

# Safety Equipment Compliance

In the two weeks in Las Palmas prior to the departure of the ARC fleet all participating yachts are visited by one of the team of inspectors to check that they are carrying the required safety equipment. The items required are listed in the ARC Conditions of Entry, which are published in four languages and are readily available in the ARC Skipper's Handbook, the pre-entry information pack and on the ARC website. These requirements are based on ISAF/ORC regulations and have been progressed over the years by the team with their unique experience of the event. For the racing division the RORC/ISAF Offshore Special Regulations for category 1 with RORC Prescriptions also apply.

The role of the inspector is to help and advise the skipper, not just to tick off boxes on a list; it is a learning system for both sides and is not intended to be an "ordeal by fire" for the skipper. The inspector's aim is to help make the ARC a safe experience for all the crews.

## Don't Delay – Book An Early Inspection

The sooner a yacht can be inspected the easier it is for any missing items to be sourced and the crew's attention can then be focused on to the other preparations for the crossing, and on enjoying their time in Las Palmas. The inspectors will often find small items wrong and will return to a yacht at a later date once these have been rectified, but this can be time consuming for both the participant and the inspector, so it is better to be right first time. A serious breach of the regulations may result in a yacht being required to leave the Rally.

The inspection normally takes about an hour and the boat should be prepared to ensure that all the gear is either easily accessible or laid out ready to be inspected. An abridged list is produced for this purpose but any item on the list in the Skipper's Handbook may be checked. It is good for the inspection to be done with the crew that are taking part in the ARC, not a delivery crew. It is important for all crew, including children, to be aware of the safety equipment and its stowage. It is strongly recommended that the skipper holds a safety briefing for all the crew when in Las Palmas and crew should arrive with plenty of time for preparation, not the night before the event. No inspector expects a yacht to be immaculate, all yachts need regular maintenance and we appreciate that there is always plenty of preparation to be done.

The Safety Equipment list should be worked through well before the yacht sets off for Las Palmas; after all, the trip down has as much potential for problems as the crossing. Although nearly everything can be purchased at the chandlers, Rolnautic, this can be a time consuming process as the store does get very

busy with 225 yachts in the ARC each year.

## Look After Your Equipment

Remember many items of safety equipment need maintenance, salt water is a corrosive medium and can do considerable damage, lifejackets should be regularly inspected, washed and all systems, lights, inflation etc checked.

Do not skimp on safety equipment, there are many products on the market and the cheapest is not necessarily as good as other more expensive items. Life jackets are a case in question, it has been found that in many cases the more refined the jacket is the more comfortable it is to wear. All yachts should have a policy for the wearing of lifejackets, the best is to wear them at all times when on deck and therefore the more comfortable it is to wear the more inclined crew are to wear them. The same applies to the crotch straps and safety tethers. Every crewmember should have a lifejacket allotted to them, so that they are responsible for its fit, stowage and maintenance.

## Have the Right Attitude to Safety Onboard

James Pearson, one of the ARC 2007 Safety Equipment Inspectors commented after the ARC on the importance of having the right approach to safety onboard. "One thing which I found shocking was the lengths that a minority of skippers would go to get away with just the bare minimum of safety equipment reflected in an attitude begrudging compliance 'because we have to, not because it is important'. This I feel is bad seamanship and in some cases negligence to their crew who in most cases were not as educated as the skipper/first mate about the importance of the equipment in the safety check list. Skippers should always endeavour to get the best possible kit within their budget."

