

Swamping and/or capsizing of a day boat, cutter etc.

1999

Issue

Various swampings and capsizes have occurred from 1998 to February 1999. One of these resulted in a fatality, another in a sinking at sea. The circumstances leading to each incident are different but the message is clear. Some designs of boats are inherently more stable than others but ALL boats have the potential to swamp and/or capsize and/or invert and/or sink. Moreover some boats which were described as self-righting didn't self-right!

Outcome

1. Perhaps the only reliable way of knowing what will happen to your boat is to try it under controlled conditions. Care should be taken not to damage the boat in the attempt though.
2. In an inverted position check if there is anything for survivors to:
 - a. hold onto, or should some form of rope hand-line or grab rope be fitted?;
 - b. get caught on. If so should it be removed?
3. Good practice suggests you should always brief participants as to what action they should take, even if it is unlikely that the boat will capsize.

To be most effective scenario based training should not be talking shops but practical exercises. Moreover, they should try to recreate the whole incident and atmosphere. This will commonly involve a degree of confusion, some failings of participants to do what they have been told, someone well-meaning but technically not competent, trying to take control and doing the wrong things, etc. It may involve some first aid, some group management skills, an understanding of the emergency procedures, etc. If badly conducted, the exercise can become a farce, or worse, can be dangerous. If conducted well, it can give an unprecedented insight into the nature of the problem as well as suggesting other possible solutions.