Safety initiatives
New lifejacket campaign

Ongoing support needed
Sign up for FishSAFE

Vessel surveillance
Illegal fishing targeted

Reducing marine debris
Working with industry

QOL Review
Engagement programme complete
Welcome to the final issue of Safe Seas Clean Seas for 2009.

It’s been another busy year for Maritime New Zealand (MNZ), with a significant amount of activity taking place across the organisation, reflecting our diverse functions and responsibilities.

Key projects underway include the review of Maritime Rules Parts 21 and 46, and of Qualifications and Operational Limits, and our continued focus on improving compliance – particularly around vessel operations and the role of SSM companies, who are partners with MNZ in ensuring that appropriate safety standards are met and maintained.

In our response role, the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand was the lead agency in co-ordinating the intensive search for survivors in the wake of the tragic loss of life on the Tongan ferry Princess Ashika, and our Marine Pollution and Response Service experts provided assistance in preventing an oil spill, following the grounding of forum Samoa II in Apia, Samoa.

Closer to home, MNZ, with the support of the other agencies making up the National Pleasure Boat Safety Forum, launched two significant safety initiatives in late October at the traditional start of the summer boating season – a mass media campaign promoting lifejacket wearing, and consultation on a proposed change to Maritime Rules Part 91 (which would strengthen the requirement for all those on board craft under 6 metres to wear a lifejacket).

This year has highlighted the importance of lifejacket wearing, with the 22 recreational boating deaths recorded by 30 November threatening to outstrip our worst year for recreational fatalities. Tragically about two-thirds of these deaths would likely have been prevented had the victims been wearing a lifejacket. So, if you’re planning to head out on the water this summer, wear your lifejacket. It only takes a few moments to put on and could save your life – it’s that simple.

In other developments, MNZ environmental experts helped to drive through an International Maritime Organization (IMO) amendment to ban the carriage and use of heavy grade fuel oils in the Antarctic, eliminating a significant environmental risk to the region.

More recently, MNZ met with experts from around the world to discuss the management of ship-borne tourism in the Antarctic. We need to continue to work alongside other nations to improve safety and to protect this unique environment.

On behalf of us all here at MNZ, we hope that you have a safe, happy and relaxing holiday season.

Catherine Taylor
Director of Maritime New Zealand

A law change, making it compulsory for all people on board vessels under 6 metres to wear their lifejackets, is hoped to be in place this time next year – pending public consultation and government approval.

The proposed law change (under Maritime Rules Part 91) is one of two key safety initiatives recently launched by MNZ and fellow water safety agencies on the National Pleasure Boat Safety Forum (the Forum), in an effort to reduce recreational boating deaths.

Jim Lott, MNZ Manager Recreational Boating and Forum member, says public consultation on the proposed law change to the lifejacket requirement, which closed on December 18, also coincided with the new public awareness campaign encouraging boaties to make wearing a lifejacket automatic as wearing a seatbelt.

Both initiatives come as recreational boating activity continues to be marred by a significant number of fatalities and serious accidents.

“It’s a strange logic that most people would not consider driving a car without wearing a seatbelt, but once on board a small boat, many don’t give any further thought to wearing an equally important lifesaving device – the lifejacket. That’s despite all the evidence telling us that wearing a lifejacket could at least halve the number of boating fatalities we record every year,” says Jim.
New lifejacket safety initiatives

“Last year, 16 people died in recreational boating accidents around the country, which is 16 too many. Much more worrying, however, is that by 30 November this year the death toll from recreational boating accidents already stood at 22. This is already the third-highest since 2000 when there were 25 deaths for the entire year – and the busy December/Christmas period isn’t included in the latest statistic.

“Analysis of these fatal accidents continues to show that failing to wear a lifejacket is still the leading cause of recreational boating deaths, followed by lack of reliable emergency communications, failure to check the marine weather forecast, and alcohol. This is why MNZ and its partner agencies on the Forum are launching these new initiatives in an effort to target and reduce these risk factors,” says Jim.

Under current maritime rules, skippers must ensure they carry enough lifejackets for everyone on board, but it is only compulsory to wear lifejackets in situations of heightened risk – for example in rough weather, or when crossing a bar. However, Jim says the proposed rule change would make it compulsory for all on board vessels under 6 metres to wear their lifejacket at all times – unless expressly given permission by the skipper to take them off. The skipper must assess that safety would not be compromised before giving permission.

Jim says public submissions on the proposed change to Maritime Rules Part 91 will be reviewed by MNZ, then the Ministry of Transport, and ultimately the Minister of Transport. A final recommendation will then be made for Cabinet approval, hopefully by the middle of 2010.

“While it is still early days, anecdotal evidence received so far suggests that people are largely supportive of the rule change. Also encouraging is that a number of regional councils have already taken the proactive step of drafting the rule change into their local bylaws, in anticipation of it becoming law. Our hope is that with this support, and pending positive public submissions and government approval, the amended rule can be in place as soon as possible,” says Jim.

The drive behind the recommended rule change is the disproportionate number of recreational boating deaths that have occurred on vessels in the under 6 metre category over the past 10 years – the majority of which could have been averted had the victims been wearing a lifejacket.

To support the lifejacket-wearing campaign, MNZ also recently began screening a new television commercial, which focuses on encouraging boaters to make putting their lifejacket on when they step into a boat as automatic as putting a seatbelt on when getting into a car. “The message is that it can save your life – it’s that simple,” says Jim.

MNZ, supported by Water Safety New Zealand, has launched a new mass media campaign urging more boaties to wear their lifejackets. The campaign coincides with a proposed law change to make lifejacket wearing compulsory in all craft under 6 metres, unless there is low risk.
Facts and stats

450,000 pleasure craft are estimated to be owned by New Zealanders – and 1 in 3 people go out in a boat at least once a year.

22 people have died in recreational boating accidents in New Zealand in the year to 30 November. The highest recorded annual toll was in 2000, with 25 deaths. The lowest toll on record was 6 deaths in 2006.

