

Procedural Guidelines for Safety Officers

Version 5 dated 11 May 2022

BACKGROUND

The SAMSA Small Vessel Surveyor's Course covers the technical and legal aspects of safety inspections but does not cover the specifics of the SA Sailing systems and procedures. The purpose of this note is to help to close that gap.

The first section of this note covers safety inspections for Certificates of Fitness. We then go on to cover Hull Inspections.

SAFETY INSPECTIONS FOR CoF's

The Notification of Completion of Survey

The notification of completion of survey is completed in triplicate. Traditionally

1. The top copy (white copy) was given to the owner.
2. The second copy (yellow copy) was sent to SA Sailing.
3. The third copy (green copy) stayed in the book as a record for the safety officer.

However, some safety officers have found that the second copy does not scan well on their scanners. It is acceptable to use the top copy to scan to SA Sailing and give the second copy to the owner.

If there are no deficiencies, SAMSA have requested that we write NIL or NO DEFICIENCIES in that block on the notification of completion of survey. Please do not leave it blank.

It is acceptable to use the "Deficiencies" block for important comments. SAMSA themselves do this.

The Notification of Completion of Survey is a temporary CoF valid for one month. Please do not hand it to the owner until the owner has given you all the required documentation. The Certificate Administrators (CA's) at SA Sailing cannot issue the CoF until they have payment and all required documents. Unfortunately, many owners seem to be happy with the Notification of Completion of survey and do not respond to requests for the required documents. The owner is then able to claim he got a CoF although he has not met the requirements. Please hold back the Notification of Completion of Survey until you have all the required documents listed on the check sheet.

Safety Inspection Check Sheets

The SA Sailing safety inspection check sheets are available on the SA Sailing web site. SAMSA have insisted that the owner must complete the check sheets before the survey takes place. That is important for two reasons:

1. It encourages the owner to work through the safety requirements and understand them. He cannot just sit back and let the safety officer do the work.
2. It protects the safety officer and SA Sailing by placing the primary responsibility for the safety inspection on the owner. That protection could to some extent be undermined if the safety officer and the owner complete the check sheet together. The role of the safety officer is to do an audit of the comprehensive inspection done by the owner. The owner will know his boat much better than the safety officer.

When the owner phones to make an appointment for the safety inspection, please ensure that he understands that it is his responsibility to complete and sign the check sheet before you arrive to do the survey. Please also draw his attention to the document requirements specified on page 2 of the check sheets.

If you arrive at the boat for a survey and the owner has not completed the check sheet, you must walk away. Maybe go and have a cup of coffee while he completes the check sheet. We do not want to be difficult, but for our own protection we do need to work together to persuade our boat owners to do it right.

Certificates of Listing (CoL)

The NSVS Regulations require Authorised Agencies to issue approved markings which are traceable to the owner. SA Sailing does this by issuing a Certificate of Listing to the owner. The owner is requested to keep a copy on board.

Unfortunately, owners do not always notify SA Sailing when they sell a vessel, and the new owner does not always get the vessel listed in his name. We pick that up at the annual safety inspection. Obviously, SA Sailing cannot issue a CoF to a vessel that is not correctly listed in the owner's name. That would represent a failure of our obligation to provide a traceable marking. There are several ways you can check:

1. You can go online as a Safety Officer and click on hull inspections. When you enter the approved marking the system will give you the name of the listed owner.
2. You can ask to see the CoL. The owner should have a copy on board.
3. You can ask to see the previous CoF. If the previous CoF was issued to the current owner, the vessel must have been listed in his name. The name of the owner that is printed on the CoF comes from the CoL table.

The SA Sailing certificate administrators will not issue a CoF for a listed vessel unless the vessel is listed in the name of the current owner.

Photographs

To help pick up any structural changes which could affect the stability or buoyancy or watertight integrity of the vessel, SAMSA have asked us to take a photograph of the vessel as part of the survey.

However, having a photograph of the vessel on file in the SA Sailing Office does not help the safety officer pick up structural changes. To help the safety officer, we now print the photograph on the CoF. For all new CoL's we insist on a photograph which goes on the CoL. If there is a photograph of the vessel on the CoL or the previous CoF, there is no need for the safety officer to take another photograph unless there have been structural changes.

The SA Sailing certificate administrators have been instructed not to issue a CoL or CoF without a photograph.

EPIRB registrations

Historically, we had endless problems with EPIRB registrations. No matter how well we communicated the Gulliver story (see Appendix 1), the audits we conducted through SAMSA's Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) in Cape Town indicated that some of our category A vessels had not registered their EPIRB's.

