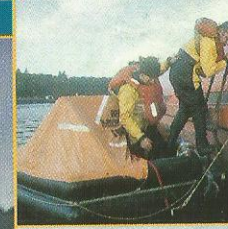
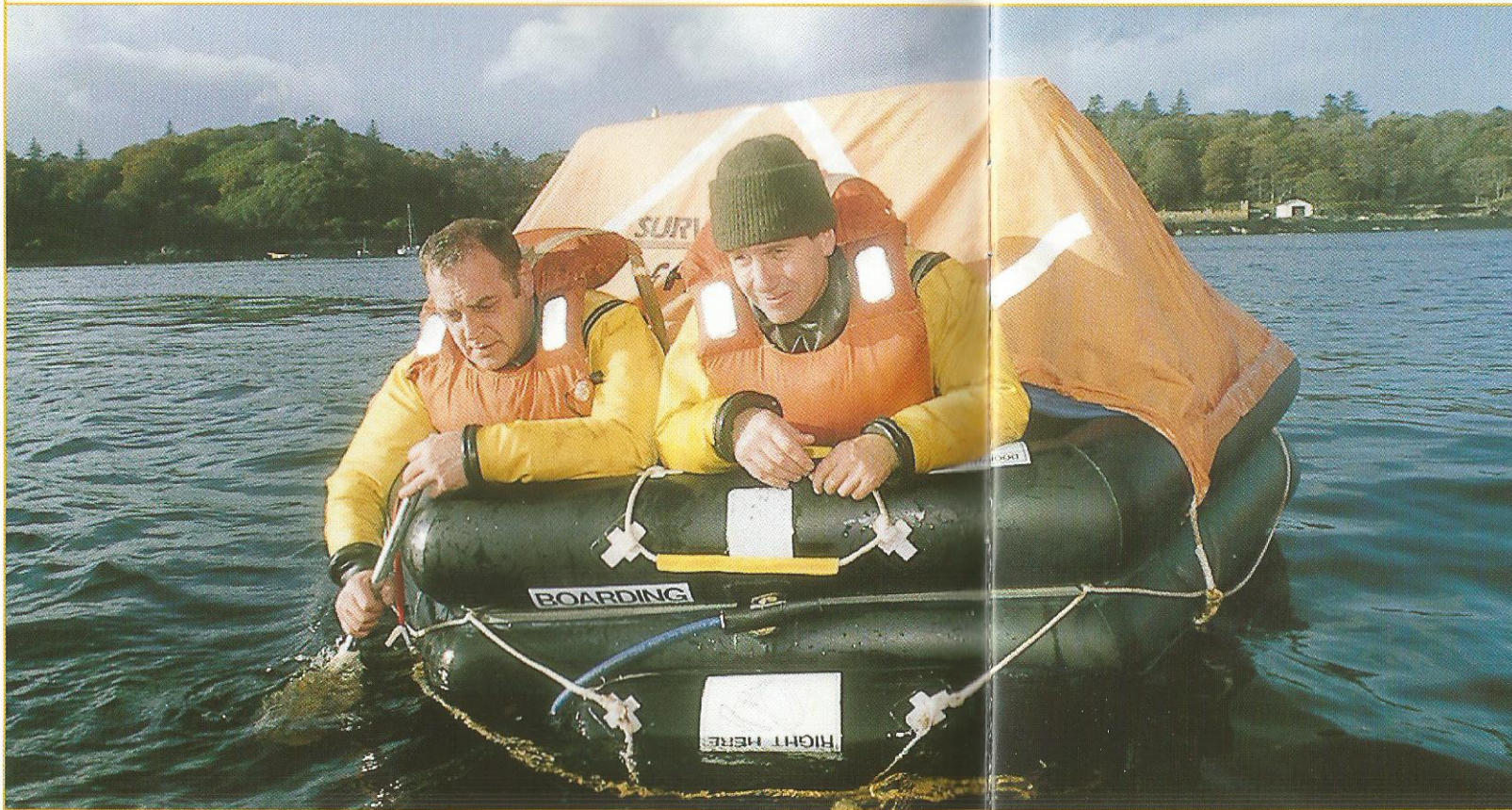


Personal Survival at Sea

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency



Maritime and Coastguard Agency



PERSONAL SURVIVAL AT SEA

FOREWORD

If you ever have to abandon ship your life will be threatened by a variety of dangers. This booklet provides a simple, basic guide to personal survival. It contains only the absolute minimum of information, outlining dangers you may encounter and providing guidance on how to overcome them.