100 recreational boating deaths in the past 10 years would likely have been prevented had the victims been wearing a lifejacket.

More than 60% of fatal recreational boating accidents have failure to wear a lifejacket as the leading cause of death.

At least two forms of reliable marine emergency communications should be carried on your person – a distress beacon and waterproof marine VHF radio are the most effective means.

A few moments is all it takes to put on a lifejacket – and it could save your family a lifetime of grief.

Top summer boating safety tips

1. Wear your lifejacket or PFD. Maritime law requires ALL skippers to carry enough lifejackets of the right size for everyone on board. Lifejackets currently must also be worn in any situation where there is increased safety risk. MNZ is, however, recommending a law change that would make it compulsory for lifejackets to be worn at all times, unless the skipper gives permission for them to be removed.

2. Check the marine weather forecast before you go. If in doubt don’t go out.

3. Carry at least two reliable forms of marine communication. A distress beacon (EPIRB or PLB) and a handheld, waterproof marine VHF are the most reliable forms of emergency communication. Red handheld flares are also an effective means of indicating distress. If carried, cell phones should be inside a resealable plastic bag, but should not be relied on as your only form of communication.

4. Check your boat. Ensure your boat is well maintained and in good working condition before heading out on the water.

5. Don’t go overboard on alcohol. Alcohol impairs judgement and balance, and its effects are exaggerated on the water. Consumption of alcohol will also reduce your survival time if you end up in the water.

6. Make a trip report. Let someone responsible know where you’re going and when you expect to be back.

7. Be considerate to other water users. Keep a lookout, stick to safe speeds, and be patient, so that everyone can enjoy the water.
The initiative, launched in May 2006 and supported by MNZ, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and the Seafood Industry Training Organisation, focuses on improving safety on board New Zealand fishing vessels through a programme of workshops, training, support and one-on-one coaching by FishSAFE “mentors” – experienced fishing industry representatives.

A key component of the scheme is the availability of a 10% ACC workplace safety discount to those fishers who successfully complete the programme, with ACC figures showing that participation by fishers in the programme over the past 3½ years has had a positive impact on improving safety.

To date, 645 people from 407 vessels have attended FishSAFE workshops – but those who back the programme say more are needed to support FishSAFE and help ensure its ongoing success.

“While FishSAFE has to date had a very positive impact on improving attitudes towards fishing safety and in reducing the number of injuries and accident claims made to ACC, the ultimate success or failure of the programme hinges on the continued support of fishers themselves and how well they use the scheme,” says Darren Guard, FishSAFE mentor, MNZ Technical Trainer, and experienced fisherman.

“We are now 3 years or so into the scheme and while uptake up to this point has been good, it has started to dwindle in recent times. We therefore urge anyone who has not yet been through a FishSAFE course to take advantage of the workplace safety initiative, with one-on-one mentoring, helping it become more successful than any other equivalent industry programme currently running.”

“It’s also the only initiative out there that has been developed by fishers, for fishers, and it is delivered by fishers.”

That’s echoed by FishSAFE head mentor Gary Levy, a 34-year veteran of the industry.

Gary says the mentoring team are a key link in helping owners, operators and fishing crews make their vessels safer places to work. They also help to ensure operators are meeting their obligations with the applicable rules and regulations for their operations – and assist them in accessing the ACC levy discounts that are available upon completing the FishSAFE programme.

The mentors also provide free advice and guidance on many issues, including hazard management and safe ship management requirements on board vessels, with one of their main roles to help owners and skippers personalise the safety systems needed to operate safely.

Meanwhile, ACC is also reminding those fishers involved in the programme that in order to maintain their workplace safety discount, they must complete an annual declaration to confirm their health and safety systems are still in place.

After 3 years, fishers must also renew and revalidate their application by completing the self-assessment questionnaire, so that ACC can further assess their knowledge of workplace hazards.

About 300 of the original FishSAFE participants are now due for revalidation, and have until 31 March 2010 to complete this, with ACC posting a new questionnaire out to those whose revalidation is due. Fishers may complete this and return it to ACC direct, but a mentor still must visit the vessel to verify that its hazard management system is still in place.

For more information on FishSAFE, visit the website, www.fishsafe.org.nz, or contact head mentor Gary Levy on 027 539 0399.
Why do we drown?

On average, every year more than 100 New Zealanders drown – either in boating accidents or other incidents on our rivers, lakes and seas.

Some people drown after entering the water intentionally (for example when swimming or diving), but most drown after accidental immersion. However, almost all drownings are preventable.

Understanding how your body will respond when you suddenly find yourself in a river, lake or the sea will significantly improve your chances of survival. Wearing a lifejacket, personal flotation device or some other buoyancy aid will also greatly improve your chances if the unexpected happens.

All of us have experienced the effects of entering the water – and the colder the water, the more noticeable the involuntary response. But we can just as easily drown in water of any temperature. The key difference is how we enter the water – intentionally or unexpectedly.

COLD SHOCK

When our skin suddenly cools, two main responses occur – surface blood vessels constrict and our heart rate increases, often doubling its normal rate. Our blood pressure rises, and together these responses create the risk of a heart attack.

If our heart keeps going, we also have to survive the respiratory response, which starts with an involuntary gasp and hyperventilation. Breathing becomes difficult. This can lead to drowning within moments of entering the water. These initial responses are commonly described as “cold shock”.

There is little you can do to guard against cold shock, but knowing what is happening may well reduce your inclination to panic (which can impair breathing and hasten drowning), and increase your chances of survival. If you are near water and there is even a remote chance you may fall in, then wearing a buoyancy aid or lifejacket will hugely increase your chance of surviving.

MUSCLE STRENGTH LOSS

Having survived an initial immersion in water, many drown within a short time. Blood retreats from our extremities as our body seeks to protect the vital organs in the chest from cooling, and our limbs cool very rapidly. Within minutes, the lowering temperature in our muscles reduces their strength – though this occurs more slowly in warmer water.