Eventually, Gustav Louw (SAMSA Regional Manager WC) solved the problem for us. He put out a blanket instruction insisting that a copy of the EPIRB registration certificate must be submitted with the paperwork for all category A vessel safety inspections. To assist safety officers, the requirement to bring a copy of the EPIRB registration form for the safety officer is now included in the check sheet.

The SA Sailing certificate administrators have been instructed not issue a category A CoF unless they have a copy of the EPIRB registration certificate.

Marine Notice 20 of 2021 requires all South African vessels with EPIRB's to register them with SAMSA's MRCC in Cape Town. All these vessels will have a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number beginning with the South African code 601. However, we have an increasing number of foreign registered vessels which are based in South Africa on a more permanent basis and are listed with SA Sailing. These vessels will have an MMSI number which starts with a 3-digit code allocated to their flag state. EPIRBs programmed with foreign MMSI numbers must register their EPIRB's in their flag state.

When an EPIRB distress alert is activated, the transmission will include the hexadecimal code inscribed on the EPIRB. The rescue authorities will decode that and extract the MMSI number. The country code in that MMSI number determines the flag state of the vessel. They will then approach the rescue authorities in that flag state to look up the registration details of that EPIRB. Hence, if an EPIRB has been programmed with a foreign MMSI number, the EPIRB must be registered with the rescue authorities in that flag state.

Float Free EPIRBs

SAMSA have given us a verbal dispensation stating that EPIRB's on sailing vessels do not have to be float free. They have promised to follow up with a marine notice confirming this. We have no such dispensation for power vessels. Power vessels have to conform to the EPIRB requirements in the National Small Vessel Safety Regulations. So category A power vessels require a float free EPIRB (i.e. with a hydrostatic release unit) installed in a position where it can float free if the vessel sinks.

Passenger vessels.

The SOLAS convention defines a passenger vessel as any vessel that carries more than 12 passengers. That definition has trickled down to the South African Merchant Shipping Act and the NSVS Regulations. SA Sailing is not authorised to survey passenger vessels.

On a commercial vessel, the distinction between a passenger and a member of crew is quite clear. But on recreational vessels it is not always that clear. It becomes clearer if one understands the history and the purpose behind the regulation.

The first SOLAS convention arose in response to the Titanic tragedy. Although the officers on the Titanic knew that there were not enough lifeboats, the first few lifeboats pulled away half full. That was a result of the chaos on deck. The regulators recognised that there was a huge difference between a distress situation on a cargo vessel – where every member of the crew has been trained to handle emergency situations – and a passenger vessel – where a small complement of crew have to deal simultaneously with the emergency situation and a large number of distressed passengers. So the drafters of the first SOLAS convention defined a passenger vessel as a vessel carrying more than 12 passengers, and added special requirements for passenger vessels.

It would therefore seem prudent for the skipper to consider an experienced sailor as a member of his crew. He knows something about sailing, and has listened to many safety briefings. In a distress situation, the skipper could ask him to launch the lifeboat or make a VHF distress call or close all the seacocks with a reasonable chance of success. A passenger is someone without that knowledge. He is a burden to the skipper in a distress situation. Having more than 12 of them on board in a distress situation becomes a huge problem.

For the safety officer, this only becomes an issue when the owner requests a CoF with more than 12 persons on board. You then have two responsibilities:

1. You should make sure that the owner is aware of the 12-passenger limitation and the reasoning behind it. To help you, it is one of the blocks on the check sheet that the owner is required to tick.
2. You should not issue a CoF where it is blatantly obvious that the vessel will be used as a passenger vessel. If you issue a CoF for a cat for 30 persons, you could be accused of doing just that. For a cat or a power boat, we have set a limit of 18 persons. That limit is there to protect you and SA Sailing. Beyond that, the owner must go to SAMSA. For a monohull, you need to use your judgement. Large racing monohulls can have large racing crews. There is no need to impinge on legitimate activity.

Foreign registered vessels (Marine Notice 15 of 2018)

Foreign vessels passing through South African waters have “the right of innocent passage”. That includes coming into nominated entry ports for supplies or repairs. It does not include going out for day sailing or joining in local race events. To do that, they require a CoF.

Marine Notice 15 of 2018 authorises SA Sailing to issue 6-month CoF's to visiting foreign registered vessels. Obviously, they are not required to get a SA Sailing listing with its SA or ZA marking. SA Sailing is required to file a copy of the foreign registration certificate. To assist safety officers, this requirement is included in the owner's check sheet. Please ensure that unlisted foreign registered vessels are genuinely visiting vessels which will be in SA for less than 6 months. If the vessels have been here for longer than 6 months they must get listed.

