

First Aid Kits and Ditch Bags

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The Mac Safety Equipment Regulations (SER's) require yachts competing in the Mackinac Race to carry First Aid Kits and Manuals.

Skippers are responsible for ensuring that a kit suitable for the race and the number of people on board is carried and maintained. You should consult with a healthcare professional to determine the appropriate contents of a kit for your boat, but many commercially-prepared kits are available for starters.

If assembling your own kit, we strongly encourage you to discuss it with a health care professional. Good resources for learning include:

<http://www.boatingmag.com/boatingsafety/tips/safety-tip/marine-first-aid-kits>

<http://www.equipped.com/medical.htm>

<http://www.thesailingfoundation.org/SAS2012Docs/SAS%20Medical.pdf>

A good yacht racing first aid kit preparation and practical tips overview by Dr Robert Amsler, DO, is also available on the BYC Mac Race Website

<http://www.bycmack.com/pdf/DrAmslersPresentation20080109.pdf>

In addition to bandages, splints and the like, most kits carry routine items which may be of use - bandages, allergy pills, anti-itch cream, seasickness pills, sunburn pain relief lotions, etc. Each crew member should be familiar with the location of and contents of the kit, since virtually anyone could be called to use it.

Commercial kits generally do not carry prescription drugs or other advanced equipment, such as AEDs. If your particular crew requires such equipment, you should consult with a physician now, before you go.

A practical approach used by several race teams is to maintain two first aid kits. One small and easily accessible for the relatively minor and common cuts/scrapes/occurrences/etc including Aspirin, antiseptic, small band-aids, burn-cream, etc. And second more formal kit for more serious needs: sutures, gauss/tape, splints, medications, etc. This way the integrity and organization of the larger/formal kit is not disturbed by smaller/common needs/events.

Remember that many medical supplies have expiration dates, and standards change, so that 10yr old kit may no longer be 'suitable' for the conditions of the race. Take the time to examine and inventory your kit. Spring is also a good time to check the expiration date on the medications and supplies in your first aid kit. Expired medications, in particular, can do more harm than good.

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Your kit(s) should also contain a good first aid manual, as is required by the SERs. Many are available, either as part of the kit or from Amazon or similar bookstores. You should familiarize yourself with the manual now, before you really need it.

The last thing you want to do is be thumbing through a table of contents in a real emergency!

First Aid Training

In addition to an appropriate medical kit, you should encourage your crew to have proper first aid training. Although our race is not governed by the ISAF Offshore Special Regulations, they are instructive. They require that 3 members of the crew have medical training equivalent to or greater than the Red Cross First Aid course. This is probably a good standard for most Mac boats as well. Find out in advance who on your crew has this training. If no one does, we encourage you to get trained.

Good sources for basic first aid training include:

- The Red Cross (basic First Aid): <http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class>
- NOLS (for more advanced wilderness first aid):
<http://www.nols.edu/courses/find/byskill/wildernessmedicine.shtml>

Crew Medical Needs

Also, consider the medical needs and/or requirements of your crew. If crew members have specific health concerns, they should be discussed with the skipper in advance. A written medical history from any crew member with any medical condition, allergy or the like is an excellent idea. If privacy is a concern, the crew member(s) can put the history in an individual sealed envelope, to be retained by the skipper (or in a large envelope in a common place) and opened only in the event of need.

An example of a medical history form is available on the BYC Mac Race Website and another here:

http://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/316056/Medical_history_form.pdf

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Ditch Bags (Calamity Pack)

The Multihull SERs require multihulls to carry a ditch bag (“calamity pack”). While not a requirement for Monohulls, having one on such yachts is also a good idea. Multihulls are required to carry pyrotechnic signals per SER, a handheld VHF, a GPS, a flashlight, cutting tools, and an EPIRB/PLB. This equipment would be invaluable in the case of a capsized, and it would also be of tremendous value if your crew was forced to abandon ship into a life raft. The SERs list minimum equipment requirements, but good sailors would supplement this list. Other items to consider carrying in the ditch bag include a first aid kit, ‘space’ blankets, a knife, spare batteries for the flashlight, signal mirror, whistle, and sunscreen.

A good article (with link to related articles) on ditch bags is at
<http://www.equipped.com/abandonship.htm>

If you have any questions, please contact us at safety@byc.com, macchair@byc.com, office@byc.com or through the BYC office @ 313-822-1853

Note: The purpose of this article is to highlight concepts for how you and your crew can race as safely as possible. As always, ultimate responsibility for the safety of the crew and the decision whether to race or to stop racing is that of the skipper (RRS4, MSR2). This email is meant as a courtesy only and you should always refer to the Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions and Safety Regulations, which govern the race.

Credits to Matt Gallagher and the Chicago Yacht Club for the original content of this Sailing Safety Series Article