



**This is a CCA Safety Moment Handout**

**Ascending the Mast Safely**

*Italics Note – Items in italics should be read to an audience before the paper is distributed.*

**Eliminating a trip up the mast becomes the safest trip.**

Check for chafing frequently - daily underway. One way is to use binoculars to inspect the rigging. It should not be necessary to go aloft underway to retrieve a lost halyard on a cruising sailboat. Instead, mast messengers should be rigged fore and aft and a spare halyard kept aboard to replace any lost halyard until you arrive in port.

**Any person going up any mast should:**

- wear coveralls or long trousers, a long sleeve shirt and shoes
- consider wearing sailing gloves to prevent wire or rope burn when handling the rigging aloft
- wear a helmet and a bulky foam or kapok PFD, if there is any motion expected aloft
- *use a lifting harness that will prevent a person from slipping out even when hanging upside down*
- *if a Bosun's Chair is used it should have a back strap and crotch piece so that a person cannot slip out of it. Additionally, the person should wear a belt or harness that will keep them in the chair even when hanging upside down.*
- also wear a safety harness & tether to be used to wrap around the mast to keep the person from swinging. The tether should be attached above the spreaders, in such a way that it would interrupt a fall, while aloft. (i.e. don't bleed on the teak)

**Safety Precautions**

- assign a “Safety Officer” to oversee the event without personally participating in any part of the hoist and/or descent operation
- avoid using an external halyard through a block at the top of the mast. Use one that goes back into the mast

- *if a rope halyard is used - tie it to the lifting harness/chair instead of trusting a shackle*
- *if a snap shackle must be used - tape/whip it closed to avoid having it open as it rubs against the rigging aloft.*
- hand signals should be established and used for hoisting and lowering instead of yelling.
- *all tools should be tied to the person or the chair*
- *no one should stand underneath a person working aloft*
- use the largest winch and a strong crewmember/grinder with a second person tailing & maintaining sufficient wraps around the drum to manually hold the person aloft
- use an electric driven winch or windlass carefully to avoid injury during rapid hoisting
- *do not depend on self tailing winches to hold a person aloft - hand tend all tails coming from a hoisting winch*
- *tie & lock the hoisting halyard tail to a cleat while the person aloft is at working position*
- use a downhaul to steady and help keep the person from swinging while aloft. (On very tall masts a down haul may be needed to compensate for the fact that the halyard tail can weigh more than the person aloft)
- *have a messenger line attached to the harness/chair in case gear or tools have to be lowered/hoisted*
- a second, hand tended halyard should be used, if available. The slack should be kept out of this halyard and it should be secured at all times in case the working halyard slips or fails. This halyard can either be tended on deck or by the person going aloft, using a carabiner, jumar ascender jam device or safety belay device
- lower the person slowly by hand with the hoisting halyard wrapped around the winch, without jerking

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