SA Sailing certificate administrators have been instructed not to issue a CoF for an unlisted visiting foreign registered vessel unless they have a copy of the registration certificate. Please make sure this is part of the pack of documents you submit.

Foreign registered vessels which stay in SA for longer than 6 months are subject to the full requirements of the National Small Vessel Safety Regulations. They must be listed¹ and marked. They may keep any markings required by their foreign registration, but they must also be marked with an SA or ZA number. Retaining their foreign marking allows them to go foreign without the bureaucratic hurdles associated with SA registered vessels cruising in foreign waters. But in SA they are treated like any other vessel listed by SA Sailing. They require a hull inspection and get a 12-month CoF like any other listed vessel.

Vessels registered by SAMSA on the SA register

Vessels registered by SAMSA on the SA register require a Local General Safety Certificate (LGSC) instead of a CoF. SA Sailing is not allowed to issue a CoF for a SAMSA registered vessel – SAMSA regard that as a serious offence. An LGSC can only be issued by SAMSA. On a SAMSA registered vessel, the safety inspection or the hull inspection may only be carried out by a SAMSA Small Vessel Surveyor. A few SA Sailing Safety Officers have been appointed as SAMSA Small Vessel Surveyors.

Unless you have been appointed as a SAMSA Small Vessel Surveyor, please do not do a safety inspection or a hull inspection on a SAMSA registered vessel. How do you know if the vessel is registered in SA?

1. The owner should declare it on page 2 of the safety inspection check sheet.
2. You need to ask the owner if the vessel is registered in order to fill in the SA registration number (O/N number) on the notification of completion of survey.
3. The vessel should have a plaque prominently displayed on a bulkhead or some other prominent position inside the vessel.
4. Vessels registered more recently will have the O/N number and the port of registration inscribed on the transom.

Vessels from another Authorised Agency

In extremis, SA Sailing may survey a recreational vessel from another agency if there is no safety officer from that agency in the region. The example quoted by SAMSA was a situation where Joe Bloggs went on his annual holiday towing his boat, but his holiday was ruined because there was nobody available in that region from his Authorised Agency to inspect his boat. SAMSA expect us to help in these circumstances

Please be very careful with these.

1. Any vessel not listed by SA Sailing gets the SAMSA price. You will remember that also applies to visiting foreign registered vessels not listed by SA Sailing.
2. You need to submit a copy of the previous CoF. That is our proof that the vessel has a traceable marking from another agency.
3. Please be very pedantic about requirements. Folk sometimes go to other safety officers or Authorised Agencies to see if they can get away with something.

Proof of payment

We require proof of payment to be submitted together with the other safety inspection documents. At any one time, there are very many unreconciled items on the SA Sailing's bank statement. Without proof of payment, identifying payments is difficult or impossible.

¹ Listing with SA Sailing is not a registration. The CoL is just our way of issuing a traceable approved marking as required by the National Small Vessel Safety Regulations for vessels operating in SA. The vessel's flag state remains the state in which it was registered. On the high seas it will be subject to the laws of its flag state.

Furthermore, we have now had two vessels which ran aground and were wrecked with notifications of completion of survey which had expired. In both cases, SA Sailing had not issued the CoF because the owner failed to pay. Generally, insurance will not pay if the vessel does not have a valid CoF. This is bad for SA Sailing's image opposite SAMSA and a disaster for the owner

Life Rafts

Some yachties are not aware that you may not sail at night without a liferaft (unless the yacht has a buoyancy certificate – but because of the heavy keel, very few keelboats would qualify for a buoyancy certificate). That requirement is spelt out on the check sheet.

We do not wish to limit a vessel to day sailing on their CoF because they did not have a life raft at the time of the safety inspection. That way, the owner has the option of borrowing a life raft for an overnight passage or race without having to redo his CoF. We do not want to burden the recreational sailing community with yet more bureaucracy.

There is no requirement to send SA Sailing a copy of the liferaft inspection sheet. But you are entitled to inspect it to check that the liferaft is in service.

Buoyancy certificates

Power vessels require a liferaft or a buoyancy certificate. SAMSA requires a copy of the buoyancy certificate to be submitted with the safety inspection papers.

If the vessel has a liferaft, please state that on the notification of completion of survey. The SA Sailing certificate administrators will not process a CoF for a power vessel unless the buoyancy certificate is attached or the notification of completion of survey states that the vessel has a liferaft.

On vessels that require a liferaft (e.g. power boats without a buoyancy certificate or category A vessels) please make a note on the Notification of Completion of Survey that the vessel has a liferaft.