The chemical and electrical reactions that control our muscles slow down, and our muscles stop working – we can do nothing at this time to help ourselves. People can not even hold up their head or avoid inhaling water. We often hear that the victim was a “strong swimmer”. Again, our greatest hope of survival is provided by a lifejacket.

Often we hear reports that a drowned person was affected by hypothermia. The term is widely used when a person is very cold, but strictly speaking it refers to the cooling of the inner vital organs. Recent research shows that even a thin person can not lose heat quickly enough to die from hypothermia within 30 minutes in freezing water. The cause of death when immersed in water is drowning, usually caused by cold shock and the ensuing loss of muscle strength.

LIFEJACKETS SAVE LIVES

Wearing a buoyancy aid is the most practical measure available to help prevent drowning – other than not entering the water in the first place. Most people who drown are close to shore or help – sometimes within metres. Of course, those in a boating mishap may well only survive if they also have the means to communicate that they need help.

Lifejackets and buoyancy aids are now very comfortable to wear, with inflatables becoming increasingly popular. Lifejackets are effective, arguably more so at preventing loss of life than a seatbelt. Logic tells us that wearing a buoyancy aid on or near the water should be just as automatic as putting on a seatbelt – except when we intend to go for a swim, or a surf. Being prepared is important, because boating accidents and falls into the water happen frequently and without warning, just as car accidents do.

For more information visit www.maritimenz.govt.nz and search for “lifejackets” or “cold water”.

Wearing a lifejacket is the most practical measure available to help prevent drowning.
Review of maritime sewage pollution regulations

MNZ is currently undertaking a review of maritime sewage pollution regulations. This review aims to determine whether these regulations have kept pace with changing patterns of maritime activity, and whether they continue to provide protection of the marine environment in line with public expectations.

Broadly, this review asks whether:

- New Zealand should bring its sewage pollution prevention measures for ships greater than 400 gross tonnes, or carrying more than 15 persons, up to the international standard in Annex IV of MARPOL (the International Convention for Prevention of Pollution from Ships)
- present regulations are effective in protecting the marine environment, the public and other users of the coastal marine environment from sewage discharges by small craft under 400 gross tonnes that carry fewer than 16 persons.

To support this review process, MNZ will present findings from its informal consultation with stakeholders and a summary of background information. We expect to issue an “invitation to comment” on each of these questions early in 2010, and interested parties will be encouraged to make submissions.

Further information about regulations governing sewage discharges from ships can be found at www.maritimenz.govt.nz/sewage-discharge

Vessel surveillance programme to continue

MNZ will be continuing its programme of monitoring and surveillance of commercial fishing vessel operations into the new year, following the recent conviction of a number of skippers for fishing outside their safe operational limits.

MNZ General Manager Maritime Services, Sharyn Forsyth, said surveillance will be conducted in a number of ways to ensure greater compliance, with MNZ receiving assistance from the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) and Navy to conduct patrols along the west coast of New Zealand. The albacore fishery will also be targeted in the new year.

“Operational limits are there for good safety reasons, and are designed to protect both the vessel and the lives of those on board. The further offshore a vessel operates, the more self-reliant and better equipped it must be, such as having enhanced life-saving and communications equipment on board, as well as a higher level of crew training and qualifications,” Sharyn says.

Sharyn said vessel surveillance would continue as some operators were still not getting the message. Following a joint RNZAF/MNZ surveillance operation in August 2008, four skippers were successfully prosecuted by MNZ, after admitting operating outside their approved operational limits.

Four operators received fines ranging from $2,000 – $4,750 for operating between 5.5 nautical miles (10 kilometres) and 17.1 nautical miles (31 kilometres) beyond their vessels’ safe operational limits without the appropriate maritime document. All four pleaded guilty to the charges brought by MNZ under section 68 of the Maritime Transport Act.

Sharyn said MNZ would not hesitate to take action against others caught operating illegally outside their safe limits.

“The simple message is that if you are pushing the boundaries by going outside your limits, then action will be taken. If operators wish to work outside their current limits, they must first have the appropriate documentation and qualifications, and meet the appropriate safe crewing and operational requirements.”

Recently Talley’s Group Ltd sent out a notice to all albacore fishermen reminding them that MNZ would be vigilant in monitoring them. Talley’s have also gone further by continuing to encourage skippers and crews to upgrade their tickets. They have taken the initiative and put 10 fishermen through their New Zealand Offshore Master (NZOM) and have offered payment of all course costs associated with any ticket upgrade that will provide the necessary qualifications to participate legally.
Reducing marine debris
Working together to find solutions

A new initiative from MNZ will involve working closely with the fishing industry to reduce the amount of garbage and marine debris that ends up in our waters.

Marine debris can be found washed up on shorelines, on the seabed, or drifting at sea – where it creates a hazard to the environment and to shipping. Ocean gyres (circulatory ocean currents) in the Pacific contain vast areas where plastic outweighs plankton by 6 to 1.

WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?
MNZ Environmental Analyst Dr Alison Lane says a fair amount of marine debris comes from land – whether deliberately dumped on the coast or washed out with storm water from cities. It also comes from merchant shipping, offshore installations and smaller boats.

“Fishing vessels are interesting because they range in size and type of activity, often go to sea for several days at a time and are full-time working vessels.”

It is legal to dispose of some kinds of garbage at sea from vessels – such as food scraps and some non-plastic items – although it must be in accordance with conditions about the distance from shore and how the garbage is treated before disposal.

International regulations about garbage disposal from ships have been in place since 1988 and garbage disposal practices have changed significantly since then, as people have become more aware of the impact of debris on our oceans.

“Despite this, our beaches and oceans are still littered with junk. Obviously regulation alone isn’t the answer,” says Alison.

While all sorts of garbage at sea can be an environmental or shipping hazard, the big issue is plastic. Non-biodegradable plastics disintegrate into increasingly smaller pieces but remain in the environment.
Birds, turtles and fish often mistake plastic fragments for food, and even plankton will feed on the tiniest pieces. Those plankton then get eaten by fish and the plastic starts moving up the food chain.

