



Emergency Action Plans for Sailing Organizations: Six Tips to Optimize your Plan and Response

By Whitney Peterson, Gowrie Group

Gowrie Group and The Burgee Insurance Program are proud to offer important safety materials and resources to sailing organizations nationwide. We believe one of the most important documents that all sailing organizations should have in place is an **Emergency Action Plan (EAP)**.

At the most basic level, an Emergency Action Plan covers these important things:

- The **key steps** to take if an emergency or life threatening injury occurs.
- **What to tell 9-1-1** or emergency responders when reporting the situation.
- The **exact locations** for where to meet the emergency responders.
- The **key contact information** needed for communication during and after an incident.

Visit [Gowrie Group's Safety Resources](#) page to download an [Emergency Action Plan - Card Template](#) and other important safety resources for sailing organizations and sailing programs.

Six Tips to Optimize your Emergency Plan and Response.

As you create and practice your EAP, Gowrie Group recommends you also review these 6 tips to empower your team to respond to an emergency as quickly, safely, and effectively as possible.

1. Review and Practice your Emergency Action Plan Annually

- Review your EAP with all staff at least once a year.
- Run a practice "drill" each season – invite your local emergency authorities to participate.
- Team with local emergency authorities (Coast Guard, fire department, police, harbor master, etc.) when developing and practicing your EAP. Together, determine the optimal rendezvous locations for emergency transfers, document how to contact each authority, and understand how jurisdictions change from water to land.
- When necessary, revise your plan based on learnings from your practice "drill."

2. Post and Share your Emergency Action Plan Prominently

- A summary version of your EAP should be posted prominently in multiple locations at your facility: near phones/VHF, dock office, front office, etc.
- Laminated versions of your summary EAP should be given to all on-the-water staff and attached to each coach boat, launch, club vessel, and/or RC boat.
- It may also be appropriate to share a copy with your club members and/or to post to your website.

3. Employ Effective VHF Communication

- Know what VHF station your club/program uses, and what station the local emergency teams use.
- Ensure employees do a radio check before taking a VHF radio into service/action, every time.
- Determine a strategy for having 2 VHFs and 2 people with the injured person/incident at all times.
- When speaking, clearly state your name and which boat you are in (every radio transmission).
- Use HIGH power setting on the VHF for maximum volume and reach in an emergency.
- Ensure shore team receiving injured person has a working VHF tuned to the right channel (borrow from another uninvolved staff member if needed).
- Use cell phones when and where appropriate and effective.

4. Know how to Communicate your Location

- When practicing/reviewing your plan, make sure the team knows the number/names of the closest government buoys, landmarks, and channel markers.
- When reporting your location, use North/South/West/East to indicate direction (not Left/Right).
- When possible, report your location using Latitude/Longitude, in addition to visual landmarks and nautical markers.
- Know how to drop a waypoint at the scene of the accident – this can be critical in the case of missing lives or assets.

5. Prevent Additional Accidents and Incidents

- Train your team to stay calm, focused, and alert; and to act as quickly as they safely can.
- Do not put yourself or others in harm's way when responding or attending to an incident.
- Respond and assist the injured person(s) to the best of your abilities – without risking additional injury to yourself or others.
- If Junior Sailing related, remember to ensure the safe return to shore of the other children in the class.
- When possible, secure the other boats involved and around the incident.
- When possible, reduce or eliminate non-emergency (discretionary) recreational boating in the area.

6. Be Smart about Communication and Information Sharing

- Ensure all onsite staff knows an emergency situation is occurring (dock, launch, instructors, galley, office)
- Have Office personnel or periphery person notify Flag Officers or General Manager as soon as possible.
- **Follow US Sailing's 10 Crisis Steps:** Act as quickly, responsible, humanely and openly as you can. Form a small management committee but speak with one voice. Immediately contact all people with a connection by telephone. Call for independent review. Send no emails unless absolute security is guaranteed. Inform your insurance agent and listen to what they say. Listen to your lawyer, but do not sound like one. Respect the public's need to know, while also respecting victims' privacy. Be accurate; say nothing unless you know it to be true. Take ritual seriously honor rescuers; consult clergy, psychologists and other specialists. Respect PTSD. Grief counseling is extremely valuable.

