



In The Water

In October 2011, Ron Trossbach wrote the US Sailing review of the Rambler 100 incident in the 2011 Fastnet Race. Rambler 100 lost its keel and inverted quickly. Most of the crew were able to quickly climb onto the bottom of the boat. The navigator, who had been below, had to swim underwater down to the cockpit, then outboard and under the lifelines before getting to the surface. Five of the crew were separated from the overturned boat, but were able to stay together, markedly improving their chances. You may want to read the entire report, as the story is insightful.

But here is an excerpt of Ron's recommendations for sailors who may end up in the water, either from an overboard situation, or a vessel flipped or sunk.

What should American Sailors learn from this accident?

1. LIFEJACKETS (a combination Inflatable PFD and Harness is recommended)
 - a. Always wear your own lifejacket – properly fitted and secured. "A life jacket isn't on until it's complete with fitting/adjustment, crotch straps attached, and PLB and bright strobe on your person." The tether/harness must be attached (but not necessarily hooked on).
 - b. Lifejackets should be either on a person, hooked to their bunk, or otherwise immediately available.
 - c. Inspect your lifejacket every time you put it on and conduct an air test of your inflatable annually.
 - d. Revisit the decision whether you want to wear an automatic or manual inflating lifejacket.
 - e. Know how to manually inflate your inflatable lifejacket. Finding the pull cord is not always easy.
 - f. Wear crotch/thigh straps (required by ISAF OSR 5.02.5 (b) on all harnesses since Jan 2011).
 - g. Know how to deploy & use your sprayhood. (splashguard/sprayhoods are already strongly recommended by ISAF OSR 5.01 j)
 - h. Upgrade your whistle. (Installed PFD whistles were considered useless.)

- i. Many PFD strobe light sensors must be in water to work and they are not very bright.

2. ALWAYS STAY WITH THE BOAT

- If you can't: Stay with the group.

3. ALWAYS CARRY (in Fanny Pack, attached to PFD, or in your foul weather gear)

- a. A Personal Locating Beacon (PLB) 100% of the time. Be sure that the boat's name is included on the Registration Form submitted to NOAA (*but see update note below*).
- b. An alternate to a PLB is a waterproof VHF Handheld Radio, preferably with DSC (Digital Selective Calling) (*again, see update note below*).
- c. A bright Strobe Light
- d. A Tether/Safety Line
- e. One or more Mini Flares or a Laser Flare
- f. A Knife

Ron writes an Update in February 2014:

Since these recommendations were written a new Man Overboard Locator device has been introduced that enters the actual GPS position of the Person in the Water (PIW) into the Automatic Identification System (AIS) that all AIS equipped stations within range can receive and display on their chart plotters or AIS displays. In this case, carrying one of these attached to their PFD's would have electronically notified all AIS equipped racers and rescue craft within range (about 4 nm) where the capsized boat and the crew in the water were located.

Ron extols: Every person going offshore should consider attaching a personal AIS locating device to their life jacket that will notify all AIS equipped boats, including the one they fell off of (if it has AIS), where they actually are located. (*Note: This device may substitute for, or be in addition to, the equipment mentioned in 3a. and 3b. above.*)

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Editor's commentary in italics