“Apart from filling the guts of these animals with indigestible rubbish that leaves no room for real food, on top of that plastics often contain metals, which then poison or contaminate the animals that swallow them,” says Alison.

“The real nightmare is that this process may go on for many hundreds of years, all from a single scrap of nylon rope or a plastic drink bottle.”

Marine debris isn’t just an environmental problem. Plastic bags, ropes, lines and other debris get tangled up in fishing gear, propellers and rudders, and sucked into engine water intakes, leading to serious safety risks, lost time and expensive repairs. Every fisher has stories of “catching” garbage, leading to damaged equipment – as well as lost time clearing it out and making repairs.

**WORKING WITH INDUSTRY**

In response to the significant risks and hazards posed by marine debris, MNZ has started a project working with the fishing community to see what can be done.

The focus of this work will be to engage with vessel owners and operators to identify the barriers to effectively managing garbage on board, and to come up with some practical solutions to overcome these.

Because the fishing industry is so diverse and operators are often the victims of marine debris, which costs them time and money, MNZ has started by surveying as many fishers as possible about their existing garbage management practices. Delegates at recent industry conferences in Wellington and Dunedin completed surveys to help identify what happens now with garbage on boats, what works and what doesn’t. These surveys have helped build a picture of the real issues facing operators who are trying to deal with garbage on board.

“Unfortunately fishing-related debris is one of the few types of garbage that can be easily traced to a particular source, and this has led to the public believing that the fishing industry is responsible for a larger proportion of the garbage than is actually the case. By working with the fishing community and publicising the results of this work, we hope to help change this perception,” says Alison.

The data from the surveys has shown clear trends, such as the amount and types of garbage that are produced and why garbage ends up going overboard.

The next step is to work with industry focus groups to develop practical solutions to some of the identified problems.

“We strongly believe that it is the people who are working day-to-day on boats who will know what ideas are going to be effective in the real world. We already know the fishing industry has a history of successful environmental initiatives. This is why we believe engaging directly with operators is the best way to make some real progress,” says Alison.

One of the spin-offs of this work is that MNZ will take the lessons learnt from working with the New Zealand industry to the International Maritime Organization, which is also considering the worldwide problem of marine debris from ships.

If anyone would like to discuss this issue, participate in the survey, or be part of focus groups on marine debris solutions, please contact Alison Lane at MNZ on (04) 494 1278.
Kiwi link to international bravery award

The “exceptional bravery” of two American sailors who risked their lives to rescue a New Zealander and two friends from a sinking yacht near Fiji has been recognised with an international bravery award.

Sophie and Maurice Conti were nominated for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea by MNZ on behalf of the New Zealand Government, following the dramatic rescue of the crew of the 10 metre ketch Timella on 12 October 2008.

Announcing the award at this year’s World Maritime Day celebrations, Transport Minister Hon Steven Joyce said the Contis were deserving recipients of the honour, which was presented at a special ceremony at the IMO in London last month.

“The selfless actions taken by the Contis undoubtedly saved the lives of three others in what were extremely challenging circumstances, and this award is a fitting tribute to their courage,” Mr Joyce said.

CALL FOR HELP

The Contis and their two small children were on board their catamaran, the Ocealys, in a lagoon about 90 kilometres from Suva, Fiji, when just before midnight they were woken by a message on their VHF radio: “Mayday, mayday, mayday…”

Twelve nautical miles (22 kilometres) away, the ketch Timella had struck a submerged reef, and had begun taking on water. The yacht’s three crew – New Zealander Ali Timms and Australians Cameron Slagle and Liz Schoch – needed urgent help:

“Mayday, mayday, mayday…this is the sailing vessel Timella…we have struck a reef and need assistance…we are hard aground…the waves are bashing us against the reef. We need help…”

During discussions with the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) in Wellington and the New Zealand High Commission in Suva about options for rescue, the Contis receive another exchange from the Timella. It is Cameron, the skipper:

“We’ve gone down mate. I’ve got water half-way to the cabin top. The [radio] batteries are under a metre and half of water…I don’t know how we are still transmitting…”

When told that search and rescue vessels are potentially still many hours away, and with the next-closest commercial vessel more than 24 hours away, the Contis realise they are the Timella crew’s only viable option.
Then, from the Timella: “…we’re getting into the dinghy and will stay with the boat as long as we can. I don’t expect the batteries to hold much longer…”

The Ocealys responds: “Roger that Timella … we are coming to you. We may not be able to help, but at least we will be there…”

Timella: “Roger that Ocealys. What’s your name man?”

Ocealys: “It’s Maurice. Maurice.”

Timella: “It’s Cameron here. Good to meet you man. We love you man. I definitely owe you a beer or two when this is all over…”

Then, nothing more is heard from the Timella.

On board Ocealys, the Contis begin heading for the stricken yacht, braving rough seas and strong winds.

Just as the sun is coming up, they reach the Timella’s position. But the sea is rough and there is no sign of the yacht or its crew.

The Ocealys begins to circle the reef looking for any sign of life – nothing.

Then, at the end of the first circuit, Sophie Conti spots something in the water – a plastic jerry can.

In discussions with RCCNZ, they do another circuit of the reef to make sure they haven’t missed anything.

On the second circuit, they glimpse something right in the centre of the reef. The swell makes it hard to see anything, but a break in the waves shows three little black dots poking out of the water – the missing crew.

DRAMATIC RESCUE

Maurice realises that the crew’s only chance is for him to go to them in their dinghy, while Sophie and the children stay on board Ocealys.

Donning a dry suit, harness, strobe light and handheld VHF radio, Maurice stuffs flares and other supplies into a dry bag and sets off.

Once inside the reef, he spots the crew of the Timella. They are in the water wearing lifejackets, clinging to their partly-sunken dinghy.

In the water, Ali Timms and her crewmates are huddled together to keep warm. Says Ali: “I looked around and saw the most wonderful sight I’ve ever seen in my life, this gorgeous guy [Maurice] in a Zodiac right upon us. He was standing in the stern wearing dark glasses and rescue-type clothing with an amazing array of equipment – radio, flares, lights and harnesses etc attached…wow!”