Remember the Safety Equipment compliance check is intended to be an assistance to the skipper and crew and does not remove his or



▼ Flare demonstration at Las Palmas



▼ Liferaft demonstration at Las Palmas

## The ARC Safety Equipment Inspection Team's Top-Tips

- ▶ Spend the time on the trip down to Las Palmas familiarising the whole crew with the safety equipment and practising emergency procedures such as MOB, flooding, and fire. Each crew member should know exactly what to do and what their role is in each of these situations
- ▶ Have a clear location diagram posted up on the yacht containing a plan of the yacht showing where all safety equipment is stowed, where all safety critical items such as sea cocks, batteries etc are located.
- ▶ Have several emergency procedure cards posted up detailing what to do in the event of an emergency, a MOB for example.
- ▶ Complete the ARC checklist before leaving home. Getting equipment and spares is far harder abroad, not to mention a huge amount of hassle having to queue in the busy chandlery in Las Palmas!
- ▶ Do not leave crew changes too late. All crew need time to settle in and become familiar with routine and equipment.
- ▶ Make sure that a full safety brief is held with the whole crew present, this should include contingency plans for things such as rudder failure.
- ▶ Make sure that you have a copy of your insurance certificates onboard.
- ▶ Book your safety equipment inspection for as early as possible which will save you frantically running around looking for spare parts a day before the ARC departs.
- ▶ Open up safety equipment regularly, such as lifejackets, and check for fatigue and breakages.
- ▶ Remember to check whether crew have specific medical requirements, and ensure your yacht's medical kit and grab-bag reflect this.

## The Top-Ten Common Failures Found During ARC Safety Equipment Inspections

**1. Lifejackets:** often found without crotch straps or spray hoods. Both are now requirements and essential to any real survival prospects. Few owners were really familiar with their jackets in terms of checking that the inflation bottle was charged, there was no wear on bladder, lights work etc. Not having lifejackets assigned to individual crew members – always easier than struggling to put on and fit a jacket in an emergency. Some lifejackets were found still in wrappers so obviously had not been used on the trip to Las Palmas (around 1,000 nm voyage) or had been stowed wet and become corroded.



**4. Searchlights:** these were often inadequate for the task required – searching the sea at night or rough weather. They must be powered directly from the yacht's power system as battery operated lamps only last 20 minutes in continuous use.

**5. Stoves:** often were not secured to prevent them dislodging in the event of inversion. Easy 2 minute fix with seizing wire.

**6. Emergency Steering:** tillers found stowed in a very inaccessible locations or the cover plate had seized up

**7. EPIRBs:** often skippers did not know how to test their EPIRB; several were found with faults and had to be replaced.



▼ All lifejackets should have crotch-straps and spray-hoods



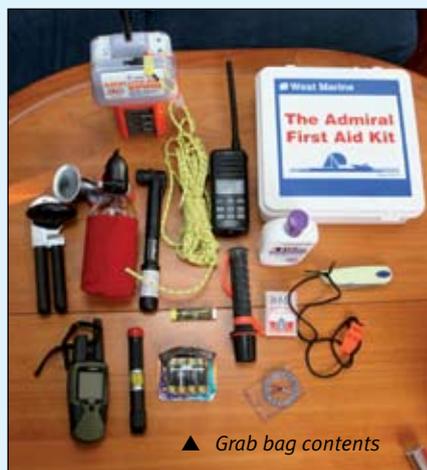
▼ The left clip will not accidentally unfasten



▼ Test your EPIRB regularly

**2. Jackstays:** attachment shackles were not seized with wire/cable ties (one inspector found 5 jackstays with very loose pins, just ready to fall out); jackstays well beyond their useful life due to abrasion and UV damage

**3. Man Overboard Equipment:** not having the correct combination of MOB equipment and particularly not having the required whistles, drogues, reflective tape fitted were common failures.



▲ Grab bag contents



▲ Secure all shackles against accidental release

**8. Guardrails:** split rings missing from guardrails were quite a common failure.

**9. Bolt Croppers:** found to be completely rusted up, or insufficient size/type for the yacht's rigging. Cutters where the blades cross over with a hook arrangement are best; croppers where the blades meet are no good on wire rigging. Larger rigs should consider angle grinders/shroud shooters and a way of knocking the pins out of the shroud bases.

**10. Softwood Plugs for Hull Fittings:** these were often missing, or not secured to the relevant through hull fitting.



▼ Attach wooden bungs to all through-hull fittings