

Rescue Boat help to Capsized Catamarans

All small catamarans are liable to capsize. There are two possibilities: either the boat will lie on its side (90° capsize) or it will invert (180° capsize). Most modern catamarans have positive mast buoyancy to make them lie on their sides in the water, but a full inversion is always a possibility.

NB if a boat receives help from an outside source they may be disqualified from the race. Therefore before offering physical help to a capsized craft, ask the skipper if they require your help.

90° CAPSIZE AND RECOVERY

- 1 Since catamarans float high on their sides with a tremendous amount of windage, it is important that you keep to windward or to the side to avoid the wind suddenly blowing your vessel onto the catamaran.
2. A skipper should stand on the bow of the hull in the water to swing the mast around to point up into the wind. (this is so when the boat is pulled up the wind can get under the sail as it comes out of the water and help to right it)
3. Make sure before a skipper goes to right his boat that the spinnaker sail is packed away (if they were using one) and that the main sail, jib sail and traveller on the back beam are not cleated on. (this will allow water to spill from the sails as the boat is righted)
4. The skipper and his crew, if any, should have a length of line tied on to the top hull (or the hull out of the water), and will proceed to pull on this line to lift the mast out of the water. If they don't have such a rope or the one they have is too short, you may have to assist in offering a line if you have one onboard.
5. As the boat comes up, keep clear as some times a boat may flip over on it's opposite side as it comes up. This may occur if the sails are still cleated on or one of the sail lines gets caught as the boat comes up. If this happens repeatedly make sure the skipper and crew are holding on to the bottom of the boat somewhere as it comes up so their weight stops it from blowing over again.
6. If the skipper and crew are exhausted and/or cold their energy level may be low. If this is the case they may need assistance. You can help, either by having one your own crew get into the water to help pull the boat up or aid by going the top of the mast, which will be submerged just below the water, and pulling it up above the surface.

WARNING – this may be only possible if safe to do so. I.e. if a big swell is present or your vessel has strong windage tendencies, you must avoid having your vessel pushed onto the mast and sail of the catamaran by a wave or strong wind gusts. It may be possible to tie a length of rope to the top of the mast and hand lift it, so it can break the water surface. If all else fails have the skipper “lower” their mainsail from the mast and roll it up. Then try righting the boat. In this case the boat will need to be towed ashore.

180° CAPSIZE AND RECOVERY

A fully inverted capsize is not a problem with modern catamarans which have positive mast buoyancy.

- 1 Once the boat is totally inverted the skipper and crew will climb onto the underside of the trampoline.
- 2 They must make sure a spinnaker sail is packed away and that the jib sheet, and mainsheet and traveller line are released.
- 3 The skipper and crew will decide which hull is closest to the wind and position themselves on the downwind hull near the stern with the righting line coming from the front of the windward hull. (So the line runs diagonally from front corner to back corner of the opposite hull)
- 4 The skipper and crew will lean back to raise the windward hull at the bow and move the mast into a position where it wants to float to the surface.
- 5 As the hull becomes 'unstuck' it will quickly allow the mast to float to the surface and the skipper and crew will need to move their weight forward to stop the bow rising.
- 6 Once the boat is on its side, follow the procedure for a 90 capsize.
7. If a mast that is not sealed, fills with water, it may be hard for the skipper and/or crew to pull the catamaran onto its side. If this happens you can assist by tying a tow line to the front of the windward hull and VERY GENTLY with low throttled, pull on a diagonal across the boat to flip the mast up and the boat onto its side.

Mistakes made by skippers trying to right a catamaran

Not turning the boat so the mast points into the wind

Not releasing all the control lines

Not leaning out fully to right the boat

The crew does not hold on to the lower hull as the boat comes upright