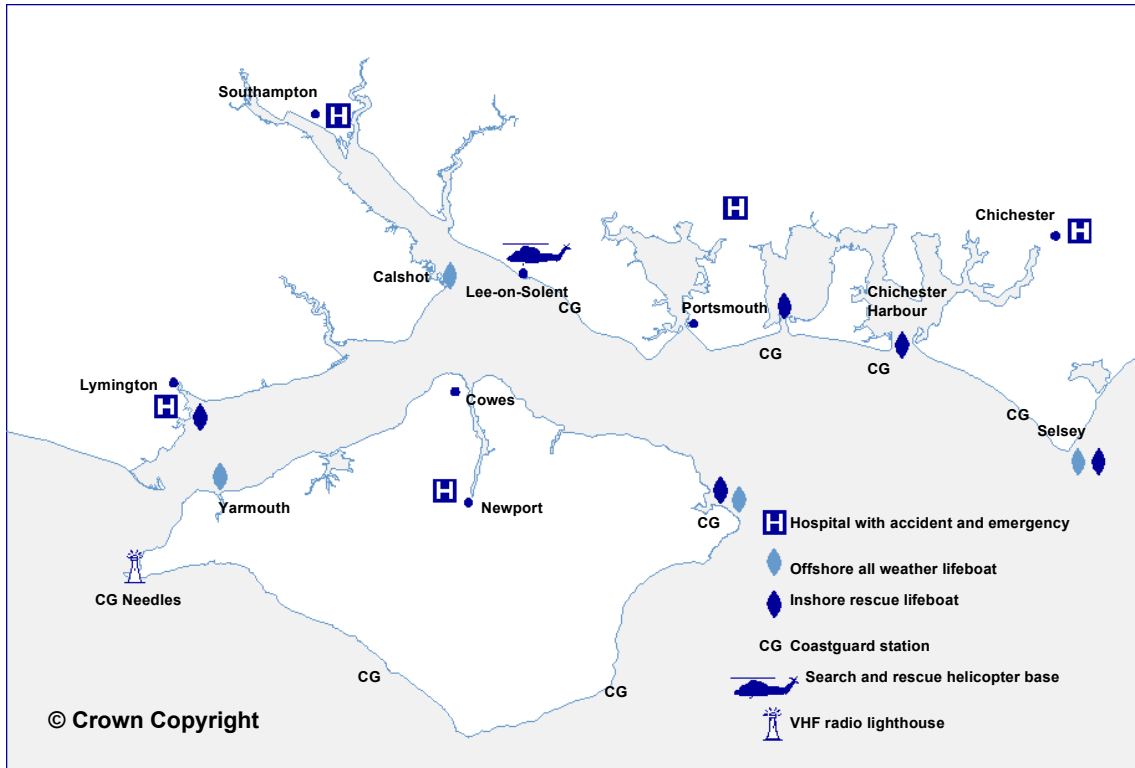


SAFETY

Long-term aim: ‘to ensure that adequate mechanisms to achieve maximum practicable safety within the Solent continue to be maintained’.



KEY FACTS:

- The Coastguard attend over 2,500 safety incidents in the Solent each year.
- Over 450 people are rescued from the Solent each year.
- The total theft in the Solent waters exceeds £1.25m, annually.

The Position

Ensuring the everyday public safety within the Solent embraces a number of different aspects, and falls within the responsibilities of several different organisations. The key areas can be summarised as follows:

