



What If ??? ... Savvy Solutions for Sailing Snafus

The April meeting topic of "*What If ... ??? Savvy Solutions for Sailing Snafus*" garnered a lot of great discussion from our five breakout groups. Each group was given the same five problematic situations in which they were to come up with solutions. The following is the scenario, along with all five of the distress situations presented at the meeting and the solutions (in no particular order) our members came up with.

The Background Information:

You are on a 34' sailboat and are familiar with the location and function of all of the equipment aboard. The boat is properly equipped with all required safety equipment, a basic tool kit and everything is functioning properly. In addition to yourself, there is one other individual on board and they have a basic understanding of boat operations.

1. What If ... Painter Meets Prop?

You are motoring, with the sails doused, in a crowded anchorage. As you are preparing to set anchor, the painter on the dinghy you are towing gets fouled in the propeller and stalls the engine.

Immediate Actions:

- Drop anchor
- Put the boat in neutral
- Turn off engine
- Alert your neighbors you're disabled
- Cut dinghy loose
- Call out for help, from those around you
- Put fenders out (call out for nearby boats to do the same)
- Side-tie to a set boat
- Use dinghy to control sailboat/pull into mooring
- Alert the other boats in area with five horn blasts
- Have your boat hook ready

- Call Harbor Master

Long-term Solutions:

- Spotter on boat
- Add floats to lines
- Check for damage
- Pull dinghy close to the boat when coming into anchorage
- Snorkel, mask and knife to dive below boat, may need to cut loose from prop
- Make sure the painter is stored properly
- Reset anchor
- Check for vibrations

2. What If ... Lost Steerage?

After a day of sailing you are motoring through the marina, on your way back to the slip, with sails doused when you suddenly lose steering.

Immediate Actions:

- Slow the boat by putting in neutral
- Use emergency tiller
- Hail everyone nearby
- Raise sails – heave to
- Raise sails – sail out of harbor or into slip
- Fenders out
- Drop anchor at the stern to stop forward motion
- Drop anchor
- Call Harbor Patrol/channel 16

Long-term Solutions:

- Figure out what caused you to lose steerage
- Call mechanic
- Watch for play in tiller
- Monitor
- Perform regular maintenance/checks on boat

3. What If ... Fire on Board

You are enjoying a relaxing day offshore on a day sail when you smell smoke and notice that it is coming from below. Upon investigation, you discover a fire in the engine compartment.

Immediate Actions:

- Yell “Fire!”
- Grab fire extinguisher (only use if fire is not electrical)

- Call for help via channel 16 “Mayday”
 - How many people aboard
 - Latitude and longitude
 - Vessel name
 - Inform immediacy of the situation
- Turn off all power and electrical
- Don PFD’s
- Prepare to abandon ship
- Grab ditch bag
- Drop life raft
- Direct boat into the wind
- Smother fire (especially if electrical)
- Close ventilation
- If the engine is on, turn it off
- Send up flares
- If under sail, heave to
- Note your latitude and longitude
- Don’t open the engine compartment too soon, don’t want oxygen reigniting the fire

Long-term Solution:

- Make sure fire extinguishers are up-to-date and there are enough on board
- Have a fire and/or wool blanket on board
- Baking soda
- Create an emergency plan for your boat
- Check wiring and hoses monthly
- Maintain a maintenance list
- Check engine more frequently

4. What If ... Taking on Water

You are halfway across the channel headed toward Catalina Island. A crewmember ventures below and notices that you are slowly taking on water and that the automatic bilge pump does not seem to be working.

Immediate Actions:

- Use the hand bilge pump/begin manual pumping
- Slow yourself to see if you can determine how the water is coming in and adjust your speed accordingly
- Check the float switch
- Look for the source of the leak
- Check the through hulls
- Possible pan pan call
- If necessary, begin bailing

- Set sail to closest port
- Taste the water; determine if it's fresh or salt water
- Reset the breaker
- Turn off water pressure switch
- Prepare to evacuate
- Try to plug leak
- Don your PFD

Long-term solution:

- Continue on course, but radio ahead
- Maintain regular boat maintenance
- Check bilge pump before heading out
- Test bilge pump monthly
- Check the through hulls; manually check the fittings
- Carry an extra pump aboard

5. What If ... Boom!!!

You are offshore on a day sail and at the helm of the boat when, while performing a gybe, the most experienced crewmember is struck by the boom and knocked unconscious.

Immediate Actions:

- Heave to and tend to the injured person/perform first aid as needed
 - Assess severity of injury
 - Stabilize
 - Perform CPR, if necessary
- Lock wheel; turn to leeward
- Send a "Mayday" via channel 16 requesting medical assist
 - Latitude and longitude
 - Provide pertinent health information/current condition
- Secure the boom
- Drop anchor/sails
- Head to shore/closest harbor
- Start the engine

Long-term Solution:

- Install/use the [boom] preventer
- Have everyone in the cockpit when you gybe
- Wear helmets
- Basic first aid and radio training skills for all crew
- Ensure all crew knows how to use the radio
- Walk on the windward/high-side of the boat
- All crew know CPR
- Ensure they receive proper medical attention