The most common cause of death after shipwreck is hypothermia and drowning - usually because people get too cold to help themselves. Even after boarding a survival craft you could die of cold if you have not taken the necessary precautions. The epic survival voyages which attract so much publicity have nearly all occurred in tropical waters. Survival at sea for even a short period is dependent on adequate preparation and knowledge of survival techniques. Different ships have different types of survival equipment.

Do you know which types are on your ship, where they are, and how to use them?

If not, find out!

You are not a survivor until you have been rescued.

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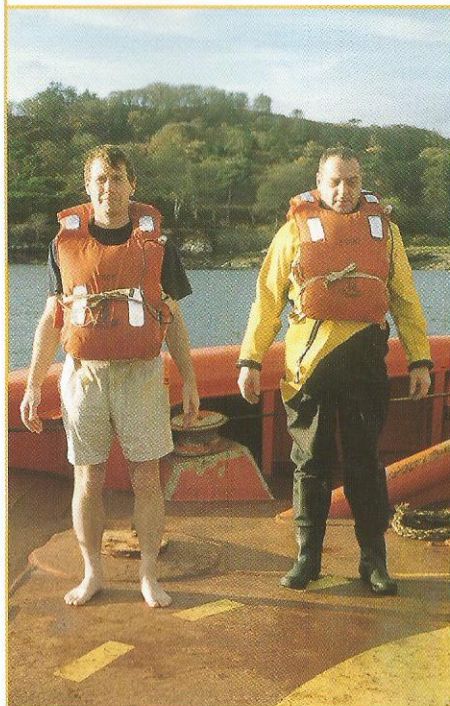
INITIAL ACTION ON HEARING GENERAL EMERGENCY ALARM SIGNAL

Signal: sounding of alarms, and seven or more short blasts followed by a long blast on ship's whistle.

- 1 Put on plenty of warm clothing. Woolly clothing is best; as many layers as possible with an anorak or oilskin as the outer layer. If available, put on an immersion suit. Remember that some immersion suits are not insulated and it is essential that warm clothing is worn before putting on the suit.**

If it should be necessary to enter the water on abandoning the ship, the initial 'cold shock' may prove disabling, or even fatal. Extra clothing will markedly reduce this shock effect, while an immersion suit could prevent it entirely.

The extra clothing or immersion suit will prolong your survival time by reducing loss of body heat. It will not weigh you down, the opposite is true:



when you enter the water the air trapped between the extra layers of clothing will help your lifejacket in keeping you afloat.

Even if you do board the survival craft without getting wet the extra clothing or immersion suit may well help to save your life while awaiting rescue. COLD, not lack of food and water, is the great killer.

Don't panic. Don't waste time after the alarms have sounded. Final adjustments to clothing and lifejacket may be made on the way to the muster station or after arrival there.

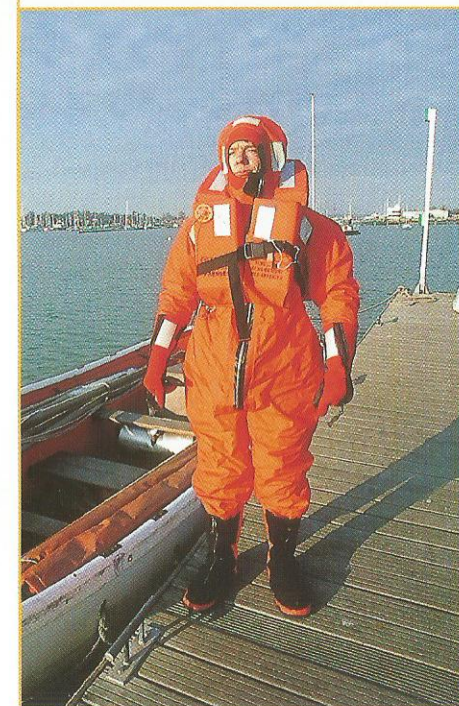
- 2 Put on your lifejacket. Follow donning instructions.**

Without a lifejacket even good swimmers will have difficulty staying afloat in cold water because of the disabling effects of cold, shock and cramp. A lifejacket will keep you afloat without effort or swimming no matter how much clothing is worn. If unconscious a lifejacket will keep your mouth clear of water.

If your ship does not have totally enclosed lifeboats take your Thermal Protective Aid (TPA) with you to the survival craft. These may be stowed in a boat deck locker or in the lifeboat itself. Some spares will be available anyway, as part of the liferaft equipment.

- 3 Go to your muster station in an orderly manner.**

The general emergency signal is not the abandon ship signal. Information on the nature of the emergency and further action to be taken will be obtained at your muster station.



PREPARATION FOR ABANDONING SHIP

Abandon ship only when told to do so.