As the weary trio are pulled on board, Maurice quips: “Good morning ladies and gentlemen. My name is Maurice and I will be rescuing you today.”

Says Ali: “We’re all kind of beached in the dinghy as it speeds away from the reef. The transition from despair to the relief that we have survived is immediate.”

After being taken on board and warmed up, fed and watered, the group finally make it safely into Likuri Harbour (Western Fiji), where all are able to enjoy the beer that Cameron has promised them.

Of her rescuers, Ali simply says: “They are my heroes. They saved our lives.”

In accepting New Zealand’s nomination of the Contis for the award, IMO Secretary General Efthimios Mitropoulos said the Contis had displayed “exceptional bravery” in rescuing the crew of the Timella, “at considerable risk to their own safety and that of their children”.

The couple said they were “stunned and speechless” on receiving the award.

“We are deeply honoured. We felt that just being nominated was a huge deal and never even suspected that we would be awarded this honour.”

Special thanks to Maurice Conti and Ali Timms for sharing extracts from their diaries for this article.

The Contis’ catamaran, the Ocealys, the night before the dramatic rescue mission.

Photos: courtesy of Sophie and Maurice Conti.

To the rescue: Maurice Conti dons safety equipment before setting out to rescue the crew of the Timella.

11
Boat ramp surveys and spot checks show strong safety awareness

Recent boat ramp surveys and free boating safety checks carried out in different parts of the country paint an encouraging picture of a healthy safety culture among recreational boat skippers, say water safety agencies.

Jim Lott, MNZ Manager Recreational Boating and National Pleasure Boat Safety Forum spokesman, says boat ramp surveys in Auckland and Waikato, and free boating safety check days held around the country showed a generally high level of compliance with maritime safety requirements. To date boating safety check days have been held in Nelson, Auckland, Christchurch, Picton and Waikawa.

Small Craft Safety Advisor Jim Lilley was instrumental in setting up the pilot boating safety check day in Picton, and has been co-ordinating similar events in the South Island, while Small Craft Safety Advisor Alistair Thomson has been very involved with North Island surveys and boating safety check days.

“Although both surveys and safety checks were in no way intended to be a formal ‘scientific’ measure of compliance with boat safety rules, the information collected from the boaties spoken to and the vessels checked indicated a high level of safety awareness and compliance, particularly around the carriage of lifejackets,” says Jim Lott.

The boat ramp survey, conducted in Auckland and Waikato by MNZ safe boating advisors and Environment Waikato navigation safety officers, polled 580 vessel owners.

“The main purpose of this survey was to determine the level of compliance with Maritime Rules Part 91 and Environment Waikato’s navigation safety bylaw, which require all boaties to carry sufficient lifejackets of the right size for all on board,” says Jim.

The survey included questions on the number of lifejackets or personal flotation devices carried, the types of communications equipment carried, the vessel size, and the number of people on board.

“What was most encouraging was that of the 580 vessels surveyed, almost 95% carried the appropriate number and size of lifejackets, while 97% carried some form of communications equipment, such as a VHF radio, flares or a cell phone in a sealed waterproof bag.

“However, what was of concern was that skippers on a very small number of vessels (1.5%) carried no lifejackets and no communications equipment. Most of these vessels were in the under 6 metre category, which is over-represented in boating accident injury and fatality statistics.

While the number of boats found without any safety equipment was thankfully a very small percentage, when extrapolated over the conservative estimate of 450,000 pleasure boats in New Zealand, with approximately 7,000 vessels at high risk,” says Jim.

Meanwhile, free boating safety check days have also indicated a generally strong level of safety awareness and compliance. Both events were co-ordinated by MNZ, with support from Coastguard Boating Education and Water Safety New Zealand, along with a host of other organisations, including local harbourmasters, Police, the New Zealand Fire Service, and local councils.
Areas were set up to allow boaties arriving to launch their vessels to take advantage of free safety checks, and also be provided with information on safety equipment, such as lifejackets, marine VHF radios and distress beacons (EPIRBs or PLBs). Boaties returning to the ramp were also given the opportunity to undertake a safety check and receive information.

"The free checks were very well-received," says Jim. "Most of the boaties we engaged with at both types of events were very receptive and positive about the observations made.

"One of the great things we noted was that lifejacket compliance was very high, with most boaties wearing theirs. The carriage of reliable communications was, however, a little light across the board – so this provided us with an opportunity to promote the use of handheld VHF radios, which are cheaper than a lot of cell phones," says Jim. "Many boaties spoken to assured us they would follow this up.

"All in all the surveys and the free safe boating checks were a great success and we, along with our partner organisations, hope to take them to other centres."
With summer boating activity in full swing, MNZ Manager Recreational Boating Jim Lott says it is important that all boaties ensure their craft are well maintained and in good working order, with the appropriate safety equipment carried on board.

“Each year the Coastguard, Police and the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand respond to thousands of calls for some sort of assistance, and barely a weekend goes by without radio messages that boats in various localities are in need of a tow because of some sort of mechanical fault,” says Jim.

“Commonly, it’s as silly as someone simply running out of fuel, which is a pretty basic precaution to take before heading out on the water. Another common problem is boats whose engines won’t start, which is often a battery issue.

“Putting the battery on a charger before going out is not enough,” says Jim. “It has to be properly checked at a battery agent each year. But too often the temptation to try and get a few more months use to save a paltry sum overrides basic common sense. Dirty fuel, or sometimes just old fuel, is also a common problem that is easily eliminated,” says Jim.

Jim says that due to the good work by Coastguard volunteers and other rescue agencies, these preventable problems rarely become more than an inconvenience. However, he says, they can be the first link in a chain of events that can end in tragedy.

“While all risks can not be eliminated while on the water, good maintenance is a key part of ensuring the risks are minimised, and that boaties are well prepared for an accident that could happen without warning at any time.”

Jim says the importance of this message was underlined in two separate fatal accidents, which were both related to maintenance and equipment issues.

