

US Safety Equipment Requirements
Replacing the ISAF Offshore Special Regs by USSA prescription
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As a consequence of various accidents involving boats on the West Coast a safety stand down was put into effect by Capt. Cynthia Stowe, Captain of the Port of San Francisco, in April 2012. As a result of the safety stand down, the Northern California Ocean Racing Council (NCORC) was formed consisting of individuals representing the Organizing Authorities that run races in the Gulf of the Farallones (an area off of San Francisco Bay bounded by Pt. Reyes, SE Farallon Island, and Pillar Point).

It became obvious at the NCORC meetings that Organizing Authorities were using a variety of minimum equipment requirements, many of which were either outdated or very modest in their requirements.

An equipment sub-committee of the NCORC was created consisting of Andy Newell, Michael Johnson, Jim Quanci, Max Crittenden, Jim Antrim and Chuck Hawley, who represented many of the Organizing Authorities that run races in the Gulf of the Farallones. A meeting was held on October 13 to compare the requirements of the Singlehanded Sailing Society, the Bay Area Multihull Doublehanded Farallones requirements, the Mackinac Safety Requirements, ISAF Category 2 with US Prescriptions and other equipment lists. A draft of the NCORC Minimum Offshore Requirements (NCORC MOR) was the result.

A second meeting of the sub-committee was held on December 2, 2012 and over 100 suggestions were considered. In addition to the sub-committee, Stan Honey and Michael Morazedah were consulted during the meeting.

The second draft of the NCORC MOR was published after an NCORC meeting at Island Yacht Club on January 7, 2013. OAs were encouraged to use the MOR so that all participants in Gulf of the Farallones races in 2013 would sail under the same equipment requirements. This resulted in the lifting of the stand down to offshore racing by the US Coast Guard.

To expand the reach and impact of the new equipment regulations, a sub-committee of the US Sailing Safety at Sea Committee was formed during the AGM in San Francisco in October of 2012. The sub-committee was chaired by Bjorn Johnson, and members included Dan Nowlan, Ron Trossbach, James Phyfe, and John Winder.

Taking the NCORC MOR as a baseline for the new "US Coastal" requirements, the new sub-committee created less rigorous "US Nearshore" requirements that approximate ISAF Category 5, and more rigorous "US Ocean" requirements that approximate ISAF Category 1. Reviews of other safety regulations included the OSR's, Chicago Mac Safety Regulations, Around Gotland Race, China Sea Race, Fastnet Race, Newport Bermuda Race, Marion Bermuda Race, NCORC Safety Requirements.

The reworked USSER's were then placed on the US Sailing web site in September and given a two-week comment period during which they could be viewed by any interested parties. The comments were reviewed by the subcommittee for validity and Version 5 was created utilizing

the comments. In San Francisco on October 3 and October 4, John Winder, Dan Nowlan, Chuck Hawley and Bjorn Johnson reviewed the latest of the USSER comments and reviewed the document for changes and reworked some of the wording to conform to the newest comments and suggested changes.

As of October 8th there have been more than 500 e-mails, 20 conference calls/meetings, one US Sailing Safety at Sea review committee with comments and one public review period with comments: all incorporated into the document.

A Final Version of the Document was ready for presentation to the US Sailing Board at the AGM in Florida in late October, 2013; and accepted.

It is now a US prescription to the ISAF Offshore Special Regulations.

This means that within the US, boats need to comply only to the USSER's for all races.

Moreover; this document has been vetted by the US Coast Guard and accepted by that Authority, as being what is needed for offshore sailing defined by the 3 categories.

Note that the USSER's are a "basis" for each event and area. They are meant to be manipulated as needed to fit an area. The idea being that each "box" can be moved from one section to another to best fit the areas safety needs. This gives each AO control over their event, to a degree, permitting changes that make sense and can be justified.

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