Rescue and Fast Rescue Boat – Launch and Operations — study guide

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A rescue boat is the ship's fastest answer to a person in the water — but launching and recovering it is one of the most dangerous things the crew does. This guide covers the boat, the launch and the training.[1][2]

The boat and its equipment

The maximum length of a rescue boat is **8.5 metres**. A rescue boat **can** be a boat that is already on board the ship. Life-Saving Appliances kept on board rescue boats include thermal protective aids for any casualties, portable fire-extinguishing equipment, first-aid kits and buoyant lines. The LSA that should be checked **annually** include davits, release mechanisms and clutches.

Why a rescue boat is launched

A rescue boat might be launched to pick up survivors from an abandonment and transfer them to a suitable survival craft; to aid the search, rescue and recovery of a casualty falling overboard from a ship or an aircraft; or to transfer a sick person from ship to ship for better medical facilities.

Drills and command

As per SOLAS, a rescue boat must be launched and manoeuvred in the water **every three months**. During an emergency the efficient recovery or assistance of a casualty is important, but the **safety** of the ship's crew is equally vital, especially during launch and **recovery** — which is why regular drills are performed to increase the **competency** of the rescue boat crew. The **Master** is in overall command of a rescue operation.

Communication and hazards

Secondary means of communication during a rescue are buoyant smoke and flares. During inclement weather there is a higher risk when reconnecting a rescue boat to the ship, because the fall blocks are swinging around at the head height of the crew and because the movement of the ship and boat can affect the crew's ability to recover the boat.

Training

To work on a fast rescue boat, the required training is STCW Proficiency in Fast Rescue Boats and STCW Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats.

Key facts to remember

- Rescue boat ≤ 8.5 m; it can be a boat already on board.
- On board: thermal protective aids, portable fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, buoyant

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lines.

- Annual LSA checks: davits, release mechanisms, clutches.
- Launch reasons: pick up survivors, search/rescue/recover a person overboard, transfer a sick person.
- SOLAS: launch and manoeuvre every three months. Master has overall command.
- Secondary communication: buoyant smoke, flares.
- Reconnecting in bad weather: swinging fall blocks at head height, ship/boat movement.
- Training: STCW Proficiency in Fast Rescue Boats; STCW PSCRB.

Sources

1. SOLAS Chapter III and the LSA Code — rescue boat construction, equipment, launch and davit requirements.
2. STCW Convention and Code — proficiency in survival craft and rescue boats, and in fast rescue boats.