Hull inspections

For a water borne vessel (where the safety inspection is not done with the vessel on a trailer) SA Sailing will no longer issue a Certificate of Fitness to a vessel that does not have a valid hull inspection certificate. There is however no requirement for a hull inspection certificate on a vessel where the safety inspection is conducted with the vessel on a trailer. If the vessel is on a trailer, the inspection of the hull is part of the safety inspection, and the owner does not have to pay for a hull inspection. However, if owners want a hull inspection certificate, they must complete the hull inspection process in full including paying for a hull inspection and completing the hull inspection check sheet.

If the safety inspection is done with the vessel on a trailer, please state that on the Notification of Completion of Survey, so that the certificate administrator knows that a Hull Inspection Certificate is not required.

The 100 GT limit

SA Sailing is only authorised to inspect vessels up to 100GT (Gross Tonnes). GT is not displacement. It has nothing to do with the weight of the vessel. It depends only on the enclosed volume and is calculated from a formula given in the 1969 International Convention on Gross Tonnage:

$$GT = k \times V$$

Where V is the enclosed volume in cubic meters

$$k = 0.20 + 0.20 \times \log_{10}(V)$$

Clearly this is not a calculation you can do in your head. To help us, SAMSA have stated that any vessel <24m LOA may be considered to be <100GT. We can only survey vessels >24m if we have a certificate from a naval architect proving that the gross tonnage is less than 100GT.

SA Sailing will no longer list a vessel over 24m unless we have a certificate from a naval architect. But we still have one or two vessels in the system over 24m without certificates from naval architects, and you might be asked to do a CoF for a foreign registered vessel that is not listed.

Please do not do a safety inspection for a vessel over 24m unless the owner provides you with a copy of a certificate proving that the vessel is <100GT. The SA Sailing certificate administrators have been instructed not to issue a CoF for a vessel over 24m unless they have a copy of a certificate proving that it is less than 100GT.

Ship Station (radio) licence

All vessels with radios are required to have a ship station licence from ICASA on board.

However, ICASA are often behind with their paperwork, in which case the owner should have the previous year's ship station license on board.

If the owner does not have the ship station license on board, you can still give him the notification of completion of survey. However, to clear yourself, please note it as a minor deficiency. That places the obligation on the owner to rectify the situation.

You might want to suggest to the owner that he gets a 5-year ship station license. It does involve paying for 5 years up front but eliminates a lot of paperwork and frustration.

Covid-19

During the pandemic, SAMSA have required the owner to submit a Covid-19 safety declaration for a CoF safety inspection. They require that declaration to be submitted with the safety inspection and filed with the safety inspection documentation. Hopefully that requirement will fall away soon. There is no requirement for a Covid declaration for a hull inspection

Supporting documentation

We have a problem with supporting documentation. If all the paperwork is present and correct, it takes a few minutes to process a CoF. But it takes a great deal of time if the paperwork is not correct. The SA Sailing certificate administrators are not authorised to issue a CoF unless the supporting paperwork is correct – that would be a serious audit non-conformity. So they have to contact the owner asking for the additional paperwork. Some owners do not respond to that request. It would appear that all some owners want is the notification of completion of survey.

There is an additional problem here. The SA Sailing notification of completion of survey is an interim CoF for one month. Handing out a CoF – even if it is an interim CoF – without essential documentation such as an EPIRB registration certificate – is in itself an audit nonconformity. SAMSA would argue that we should not have given the owner a CoF – even if it is just an interim CoF – if critical paperwork is missing. We have now had two vessels that ran aground and were wrecked with notifications of completion of survey which had long expired. SA Sailing had not issued a CoF because the owner had failed to pay. The subsequent SAMSA and insurance investigations reflect very poorly on SA Sailing – we should not have handed over a Notification of Completion of Survey (temporary COF) if the documentation is incomplete.

Please do not allow the owner to make it your problem or SA Sailing's problem. Make it the owner's problem to get all the documentation including the proof of payment to you BEFORE you give him the notification of completion of survey. These days with scanners and email it should be a lot easier. If the documentation is incomplete, please do not hand over the Notification of Completion of Survey to the owner until you have all the supporting documentation.

From version 2.2 (issued May 2018) the safety inspection check sheets have listed the documentation required in a way that is unambiguous. When the owner makes the appointment for the safety inspection, please draw his attention to:

1. the requirement to complete the safety inspection check sheet before the inspection
2. the requirement to have available the supporting documentation listed on page 2 of the safety inspection check sheet.