In the first accident in August last year, two men were delivering a yacht to another port for keel repairs when the keel tore away, causing it to capsize. Most of the journey had passed without incident and they were nearing their destination when the boat suddenly slowed and then rolled onto its port side.

The crew had time to send a mayday message on their VHF radio, activate their distress beacon and put on lifejackets before the yacht completely capsized. Unable to clamber onto the hull, and wearing what is thought to have been an incorrectly fitted lifejacket, the vessel’s skipper drowned before help could arrive.

Over the years, the yacht had a number of groundings and had struck a whale causing damage to the boat. The men knew that the keel was moving significantly and believed that tightening the keel bolts would ensure the keel was safe. However, a weld had failed, causing significant movement in the keel and a crack in the faring.

They did not subsequently check the keel to see if the movement was reduced or use the services of a boat builder or surveyor. Deciding to set sail on a coastal voyage in a vessel with a known keel defect had tragic consequences.

In the second fatal accident, two fishermen drowned off the Horowhenua Coast in March this year after their 4.5 metre aluminium dinghy took on water and sank rapidly, due to a number of do-it-yourself repairs and modifications that allowed water to flow into the underfloor area, greatly reducing freeboard and making the vessel unstable.

Despite both men wearing lifejackets, due to the speed of the vessel sinking they were not otherwise prepared for survival in the water, with no working communications equipment available to them once it sank. They had also not told anyone how long they would be out and when they were expected back.

“What tragedies like these highlight is that safety is not just about good maintenance, it is also about carrying the right safety and communications equipment – so that if you do end up in the water, you are prepared for survival, and can tell someone that you need help.”

“The key message is that whether you are buying a boat, taking it out again with the arrival of summer, or using it often, regular maintenance and equipment checks are the only way to ensure trouble-free boating. If you do not, it will catch up with you, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not next month, but it will almost certainly happen.”

For more information about boat maintenance, see the December 2009 issue of Lookout!, which is available on our website, www.maritimenz.govt.nz, or by emailing publications@maritimenz.govt.nz, or phoning 0508 22 55 22.
Kiwi oil spill experts play key role in response

The foundering of a ship on a reef in Apia harbour in Samoa in September provided an opportunity for MNZ oil spill experts to test their readiness to respond to international calls for assistance.

The container vessel *Forum Samoa II* was grounded on a reef at the entrance to the harbour, with 356 cubic metres of intermediate fuel oil and 38 cubic metres of diesel on board. Initial reports indicated the hull of the vessel was badly damaged, with the very real threat of a large-scale oil spill coming from the vessel.

MNZ was asked by Samoan authorities to provide assistance, and within just 12 hours had dispatched a team of five trained oil spill response staff to Apia in a Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Hercules aircraft. The provision of the RNZAF Hercules was at very short notice and highlighted the capabilities of the RNZAF to support this type of activity.

Loaded on board the Hercules was 11 tonnes of oil spill response equipment selected to manage a spill of this kind in the Pacific islands environment. The team at MNZ’s Marine Pollution and Response Service (MPRS) had worked through the night to select and prepare exactly the right equipment for the situation at hand.

MPRS Group Manager Nick Quinn says the grounding had the potential for a catastrophic impact on many aspects of life in Samoa. “We took the threat extremely seriously and the team went over there prepared to manage a full-scale spill,” says Nick.

“Many aspects of the potential spill impact were assessed and planned for, including a sound assessment of the general environmental situation and the impact on the reef and surrounding area should any oil be spilt.”

Fortunately, the *Forum Samoa II* was extricated from the reef by the vessel’s salvage company the morning after the team arrived.

*Forum Samoa II* was brought alongside, and the MPRS team put a protective boom around the ship to prevent any spill oil contaminating the harbour. Despite extensive damage to the hull, very little oil was spilt, and the ship was later transferred to dry dock for repairs.

Nick says the incident provided invaluable experience for all involved. Of the five MNZ staff members who went to Apia, four are members of the National Response Team (NRT).

The NRT consists of MNZ staff, contracted specialists, and around 45 trained personnel from around the country from regional council response teams. The NRT is available to assist in any large-scale oil spill events MPRS is called upon to assist with – whether in New Zealand waters or beyond.

“This is the kind of thing we do exercises for all the time. We regularly practice new and different scenarios to test the different facets of our response capability.”

“In this instance we had to quickly put together equipment for an incident happening thousands of kilometres away, in an environment that has differences to the New Zealand environment. We had to be mindful of only having limited space available on the Hercules, and ensuring our team would have everything they needed for this type of response, without taking unnecessary equipment.

“The fact that our team was able to do this so effectively is testimony to the hard work we all do exercising and planning for oil spill responses,” says Nick.

The spill response team begins preparations for booming off the *Forum Samoa II* to contain any potential oil spill.

The *Forum Samoa II* boomed off and safely secured at Apia wharf.
Refuse barge keeping Bay of Islands rubbish-free

Enjoy your summer holiday in the far north — but please don’t trash the beautiful Bay of Islands.

That’s the request from the partner agencies and the bay community, who together provide an on-the-water rubbish barge for bay boaties during Christmas and New Year.

The barge is organised by the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Far North District Council, and the Northland Regional Council, and has been operating since 1981.

The current user-pays system — $5 for a 40 litre bag — was introduced in 2006, and there is free recycling for plastics, cans and glass. A total of 153 cubic metres of refuse was removed last season.

The barge will be moored off the south-east of Moturua Island from around 23 December 2009 to 12 February 2010. Rubbish bags are available from several local retailers, boat clubs and Russell Radio — whose support is essential — and from DOC rangers who patrol the bay.

“Boaties are increasingly playing their part in keeping the bay a beautiful place to enjoy,” says Dene Harrison, programme manager of DOC’s visitor and historic assets team. “Everyone’s keen to reduce the waste entering the waterways, harming marine life or landing on the beaches.”

This is even more important now that DOC has completed an island rodent-eradication programme, and the volunteer community group Guardians of the Bay of Islands is working on restoring biodiversity to the islands.