- ensuring safety of navigation. Here the lead authorities are the harbour authorities, with their powers of direction over shipping, bye-laws, notices to mariners, and pilotage arrangements. The exception is the Western Solent where responsibilities rest with the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR);
- ensuring shipping is safe. The Marine Safety Agency (MSA) have a statutory responsibility for the survey and inspection of commercial shipping, to ensure they conform to international standards for safety and pollution prevention;
- ensuring competence of those afloat. Commercial seafarers are required to carry certificates of competency, and to be subject to medical examination. The MSA has the overall responsibility for the national scheme; however, there are also arrangements for the certification of Solent-based commercial boats and boatmen which have been agreed through the Solent Harbourmasters' Association. The certification of pilots is also carried out by the harbour authorities, in conjunction with BP and Esso for oil traffic. There are no statutory safety requirements for recreational craft, although the Coastguard operates advisory schemes. Qualifications for recreational seafarers are also on a voluntary basis, and the governing bodies of sport operate a number of structured training programmes;
- organisation of search and rescue. The lead responsibility for co-ordination of civil search and rescue on the coast rests with the Coastguard, who maintain a 24-hour watch via the '999' service and the international distress frequencies. The Solent is covered by the Solent District Maritime Rescue sub-centre, based at Lee-on-the-Solent. Lee is also the base for one of the Coastguard's three search and rescue helicopters. Support in the event of an incident may be provided by the harbour authorities, RNLI, MoD and voluntary inshore rescue services (co-ordinated by the Solent Sea Rescue Organisation);
- ensuring safety on beaches and shoreline. The lead responsibility rests with local authorities, Health and Safety Executive (HSE), HANWA employees or the appropriate site owner with the requirements to meet a 'duty of care';
- safety of industry. There is a range of legislation to ensure that industrial processes are safe, with the responsibilities for enforcement resting with the HSE, Environment Agency and local authorities;
- prevention and detection of crime. The lead responsibility lies with the police, and the Hampshire Constabulary maintain patrol boats based at Cowes and Portsmouth. In addition to land-based officers, the Ministry of Defence police maintain a twenty four hour presence within the Portsmouth Naval Base, with three patrol boats. Other statutory bodies are HM Customs and Excise (anti-smuggling), Environment Agency (anti-poaching of migratory fish) and the Sea Fisheries Committees (enforcement of fisheries legislation).

Several organisations exist to co-ordinate safety matters within the Solent. Those with the most significant roles include:

- Solent Pilotage Co-ordination Committee, which is an executive committee of Portsmouth Commercial Port, ABP Southampton, Cowes Harbour Commissioners and the Queen's Harbour Master. The Committee meets bi-monthly, and considers policy issues with regard to safety of navigation and pilotage. The Secretary to the Committee is the QHM;
- Solent and Southern Harbour Masters' Association, which is an association of statutory harbour masters between Weymouth and Little Hampton. It meets twice a year and provides a forum for matters of concern to harbour masters, and focuses on operational matters. The Honorary

Secretary to the association is the harbour master of Southampton. The association sets up working groups to consider particular issues when necessary;

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Search and Rescue Committee, which has been established in line with national guidance and has a wide membership, including harbour authorities, local authorities and safety organisations. The committee meets twice annually, and is chaired alternately by Hampshire Constabulary and the Coastguard (who also act as secretary);
- Solent Sailing Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the Solent Cruising and Racing Association and provides for closer liaison between sailing bodies and harbour authorities. It considers conflicts between recreational and commercial usage, competing recreational activities and port projects. The committee meets annually in January/February.

The most notable trend with regard to safety within the Solent, is the growth in the number of recreation-related incidents recorded by the Coastguard. In the last ten years the numbers of incidents attributed to commercial craft have remained stable, whereas those for recreational activity have increased by 50% - with the greatest rise within motorised craft. The largest single cause of incidents nationally is mechanical failure, although a number of other causes are also significant. This number of incidents broadly parallels the growth in recreational craft, although a detailed information of whether relative levels are changing is not available.

The trend in membership of governing bodies of sport varies from activity to activity, but is generally upward; for example, membership of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) increased from 67,000 to 76,000 between 1993 -1995. The number of qualifications gained is also increasing with, for example, around 80,000 certificates issued by the RYA in 1994. The proportion of recreational participants who are members of a governing body of sport is generally less than half of the total participants, with sub-aqua and wildfowling the exceptions to this pattern. In consequence, it is often difficult to distribute information, particularly to the full range of users who require the information.

Maritime crime is significant within the Solent. Annual theft of vessels and marine property has been estimated at £1.25 million. The national trends in marine crime are believed to be slightly upwards, with theft in particular becoming more calculated. There are a growing number of crime prevention schemes being adopted, as well as technological improvements to marine security.