Download **Gowrie Group's Emergency Action Plan Template** and other important safety resources from [Gowrie Safety Resources](#) download page.

 <p>Name of Org: Emergency Card Address, phone number(s), Lat/Long</p> <p>Emergency or Life Threatening Injury - Steps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Render assistance 2. Make contact with coaches or program staff for assistance 3. Call for Help & Emergency Medical Attention: (Who to call and order should be customized for location) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 9-1-1 o Harbor Master: VHF#16, xxx-xxx-xxxx o Local US Coast Guard: VHF#16, xxx-xxxx-xxxx o Main Office: VHF #, xxx-xxx-xxxx 4. Monitor and administer first-aid (List AED locations, boats with AED, etc.) 5. Send someone to meet/direct Emergency vehicles 6. Transfer injured to care of Emergency Team 7. Debrief and Inform key people: Commodore, GM, Sailing Director, family of injured 8. Complete an incident report <p>Be prepared to tell 9-1-1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current location of injured person • Description of boats (if requesting on-water help) • Where you plan to bring injured person ashore (see below) • Age/gender/number of injured people • Type of injury/situation • Your name and call back number 	<p>Emergency Response Pick-Up Locations:</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Address</th> <th>Cross Street</th> <th>Lat/Long</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A Location Name 1</td> <td>Describe...</td> <td># Street, Town, State</td> <td>Street</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>B Location Name 2</td> <td>Describe...</td> <td># Street, Town, State</td> <td>Street</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>C Location Name 3</td> <td>Describe...</td> <td># Street, Town, State</td> <td>Street</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Emergency Numbers</th> <th>Organization's Numbers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>911</td> <td>Main Number: xxx-xxx-xxxx, VHF#</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Harbor Master: VHF#16, xxx-xxx-xxxx</td> <td>Launch: xxx-xxx-xxxx, VHF#</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Harbor Police: VHF#16, xxx-xxx-xxxx</td> <td>General Manager: xxx-xxx-xxxx</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Coast Guard: VHF#16, xxx-xxxx-xxxx</td> <td>Commodore/President: xxx-xxx-xxxx</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Fire: xxx-xxx-xxxx</td> <td>Sailing Director: xxx-xxx-xxxx</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Date of most recent revision: _____</p>	Name	Description	Address	Cross Street	Lat/Long	A Location Name 1	Describe...	# Street, Town, State	Street		B Location Name 2	Describe...	# Street, Town, State	Street		C Location Name 3	Describe...	# Street, Town, State	Street		Emergency Numbers	Organization's Numbers	911	Main Number: xxx-xxx-xxxx, VHF#	Harbor Master: VHF#16, xxx-xxx-xxxx	Launch: xxx-xxx-xxxx, VHF#	Harbor Police: VHF#16, xxx-xxx-xxxx	General Manager: xxx-xxx-xxxx	Local Coast Guard: VHF#16, xxx-xxxx-xxxx	Commodore/President: xxx-xxx-xxxx	Local Fire: xxx-xxx-xxxx	Sailing Director: xxx-xxx-xxxx
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Disclaimers: Although the procedure, plan, and recommendations contained in this Emergency Card Template were created by an experienced team of experts, Gowrie Group and US Sailing make no guarantee as to, and assume no responsibility for, the correctness, sufficiency or completeness of this template. Other or additional safety measures and procedures, along with a complete, detailed Emergency Action Plan (EAP) should be created to complement this Emergency Card.

Contributors: Content and information primarily provided by Gowrie Group, US Sailing, and other leading sailing programs.

About The Burgee Program: The Burgee Program is the only comprehensive insurance program developed to meet the unique needs of all types of sailing organizations - yacht clubs, community programs, schools, classes, fleets, paper clubs, and more. The program is managed by the marine experts at Gowrie Group, underwritten by Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, and endorsed by US Sailing. The program protects not only the organization, but also the board members, flag officers, volunteers, members, and employees. Learn more at www.burgeeprogram.com, 800.262.8911, burgee@gowrie.com.

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