Mr Harrison also encourages boaties to re-pack food supplies at home so that they bring less waste to the bay.
Annual report released

The MNZ Annual Report 2008/09, outlining progress against strategic goals, key achievements, and financial performance during the latest financial year, has now been released.

Our key strategic goals – the safe ship management (SSM) programme and commencement of a comprehensive review of maritime qualifications and operational limits (both 3-year projects) have, with the co-operation of the maritime community, made excellent progress during 2008/09. The expected outcome of these strategic initiatives will support MNZ’s vision of safe, secure and clean seas.

Key achievements during 2008/09 included managing the transition to the new 406MHz international distress beacon system, development of a new recreational boating safety campaign promoting lifejacket wearing on small craft, streamlining of processes relating to the issue of SSM certificates, initial audits of SSM vessels, and the launch of our new website, providing a much-improved web experience for users.

The annual report can be viewed on our website: www.maritimenz.govt.nz. Hard copies are also available on request by emailing publications@maritimenz.govt.nz.

Tiritiri Matangi lighthouse open day

MNZ recently opened the doors of New Zealand’s oldest lighthouse still in operation – Tiritiri Matangi, near Auckland.

The lighthouse open day was held in November by MNZ, in conjunction with the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Trust Inc, for the families of the trust members and the general public.

“This was the first time the lighthouse had been opened to the public in 15 years, and the day was enjoyed by all those that climbed the lighthouse tower and participated in the activities on the island,” said MNZ Lighthouse Engineer Jim Foye.

Tiritiri Matangi is an island located near Auckland, just off the Whangaparaoa Peninsula.

The island is a nature reserve owned by the Department of Conservation, with much of the replanting programmes and bird management carried out on the island by the supporters trust.

“Tiritiri Matangi is a good example of how a nature reserve can be managed for public access. It is definitely worth a visit if you have some time to spare in Auckland, as it contains lighthouse history dating back to 1865, forest walks, and a large variety of endangered New Zealand bird life,” says Jim.

First lit on 1 January 1865, the lighthouse is the oldest still in operation in New Zealand. It was also the first lighthouse to be built by the New Zealand Government.

Construction of the lighthouse was very difficult, and it took 4 months to dig down through 3 metres of thick, boggy, clay-like mud to reach ground that was hard enough to build on. Building materials for the lighthouse were shipped to the island and then carted in sledges by bullocks over the slippery banks to reach the construction site. The cost to build the lighthouse was £5,747.

Despite the challenges of construction, the original tower is still standing. The light itself, however, has undergone many changes. Today, the light is fully-automated and powered by battery banks charged by solar panels.
Over the past 3 months, MNZ representatives have travelled from Doubtless Bay to Bluff talking to the maritime community as part of MNZ’s Qualifications and Operational Limits Review (QOL Review).

Headed by QOL Review Project Manager Bridget Carter and MNZ Principal Maritime Advisor John Mansell, the QOL Review Community Engagement Programme is now complete, and has collected a wealth of information about what works and doesn’t work with New Zealand’s current maritime qualifications framework and the operational limits linked to them.

This information will help direct the development of a new framework that is clear and logical, and relevant to the needs of today’s commercial maritime sector.

Bridget and John spoke to 434 people at 139 interviews throughout the country, recording more than 1,150 comments.

“We really appreciate the time so many people gave us to share their views,” says Bridget. “A frequent comment was how good it was to talk face-to-face to people from MNZ about what they do. MNZ now has a much better understanding of how our rules impact on a large number of commercial operations on a day-to-day basis. It’s a great start for next year when we begin the design work for the new framework – there are so many real life scenarios we can use.”

“Most of the issues are with lower-level tickets,” says John. “It has been interesting to learn more about the practicalities of applying MNZ’s rules and some of the frustrations commercial operators deal with. For instance, most rules don’t recognise the safety gains made through advances in technology.”

The key issues to emerge from the Community Engagement Programme will be released to the industry for comment at the end of January 2010. There will also be further opportunities for input as the review progresses.

Find out more about the QOL Review at www.maritimenz.govt.nz/quals-limits.
Keeping the lights on – Cuvier Island

New Zealand’s most distant offshore lighthouse was also one of the toughest on keepers and their families, with its remote and steep location at the mouth of the Hauraki Gulf an ongoing challenge.

With supplies from the mainland only brought via boat every 3 months, the sense of isolation experienced by the keepers and their families was intensified by the heavy fog that often surrounded the island.

Early communications were also problematic, with trained carrier pigeons used to carry messages to and from the mainland between 1899 and 1911 having limited success.

Three keepers and their families lived on the rugged and exposed light station. To tend the light, keepers had to climb a slope via a near-vertical zigzag track, which on stormy nights could be treacherous. This prompted a series of complaints from principal keepers to their bosses, with one writing in 1892:

“I have to inform you that the cause of illness of keepers at this station is through the hill walk at night. Climbing the slope, the keeper gets into a state of perspiration and coming into … a room where there is such a draft, causes him to get a chill which makes him not fit for his work.”

In 1901, the principal keeper provided a rather more blunt appraisal of the conditions:

“This is the worst station I was ever at. There is no convenience.”

The lighthouse was the first cast iron tower to be manufactured in New Zealand, and materials to construct it had to be hauled nearly 100 metres up the steep slope that was to later cause so much ire among its keepers. The light, originally powered by an oil lamp, was first lit in 1889, and later converted to diesel-generated electricity.

Today, the light is a 50 watt rotating beacon, powered by batteries charged by solar panels.

The lighthouse became fully automated in 1982 and the final keeper was withdrawn. As for the pigeons – these were later replaced with somewhat more reliable radio communications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CUVIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE AT A GLANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tower height</td>
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<td>Light configuration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Light flash character</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power source</td>
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<td>Light range</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date light first lit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demanned</td>
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In this issue of Safe Seas Clean Seas, we begin an occasional series called “Keeping the lights on”, focusing on some of our most iconic and historically significant landmarks – the classic lighthouses of New Zealand.
New MNZ website incident page

We have developed a new alternative home page for our website, which is activated in the event of a major maritime incident.

