



## Surveillance principles for Q-boat drivers

### Legal framework and role of the Q-boat:

Article 128 of the Criminal Code "Failure to render assistance" states that "Anyone who fails to render assistance to a person whom he has injured or to a person in imminent danger of death, when this could reasonably be required of him, given the circumstances, or who prevents a third party from rendering assistance or hinders him from doing so, shall be punished by a custodial sentence of up to three years or a pecuniary penalty". This article and the case law call for caution in defining the role of the Q-boat driver during surveillance sessions.

There are specialized lake rescue services and the Q-boat driver must first and foremost observe and call to order the club's boats and, if necessary, call for help.

### Emergency services

The services that intervene on the lake are : the lake police (during the day), the professional fire brigade (who are not present on the lake, but are available 24 hours a day), the REGA (who support and work with the police) and the airport fire brigade who have a boat in Port Choiseul (acting ONLY in case of aircraft crashes).

In addition, there is a free rescue service run by trained volunteers, the International Rescue Society of Lake Geneva (SISL, <https://www.sisl.ch>). The SISL has 48 sections, 5 of which are in the canton of Geneva. The Versoix section has two rescue boats. In the Petit-Lac, the closest sections are : Bellevue-Genthod, Coppet, Hermance, Collonge-Bellerive la Belotte, Nyon and Yvoire (France). The SISL Sections are not a surveillance service, but a voluntary intervention service.

Every summer evening, a section of the SISL is on standby. The same is true every weekend in winter. The Versoix Section can be reached on 022 755 20 20 (24 hours a day).

### Strong wind, rotating lights

In the Petit Lac, there are 4 rotating lights triggered by the MétéoSuisse centre at the airport: Versoix, Geneva, Nernier (France) and Nyon. The SISL boats go out when the lights flash at 90 flashes per minute.

These lights indicate the arrival of stormy winds at a frequency of 40 flashes and an imminent storm at a frequency of 90 flashes.

- 40 flashes: risk of sudden gusts of wind up to 25 knots (caution)
- 90 flashes: risk of gale force winds of more than 25 knots (storm warning)

The MeteoSuisse blog <https://bit.ly/3y2y3f7> explains this procedure in detail.

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For the record, the YCC rules state in point 8.4 that *"orange flashing lights are activated when a gale is forecast. (...) All indicate the local weather situation in the Petit Lac. When their frequency is 40 flashes per minute, it is recommended to reach the port or at least to get closer to it in order to be able to reach it quickly if necessary. The imminence of a gale is announced by flashes with a frequency of 90 flashes per minute. In this case, all boats must immediately move to the nearest shelter. If the skipper deems it more dangerous to take shelter, the boat may remain on the water until the storm has passed. You may not borrow a Club boat when the flashing lights are operating at 90 flashes per minute. Remember that you must notify one of the YCC Committee members in charge of safety as well as the Swiss authorities if you are stranded in a harbour where you would have found shelter during a gale or storm"*.

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The Q-boat driver must pay attention to the lights and not hesitate to ask the club boats to move closer to Port Choiseul when the lights are flashing at 40 flashes per minute. At 90 flashes per minute, the Q-boat driver must bring the club boats into Port Choiseul.

## **What to do in an emergency**

If a life is in danger, if a keelboat has capsized and especially if someone is missing, it is imperative that the alarm is raised immediately. This is a legal obligation.

The emergency numbers in Switzerland are **117** (police rescue), **118** (fire brigade) and **144** (ambulance); regardless of the number, the call shall be forwarded as appropriate.

If you are in doubt about network coverage (Swiss or French network?), dial **112** (European emergency number). **112** works also in Switzerland, and even if the phone has no SIM card or is locked. You can therefore call with a team member's phone without unlocking it. In Geneva, **112** is diverted to **117**.

The Versoix section of SISL can be reached on **022 755 20 20** and intervenes, for example, to right a dinghy or a catamaran whose crew is in good health and not in danger. However, the SISL has neither the right nor the competence to handle emergency calls. As soon as there is an injury (or suspicion of an injury), you should call one of the alarm centres listed above.

In France, you can also dial **18** (sapeurs-pompiers).

These numbers are voice lines, so it is very difficult to send data.

To make it easier and faster to process your call, specify the following 3 points:

- Give a telephone number on which you can be reached,
- Give the location as precise as possible of the place where the services must intervene (a GPS point if you have one on your smartphone),
- Specify the reasons for your call.

If a vessel is abandoned offshore and the crew returns to shore, it is compulsory to inform the rescue services in order to avoid triggering a search for possible drowning.

There is also a distress channel on the radio, VHF channel **16** (lake distress). This channel is strictly reserved for distress communications. Any other use is punishable by fines. Possession of a VHF radio may be exempted from the fee if it is programmed exclusively for channel **16**, which is not subject to any concession or fee.

YCC motorboats on coordination missions must carry a VHF or have a working mobile phone.

Finally, there are apps to raise the alarm on smartphones: Echo**112**, Echo**SOS**, REGA app. However, these applications require a data network connection.

While waiting for help, make sure you do not put yourself in danger.

## **Various**

With dinghies, the most frequent health problems are hemorrhages and hypothermia. The latter slows down the healing process in the event of hemorrhaging).

To hoist a person in the water on board a boat, you must take him/her by the waistcoat or clothes for example and mount him/her with his/her back to the boat. Alternatively, a strap can be passed under both arms and pulled from behind.

It is important that the crew members of the monitoring session know how to turn the engine off and on. The boat's operator should show them how to do this and also attach the kill cord to his or her own body.

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