1 Follow instructions in preparing the ship's survival craft.

It may or may not be necessary to abandon ship: the order to abandon ship will be given by the master/skipper. In many cases the ship itself proves to be the best lifeboat.

EPIRB / Portable Radios /Sarts etc to be taken to survival craft as required.

Lifeboats to be prepared in accordance with established procedures.



ABANDONING SHIP: PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN

Do not abandon ship until told to do so.

1 When the order is given, get into lifeboats and /or davit-launched liferafts at the embarkation deck.

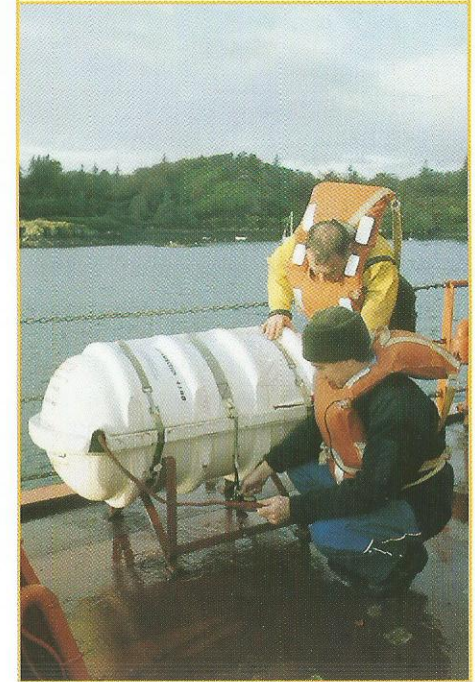
This way you will keep dry.

2 When the order is given, launch throw-over liferafts.

- a) before launching make sure the painter is made fast to a strong point on the ship;

Throw-over liferafts will be secured by their painters to a hydrostatic release unit (HRU). This is a strong point. However, if the liferaft has to be transferred to another position, then the painter must be re-secured to another strong point, otherwise the liferaft will be lost. The painter is used to inflate the raft and to hold it alongside.

- b) make sure the water in the launching area is clear of people or obstructions;



**ABANDONING SHIP:
PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN
(continued)**

- c) after launching, pull and keep pulling on the painter until inflation occurs;

There may be as much as 72 metres of painter within the liferaft container which must be fully withdrawn and given a sharp pull, before inflation can occur.

- d) wait until the buoyancy tubes are fully inflated before boarding;

Premature boarding may prevent proper inflation.

**Never jump onto the canopy of a liferaft.
While waiting for others to board prevent raft from chafing alongside the ship.**

- e) prevent the liferaft chafing on the ship's side if possible.

This will avoid damage to liferaft fabric.

3 If possible, board lifeboat or liferaft without entering the water.

It is important to avoid entering the water if at all possible to reduce the effects of COLD.

Jumping onto the liferaft canopy could cause injuries to yourself or a person already inside and may damage the canopy.

**ABANDONING SHIP:
PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN
(continued)**

4 If it is necessary to enter the water, choose a suitable place from which to leave the ship, bearing in mind the following points:

- a) drift of the ship;

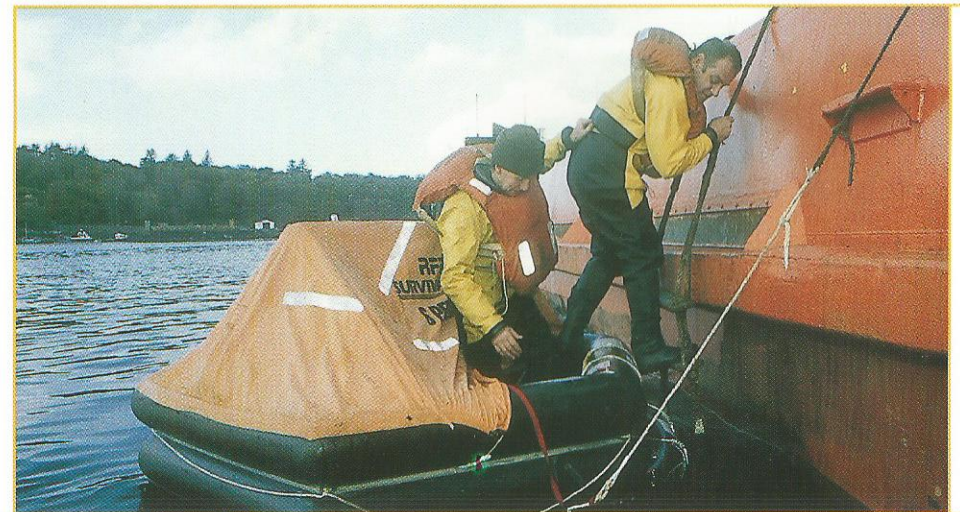
The ship may drift down on you faster than you can swim away.