For your convenience, you might choose to ask the owner to email copies of the required documents in advance.

SA Sailing is required to file the supporting documentation for 3 years. SAMSA audit the supporting documentation during their annual audits.

HULL INSPECTIONS

Hull inspections are required for all water borne vessels. For vessels which are trailer borne the inspection of the hull is considered to be part of the CoF safety inspection.

Hull inspections must be conducted with the boat out of the water. An inspection by a diver is not accepted. The Hull Inspection form is on the SAS web site. Just like a safety inspection for a CoF, the owner is required to complete the form and sign it before the safety officer conducts the hull inspection. Please do not proceed with the hull inspection unless the owner has provided proof of payment and has signed the hull inspection form.

No Covid declarations are required for hull inspections. These inspections are conducted outside in fresh air and social distancing is easily observed.

Hull inspections should be uploaded directly into the Quartex system.

A CATCH-22 SITUATION

It sometimes happens that a vessel without a current CoF or Hull Inspection Certificate is too large to be lifted out of the water for a hull inspection at the marina where it is moored. Without a current CoF it cannot legally sail to the nearest location where it can be lifted out of the water. And without a current Hull Inspection Certificate SA Sailing cannot give it a CoF. We have a catch 22 situation.

Under these circumstances, SA Sailing will consider issuing a temporary CoF, subject to the following conditions:

1. The owner must arrange for a diver to conduct a hull inspection in the water which is to the satisfaction of the safety officer
2. The owner must pay for a safety inspection which will be conducted by the safety officer in the normal way.

Provided these inspections are to the satisfaction of the safety officer, he will sign a notification of completion of survey for a temporary CoF with a validity date which gives the owner sufficient time to sail the vessel to a facility where a satisfactory lift exists. Once the vessel has a hull inspection certificate, SA Sailing will issue a CoF with a life of 12 months from the date of the safety inspection by the safety officer.

The owner must motivate the request for this dispensation in writing to SA Sailing. If approved, the safety officer then becomes responsible for managing the certification arrangements to his satisfaction. On the Notification of Completion of Survey, the safety officer must draw attention to the expiry date of the temporary CoF in order to ensure that the certificate administrator does not issue a 12-month CoF instead of a temporary CoF with an appropriate expiry date.

SUBMITTING PAPERWORK

To minimise the transmission of Covid-19 infections, please submit your documents to SA Sailing electronically.

CoF safety inspections should be submitted by email. To avoid confusion there should be a single email for each safety inspection with all the required documents attached.

Hull inspection reports should be submitted via the Quartex computer system.

In 2022 we will be introducing a new computer Certificate System which will be very much more user friendly and will have checks and balances in place to make it easier for owners and safety officers. For example, owners will not be able to apply for a CoF or a HIC unless the vessel is listed in the name of the owner.

CHECKING ON A VESSEL IN QUARTEX.

A CoF for a vessel surveyed in the water will not go through if the vessel does not have a hull inspection certificate. Nor will it go through if the vessel is not listed in the name of the owner. You can go online to the Quartex system and check:

1. Does the vessel have a hull inspection certificate
2. Who is the listed owner of the vessel.

SA SAILING OFFSHORE COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 1: GULLIVER

On 15 June 2011, the 44 ft. catamaran Gulliver was sailing from Port Owen to Knysna. The skipper was hoping to reach the shelter of Mossel Bay before the arrival of a cold front. At around 1330 Gulliver capsized in a violent gust about 12 nm offshore in the vicinity of Cape Infanta.

One of the crew managed to swim down to recover the EPIRB and set it off. The owner had included the EPIRB on his ship station licence, but was not aware of the additional requirement to register the EPIRB with the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) in Cape Town. SA Sailing had given the vessel a CoF, but had failed to check that the EPIRB was registered with the MRCC. So the MRCC had no information on the vessel and was unable to contact anyone to verify any details. Because the vast majority of EPIRB alarms are false alarms, the probability was that this was yet another false alarm and the NSRI was not activated.

However, the skipper's wife became alarmed when her routine cell phone calls to the vessel went unanswered, and because of her persistence the probable link between Gulliver and the unidentified EPIRB alarm was eventually recognised. By the time the NSRI crew at Witsand was activated to launch their 5.5m rescue craft it was dark with wind gusting up to 60 knots.

At about 2300 the NSRI finally located the upturned hull of Gulliver and took the skipper and crew on board. It took another two hours for the overloaded rescue craft to battle back through huge seas. The skipper and crew were taken to hospital for treatment for hypothermia. It had been a close call. The crew of the NSRI rescue boat were given an IMO award for bravery.