenario. By having both partners together in a class they are able to discuss and list the items they need to change or practice. This list becomes one of the most valuable products of the course and helps instill the confidence that makes boating together even more enjoyable.

## **SUDDENLY ALONE SEMINAR SUBJECTS**

**INTRODUCTION AND PSYCHOLOGY.** This first presentation describes a brief history of the course, how the topics were selected and what assumptions were made in the design of the course. The psychology of becoming suddenly alone is described along with recommendations of how to deal with the situation in a positive way, starting before an actual incident.

The classroom lecture presents some of the common mistakes that have led to disasters afloat and suggests how situation planning and equipment selection & use can reduce the risks and help solve the problems that may be encountered. Emphasis is placed on the role of the typical cruising couple where one partner is stronger and better prepared than the other. Descriptions of how to learn together with one person teaching another are suggested. Resources for learning from other sources are described as well as recommended study habits. Program recommendations are introduced that are designed to ease any anxieties while this learning process takes effect.

The workshop for this first session is a forum for discussing concerns and answering questions of the participants plus a chance to review the available resources including the accompanying workbook "Know You Can Handle It".

**STABILIZING THE SITUATION.** The goal of the Stabilizing segment is to provide a basic description of what a person should do when taking command and bringing the boat under control when single handed in a crisis. Emphasis is placed on the fact that cruising boats can normally summon help and advice using the VHF radio, emergency electronics, and visual signals found on recreational sail or power boats.

The classroom lecture discusses stabilizing the boat with such options as basic sail control, lowering sails, starting the engine, and steering using installed automatic steering that may be aboard. It covers selecting a waypoint and steering to a rendezvous point or safe harbor entrance. Anchoring procedures are also described as an option. A recommended setup for the boat that supports the suddenly alone situation is presented. This includes choice and use of furling systems, lazy jacks, autopilots and the location of safety equipment, including the VHF radio.

The workshop for Stabilizing can be conducted on a boat at the dock or on a mooring. Topics include demonstrating and practicing basic knots, engine operation, anchoring, docking the boat, autopilot operations, and sail handling. Details on these topics are in the accompanying Workbook.

**COMMUNICATIONS/CALLING FOR HELP OR ADVICE.** The Communications segment describes the emergency procedures to learn before an incident occurs. The goal is to provide a basic description of how a suddenly alone person can summon help and tell others where they are using the VHF radio, emergency electronics, and visual signals normally found on recreational sail or power boats.

The classroom lecture covers turning on and operating a VHF radio, calling and talking to another boat or shore station, determining and sending the position of the emergency and the use of Digital Selective Calling (DSC), EPIRBs & PLBs. The recommended placement of equipment to support the suddenly alone person at the helm will also be presented. This includes the location of GPS/Chart Plotters, VHF Radio, cockpit speaker, and the connection and use of DSC.

The communications workshop includes making actual VHF calls and use of a voice recorder to initiate, deliver and play back MAYDAY and PAN PAN messages. A seminar handout, the Distress Communications Form, which incorporates the use of DSC, Voice and EPIRB MAYDAY calls, will be introduced and reviewed for students as part of the recommended procedure to use aboard their own boats.

**NAVIGATING TO A SAFE HAVEN.** The Navigation segment focuses on the minimum procedures to learn and practice for the less experienced person to reach a safe harbor. The goal is to provide a basic description of how the suddenly alone person can determine the vessel's position, plot that position on a chart, and determine the course or courses to a safe haven. Recommended procedures to always know the boat's position and the location of nearby hazards and safe areas will be emphasized.

The classroom lecture covers the use of GPS in navigating, including waypoint management and determining current position for plotting and transmission to other vessels and rescue authorities who might respond to urgent or emergency calls. It also introduces chart reading and basic plotting using a chart and navigation tools. Finally it describes the virtues and possible pitfalls of only using a chart plotter for navigation.

Each student should be given a sheet of navigation problems that includes the points made in the classroom presentation to solve during the workshop with the assistance of their partners, other students & friends or volunteer helpers. Time for a full class discussion on the different methods used should be included at the end of the Navigation Workshop.

**RECOVERY OF AN OVERBOARD PERSON.** Recovery of a person in the water (PIW) describes the use of time tested procedures to confidently recover an overboard person. The goal of this segment is to describe the equipment options and the recovery of a person using the basic Quick-Stop maneuver and the Lifesling recovery system.

The classroom lecture shows and describes the Lifesling, the basic Throw Rope, lifting options including the Block and Tackle lifting accessory, and the basic recovery maneuver. A video of a short-handed recovery is shown and a handout, The Lifesling Owner's Preparation Guide, is distributed.

Personalizing the Lifesling and rigging at least one lifting arrangement following the handout will be demonstrated during the workshop. If available, this demo will take place on a sailboat alongside a dock. Additionally, use of various throwing devices used to make contact with a person in the water will be part of the workshop drills to be demonstrated and tried by all students.

**SUMMARY.** A short classroom session that summarizes the seminar, reviews the recommended 'homework' and practice sessions and answers questions should be part of the final session of this series, before the social hour.