The page gives visitors an updated snapshot of the incident as it unfolds, as well as links to information relating to the incident, such as media releases, location maps, recordings, and other media material.

This page will be activated in the event of a major incident, such as a large-scale search and rescue or an oil spill. Most recently the incident page was activated for the Tongan Princess Ashika ferry tragedy in August.

The next time the page is activated, it will also offer access to a dedicated RSS feed and subscription to email notifications.

MNZ’s website now features an alternative home page to be activated in the event of a major maritime incident.

From 1 January to 30 September 2009, there were 18 fatalities – 4 in the commercial sector and 14 in the recreational sector. This compares with 8 commercial and 10 recreational fatalities over the same period in 2008.

Feedback

Your feedback and ideas on Safe Seas Clean Seas are very welcome. If you’d like a particular topic covered in our next edition, please contact the publications team by email: publications@maritimenz.govt.nz or phone 0508 22 55 22.

Free subscription to Safe Seas Clean Seas and Lookout!
To subscribe or unsubscribe to these free quarterly publications, or to change your address details, email us at publications@maritimenz.govt.nz or phone 0508 22 55 22.

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Today, the light is a 50 watt rotating beacon, powered by batteries charged by solar panels. The lighthouse became fully automated in 1982 and the final keeper was withdrawn. As for the pigeons – these were later replaced with somewhat more reliable radio communications.

**CUvIEr ISLAnD LIghThoUSE AT A gLAnCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Location</strong></th>
<th>latitude 36°26' south, longitude 175°47' east</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elevation</strong></td>
<td>119 metres above sea level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction</strong></td>
<td>cast iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tower height</strong></td>
<td>15 metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Light configuration</strong></td>
<td>50 watt rotating beacon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Light flash character</strong></td>
<td>white light flashing once every 15 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power source</strong></td>
<td>batteries charged by solar panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Light range</strong></td>
<td>19 nautical miles (35 kilometres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date light first lit</strong></td>
<td>1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Automated</strong></td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demanned</strong></td>
<td>1982</td>
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</table>

Keeping the lights on – Cuvier Island

New Zealand’s most distant offshore lighthouse was also one of the toughest on keepers and their families, with its remote and steep location at the mouth of the Hauraki Gulf an ongoing challenge.
1. Have you heard about MNZ’s QOL Review?  
☐ yes  ☐ no
If yes, please go to question 2. If no, please go to question 8.

2. What is the aim of the QOL Review?  
Please tick as many boxes as apply:
☐ to ensure we have relevant qualifications that meet today’s industry needs  
☐ to streamline the current QOL framework so it is easier to understand and manage  
☐ to create flexible pathways to enter and move within the maritime industry  
☐ to help build a skilled and competent workforce

3. How did you find out about the QOL Review?  
Please tick as many boxes as apply:
☐ industry publication (please specify)  
☐ industry colleagues  
☐ interview by QOL Review project team member  
☐ other MNZ staff member (please specify)  
☐ briefing by MNZ  
☐ industry conference (please specify)  
☐ industry publication/article in magazine (please specify)  
☐ MNZ website  
☐ other (please specify)

4. What is your main source of information about the QOL Review?  
Please tick one box:
☐ industry colleagues  
☐ interview by QOL Review project team member  
☐ other MNZ staff member (please specify)  
☐ briefing by MNZ  
☐ industry conference (please specify)  
☐ industry publication/article in magazine (please specify)  
☐ MNZ website  
☐ other (please specify)

5. Have you read about the QOL Review in any of the following publications?  
Please tick as many boxes as apply:
☐ Safe Seas Clean Seas  
☐ Seafood New Zealand  
☐ Professional Skipper  
☐ other industry publication (please specify)

6. Have you visited the QOL Review web pages on MNZ’s website?  
☐ yes  ☐ no

7. Have you read the QOL Review fact sheet or the quick guide to the QOL Review?  
☐ yes, I have read both  ☐ no

8. Would you like to receive future information about the QOL Review?  
☐ yes  ☐ no

9. Which part of the maritime sector do you work in?  
☐ adventure tourism  
☐ aquaculture  
☐ fishing  
☐ government/local government  
☐ media  
☐ shipping  
☐ training  
☐ other (please specify)

10. What is your role in the maritime community?  
☐ shore-based business owner  
☐ shore-based employee  
☐ vessel owner/operator  
☐ vessel employee  
☐ skipper  
☐ crew  
☐ engineer  
☐ educator/examiner  
☐ other (please specify)

11. Which region are you based in?  
☐ Northland  
☐ Auckland  
☐ Waikato  
☐ Bay of Plenty  
☐ East Coast  
☐ Hawke’s Bay  
☐ Taranaki  
☐ Manawatu-Wanganui  
☐ Wellington  
☐ Nelson  
☐ Marlborough  
☐ West Coast  
☐ Canterbury  
☐ Otago  
☐ Southland

Your contact details  
Please provide your contact details for prize delivery (if you are the winner) and for QOL Review updates (if you answered yes to question 8):
Name: ___________________________ Phone (day time): ___________________________
Email: ___________________________
Delivery address: ___________________________

To return this quiz and go in the draw:  
please detach, fold, seal and mail freepost to Maritime New Zealand (address overleaf).

Terms and conditions  
There is one pair of offshore binoculars to be won. All entries must accompany a completed survey. Only original surveys will be accepted. The prize winner will be drawn at random and under supervision. All entries must be received no later than 31 January 2010. The prize draw supervisor’s decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The winner will be notified by telephone or in writing using the details on the entry form. If the winner cannot be contacted after reasonable attempts by MNZ, their prize will be forfeited and another winner will be drawn. The prize is not transferable or redeemable for cash or another item. MNZ employees and their immediate families are not eligible to enter into the prize draw.

* Waterproof, 7 x 50mm offshore binoculars with fog-free manual focus – case and lanyard included.

New MNZ website now features an alternative home page for our website, which is activated in the event of a major maritime incident.

From 1 January to 30 September 2009