

Greystones Sailing Club

Weather Limits & Deteriorating Conditions Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out **clear procedures and decision-making processes** for managing deteriorating weather or other potentially unsafe conditions during Greystones Sailing Club (GSC) training courses and organised sailing activities. This policy follows **Irish Sailing Association (Irish Sailing) Training Centre Guidelines**, which require that **participant and instructor safety is always the primary consideration**. Boats and equipment are secondary.

2. Responsibility and Authority

- The **Senior Instructor** (or Centre Principal in their absence) has **overall authority** for decisions relating to weather limits and safety.
- All instructors must comply with directions given by the Senior Instructor.
- Decisions may be taken **before launching or during an on-the-water session**.

3. Weather and Environmental Factors

Weather-related conditions that may require modification, postponement, or cancellation of activities include:

- Imminent arrival of severe weather (squalls, storms, thunderstorms)
- Rapid increase in wind strength or gusts
- Poor or deteriorating visibility (fog, heavy rain)
- Wind against tide creating steep or breaking chop
- Reduced temperatures leading to increased risk of cold exposure or hypothermia
- Sea state exceeding the ability of trainees or instructors

4. General Weather Limits (Guidance)

Weather limits are **guidelines, not absolute figures**, and decisions will take account of:

- Age and experience of trainees
- Type of boats being used
- Number and experience of instructors
- Availability of safety boats
- Sea state, tide, and shelter

As general guidance in line with Irish Sailing:

- **Beginner courses:** Typically sheltered water, up to Force 3–4
- **Intermediate courses:** Up to Force 4–5 where appropriate
- **Advanced sailors:** Higher wind strengths only with experienced instructors, suitable boats, and additional safety cover

The Senior Instructor may reduce limits at any time.

5. Decision to Go Afloat

Before each on-the-water session, instructors must consider:

- Weather forecast and real-time conditions

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- Trainee skill levels and confidence
- Suitability and number of boats
- Number and readiness of safety boats

The decision to launch must be **confirmed with the Senior Instructor** and recorded on the **Daily Log**, including:

- Number of sailors
- Boats in use
- Intended sailing area
- Launch and expected return times
- Session objective

6. Protocol for Deteriorating Conditions (On the Water)

If conditions deteriorate while afloat:

1. The **Senior Instructor assumes control of all communications and decisions.**
2. Trainees are instructed to **return ashore immediately**, unless directed otherwise.
3. Sailors capable of sailing ashore safely do so under supervision.
4. Priority is given to sailors requiring **immediate assistance or recovery.**
5. Trainees in difficulty are transferred to **RIBs.**
6. If required, trainees may be transferred temporarily to a **committee or support boat.**
7. If the fleet is dispersed:
 - Safety boats are assigned **specific zones** to ensure efficient recovery.
8. Regular updates are taken on:
 - Numbers still on the water
 - Numbers in RIBs
 - Numbers safely ashore
9. Additional safety boats may be launched if available, crewed by suitably experienced personnel.
 - Where possible, **two capable persons** should be in each RIB.

Only when **all trainees are safely ashore** may instructors recover abandoned boats, and only with the approval of the Senior Instructor.

7. Ashore Procedures

Once ashore:

1. Trainees are escorted from the recovery point to the clubhouse.
2. Attendance is checked and recorded.
3. Trainees are assessed for injury, shock, or cold exposure.
4. Appropriate actions are taken (warm clothing, showers, foil blankets).
5. Parents/guardians are informed where appropriate.

The **welfare of trainees and instructors is the priority.**

8. Abandoned Boats and Equipment

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- Recovery of boats will take place **only when conditions allow** and under the direction of the Senior Instructor.
- Boat recovery may occur later or outside course hours if necessary.
- Safety of personnel takes precedence over equipment.

9. Communication and Equipment

- All instructors must carry a **working VHF radio**, set to the designated club channel (Channel 72 unless otherwise advised).
- Mobile phones are supplementary and not a substitute for VHF communication.
- Any communication with the Coast Guard will be conducted by the **Senior Instructor or Centre Principal**.

10. After an Incident

- Any incident or near miss must be recorded using the **Accident / Incident Reporting Procedure**.
- The Executive Committee will be informed as soon as practicable.
- Any media response will be handled **only by a person authorised by the Executive Committee**.
- Procedures will be reviewed where necessary.

11. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safety on the Water Policy
- Emergency Action Plan
- Powerboat Operating Procedures
- Swim / Water Confidence Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Accident & Incident Reporting Policy

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following a serious incident.

Reviewed By:

Mark Hanley – Centre Principal/ Junior Development Officer
Senior Instructor – Robyn Maguire

Date:

08/02/2026