- b) position of any survival craft in the water;

Remember that the survival craft may drift much more quickly than you can swim. If there is no survival craft available it may be preferable to abandon the ship from the bow or

stern to get clear of the ship with more certainty. There may be difficulty in getting clear from amidships because of the ship's drift.

- c) the sea state;
- d) other hazards, e.g., burning oil.



**ABANDONING SHIP:
PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN
(continued)**

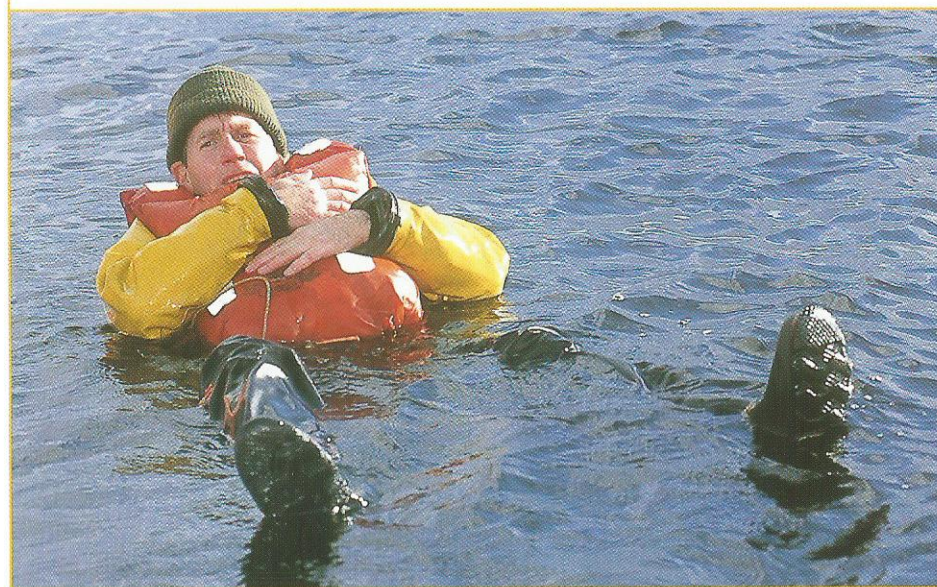
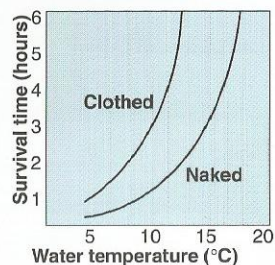
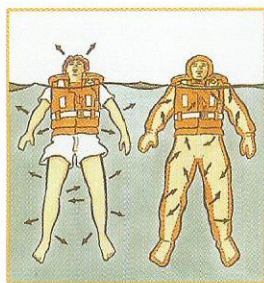
Do not jump into lifeboats or onto the canopy of a liferaft.

- 5 Do not jump into the water unless essential; use over-side ladders or if necessary, lower yourself by means of a rope or fire hose. Unless it is unavoidable, do not jump from higher than 4.5 metres into the water.

Points to bear in mind before jumping into the water:

- Keep lifejacket on, securely tied, and hold it down by crossing arms over chest;
- Block off nose and mouth with one hand;
- Keep feet together;
- Check below to avoid obstructions;
- Look straight ahead; jump feet first.

Do not look down when jumping as it makes you unstable and likely to fall forward.



ACTION WHEN IN THE WATER

- 1 Avoid remaining in the water for one second longer than is necessary.

Body heat will be lost to the surrounding water more rapidly than it can be generated. This leads to hypothermia (cold exposure), unconsciousness and death. The extra clothing worn will delay the onset of hypothermia.

- 2 Get into a survival craft as soon as possible. Otherwise get clear of the ship.

The danger of being struck from below by surfacing wreckage is greater than from suction caused by the ship sinking.

- 3 After getting clear of the ship do not swim aimlessly. Float as still as possible in your lifejacket if you cannot get into a survival craft.

Swimming increases heat loss.

ACTION WHEN IN THE WATER (continued)

- 4 Activate the lifejacket light and use the whistle attached to your lifejacket to attract attention.

These will help you to let others know where you are.