A number of publication and sources of information exist to provide information on safety in the Solent, primarily aimed at recreational users. These include:

- the Solent Yearbook, produced by the Solent Cruising and Racing Association;
- national guides and advice published by the Coastguard and MSA;
- harbour guides;
- notices to mariners;
- signs and notices at launch points, beaches and car parks.

Co-ordinated advice for recreational users was produced by the Solent Harbourmasters' Association in the publication 'Enjoy the Solent', which was well received but is now out of print. Hampshire Constabulary, with Hampshire County Council, have also co-ordinated the production of a summary of Solent bye-laws.

The growing use of rock armouring for coastal defences is creating increased concern from local authorities about the potential hazard to recreational users. The gaps between stones and the uneven surfaces are a potential source of injuries. Concerns about the potential safety hazards caused by the location of fishing nets near to bathing beaches have also been expressed, but this is currently outside the control of both fisheries and local authorities.

What do we need to do?

1. Retain effective systems for management of safety within the Solent

Management of safety is an operational issue within the Solent and raises few strategic issues. The primary need is to maintain the existing established arrangements for safety management, which generally appear to be working well. Any need for additional management should be kept under review, and if required should be based on established mechanisms wherever possible. The use of formal risk assessment provides a useful method to determine and review the need for any further safety measures.

LEAD ROLE: Wide ranging amongst the various lead bodies.

2. Identify the causes of the long-term rise in recreational safety incidents, and how this trend can be arrested

The continued rise in recreational safety incidents is a cause of concern but has not yet been subject to detailed evaluation. It would be valuable to study this phenomenon in more detail, as a basis for determining possible responses to reduce incidents in the future. The likely requirements are for focussed awareness and training programmes.

LEAD ROLE: HM Coastguard.

3. Provide and distribute effective safety information for users of the Solent

The effective provision and distribution of safety information is a fundamental element in helping to prevent and minimise incidents. The need is to generate a long-term culture of hazard awareness, and accident prevention, together with the necessary confidence and skills of all those in positions of responsibility - whether industrial or recreational. Within the Solent, there is a particular need to focus information on recreational users who represent a group with distinctive, Solent-specific needs for information. Methods of information distribution are wide ranging and require co-ordination; they include:

- specific publications, which must be complemented with effective distribution mechanisms;
- on-site signs, particularly at beaches, open spaces and public launch points;
- direct contact with users;
- publicity and media articles;
- maps and navigation charts;
- the internet, and other electronic media, which may become increasingly important in the future.

LEAD ROLE: Harbour authorities, local authorities and HM Coastguard.



SOLENT FORUM ACTION: The Solent Environment and Access Initiative (Flagship Project 2) will consider the needs for co-ordinated provision of safety information at public launch points. Solent Outreach (Flagship Project 4) could provide a number of initiatives which will assist in distributing safety information, including a revised version of 'Enjoy the Solent' and use of the internet.

KEY ORGANISATIONS - SAFETY

Lead organisations

Health and Safety Executive

HM Coastguard

Marine Safety Agency

Lymington Harbour Commissioners

Beaulieu River Management

Associated British Ports
Queen's Harbour Master
Langstone Harbour Board
Chichester Harbour Conservancy
Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners
Cowes Harbour Commissioners
Bembridge Harbour Company
Trinity House
Hampshire Constabulary

Other key organisations

Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions
Marine Accident Investigation Branch (DETR)
Hampshire County Council
Southampton City Council
Portsmouth City Council
Isle of Wight Council
West Sussex County Council
Chichester District Council
New Forest District Council

Eastleigh Borough Council
Fareham Borough Council
Gosport Borough Council
Havant Borough Council
Environment Agency
Royal National Lifeboat Institution
Solent Sea Rescue Organisation
Solent Cruising and Racing Association
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Royal Life Saving Society
Shipping Organisations
Governing Bodies of Sport
Yacht Clubs and Sporting Bodies

Co-ordination mechanisms

Solent and Southern Harbourmasters' Association
Solent District Search and Rescue Committee
District Marine Safety Committee
Solent Area Sailing Advisory Committee
Solent Pilotage Co-ordination Committee