

Preparing for an BYS Safety Audit

What to expect

A safety audit is an inspection conducted by an accredited National Equipment Auditor (NEA) who represents the BYS, which must be done prior to competing in any BYS club racing. It does not remove or replace the owner's ultimate responsibility for safety, nor does it cover crew training/experience or an assessment of hull structure, stability or integrity. The audit is simply an independent assessment that the owner has complied with Yachting Australia Special Regulations and it is valid until the end of June each year. For that reason the owner must self-audit prior to each race to ensure compliance.

The compliance requirements are set by Yachting Australia (YA) in the "Racing Rules of Sailing" (Blue Book), together with any updates available on the YA website.

While some requirements are "black and white", others require a degree of interpretation. In such cases, the national body (YA) sets policy and provides guidance to the auditors.

People frustrated by the need for, or interpretation of, a requirement should not take that out on the auditor. Auditors are volunteers and they do not set the rules. In the case of a dispute, there is a well-defined resolution process involving other auditors and BYS and ultimately owners may refer the matter to YA for an Interpretation, in accordance with SR 1.01.5.

The audit is ideally a one off inspection (renewed annually), taking about an hour and a half. More often than not, it includes a short "revisit" to verify resolution of a "short list" of items needing further work. The revisit should take no longer than 15mins. Any audit taking longer than an hour and a half, or requiring two or more revisits is indicative of poor preparation by the owner and may incur a fee.

Get Prepared!

Because preparation takes 2 to 3 times longer than you think! Firstly download the relevant audit form from the "Boat Safety Audits" section of the BYS web site. Work through the list yourself, with the "Racing Rules of Sailing" book beside you, and make your own list. Remember the Racing Rules of Sailing and Notice of Race takes precedence over any checklists BYS or other clubs might produce. You will end up with lists; things to check, things to buy, things to fix. It will take a couple of weeks to prepare the first time around and make sure the crew all help. One thing that does take time to get together is the medical kit, especially for longer races.

Requirements come in four main categories:

1. The actual boat
2. Stuff that typically lives on the boat
3. Stuff that lives in the shed(s)
4. Personal (crew owned) gear

Do your Self Audit!

Do your self-audit! By self-auditing your boat you'll work through your categories audit form to ensure that you have everything and that everything is in date. This also gives you a chance to fix or buy anything that you need or that has expired prior to your auditor coming. If you do your own audit first, you will soon realise any obvious shortcomings. If in doubt contact the BYS Sailing office who may be able to help clarify requirements.

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Today's the Day... It's Audit Day!

On the day of the audit, with at least one other crew member, lay out all the equipment in the boat, this will make your audit a lot faster and easier. The auditor will appreciate that.

Also listen, ask questions and get involved with the audit; it is a great chance to find better solutions for things as the auditors have seen lots of boats and various solutions to compliance problems. They are generally happy to help.

Please don't leave your audit till the last minute. Ideally a month before the first race is sufficient time. Unnecessary stress for boat owners and auditors, not to mention office staff who need to collate all your documentation can easily be avoided.

When an auditor checks, they are going to first want to know that you have it, secondly, know it's in service/it works and finally that you know how to use it. This is particularly the case for the more complex things like emergency steering.

A couple of tips:

- Proving something that is in service is much easier if you have with you copies of the service certificates.
- Personal (crew owned) gear and certificates are the hardest things to collect and keep in one place, you need all of the crew gear present for the audit.
- Take photos of more complex things like the emergency steering set up on the boat. This provides the added advantage of helping with crew training.
- Medical kits take weeks to collate, allowing for documentation a pharmacist may need time to order in items not normally kept in stock and tracking down some of the more obscure items. Laminate a summary of each kit along with expiry dates, ensure it is visible on the kit.
- Stuff needs to be on the boat for the audit, not in the locker or off getting serviced. This includes charts and liferafts if applicable (incl service certificates).
- Involve the crew, especially watch leads. It is not safe for only one person to know what and where each safety item is.
- Prepare for the audit by getting storm boards out, uncovering sea cocks, looking up fuel and water capacities, engine horsepower, ensure aerials are in place and radio is turned on, storm sails on deck ready to hoist if need be.

After your audit if your boat has satisfactorily met the safety requirements, the Auditor signs off the Equipment Audit form and submits it to the BYS Sailing office. You should be sent a copy of this form as well. If there are outstanding items on your boat that require attention, the auditor will not sign off on this unless they are completed. This will mean a revisit from the auditor to check these items off. This could delay documents reaching the office in time.