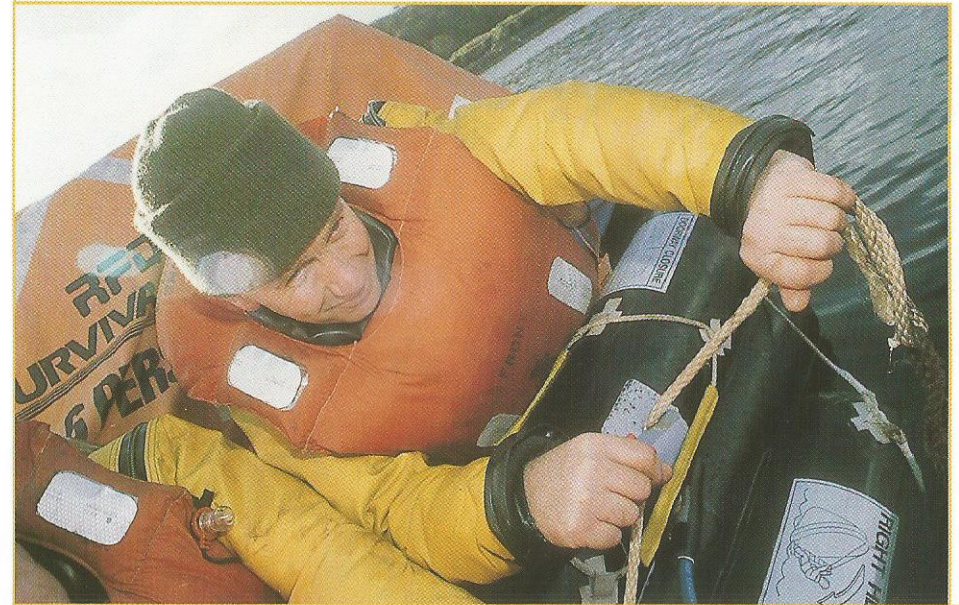
- 5 If possible, form a group with other survivors in the water.

There is safety in numbers. A group is more easily located.



BOARDING A SURVIVAL CRAFT

- 1 Boarding a survival craft unaided from the water is a difficult operation. Make maximum use of available footholds and handholds. It may help to bob down and use the buoyancy of your lifejacket to help you out of the water.



ACTION TO BE TAKEN AFTER BOARDING SURVIVAL CRAFT

- 1 Cut or slip the painter when all are on board. Use the safety knife provided in inflatable liferafts.

The safety knife is stowed near the entrances of liferafts and is designed to avoid accidental damage to the raft.

Manoeuvre clear of the ship's side or obstructions.

Getting clear of obstructions avoids the risk of damage to the survival craft.

- 2 Stream the drogue or sea anchor when clear of the ship.

Survival craft can drift rapidly. The drogue or sea anchor reduces the rate of drift and therefore assists those searching for you. In liferafts it holds the entrances at right angles to the weather, helps to steady the craft and greatly improves the stability in rough weather.

ACTION TO TAKE AFTER BOARDING SURVIVAL CRAFT
(continued)

3 Close the entrances of liferafts when everyone is inside. This keeps out the cold and wet and keeps in the warmth generated by the occupants. Rig the exposure cover in open lifeboats. If available, don a thermal protective aid. Post a lookout.

4 Maintain the liferaft. Inflate the floor for insulation against the cold, bale out the water and check for damage or leaks. Ventilate the liferaft by maintaining a small opening.

5 Take seasickness tablets as early as possible.

Most people - including 'hardened' sailors - suffer from seasickness in survival craft. This results in loss of body fluid and incapacitation.



6 Rig the radar reflector and EPIRB or SART if available.

PRINCIPLES FOR SURVIVAL

Regardless of how near rescue services may be, you must take action from the outset to safeguard yourself against immediate threats to your life. Having done so you should consider the next greatest threat and protect yourself against that, and so on in a sequence of priorities. **Without this approach only the lucky will survive.**

First and foremost, protection should be against the dangers of the environment. **Protection** has a higher priority than indicating **location**, and since it is possible to survive many days without **water** and many weeks without **food**, both protection and location have higher priorities than food and water.

Do not attempt to sail away from the area of the sinking ship. Search for survivors will commence at the last known position of the ship. Survival craft should be kept together to provide a bigger location target; there will also be more survival aids to share.



Maritime and Coastguard Agency

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Transport

**Remember: no one is a
survivor until rescued**

Where a survival craft fixed or portable radio is available, 'Distress' messages should be transmitted, following the simple instructions provided on the equipment. If an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) or radar transponder is available, switch it on. Rescuers can 'home in' on these signals.

Distress flares and rockets should be used sparingly, and only when there is a likelihood of their being seen. If the sun is shining the daylight signalling mirror can be used to attract attention. If sighted by a searching aircraft, it may be some time before rescue is at hand but your location will be known.



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