OVERBOARD RECOVERY

When a person goes overboard the actions taken in the first few seconds can determine the success of the recovery. Proper actions must be taken without hesitation. The actions must be swift and certain.

A) Sound the alarm. (MAN OVERBOARD - PORT / STARBOARD)

B) Throw nearest and any flotation devices to the person in the water.
Anything that floats will do, horseshoe rings, fenders, a PFD if it is not occupied, man overboard pole etc. This gives the Person in the Water (PIW) something to hold onto and helps to provide a visual indication of where the PIW is located.

C) One person points at the PIW at all times. This is THAT PERSONS ONLY JOB. They should also keep the helmsman informed of the bearing to the PIW.
It only takes a small amount of wave action (about one foot) to make it very difficult to spot a person. The spotter will continue to point to the PIW until the PIW is along side the recovering vessel.

D) Turn the boat back to the victim.
If in a boat under power the turn should be made to turn the stern away from the PIW to keep the propeller away from the person.

There are many ways to return to a PIW some of these will be outlined below. The quicker the return to the PIW the greater chance of a successful recovery.

DO NOT BACK DOWN ONTO THE PIW - THE PROPELLERS CAN CUT THEM.

E) Stop the boat alongside the victim.

F) Make contact with the victim.
The contact may be a lifesling, the D rings of a PFD if the victim is wearing one and you can reach them, a horseshoe ring with a line on it, a bowline at the end of a line. This is to insure that the victim is not separated from the boat.

G) Attach the victim to the boat. DO NOT leave the victim tied to the boat unattended or attached with a knot that can not be easily released. If the boat is moving the victim can drown. If the sails are up they should be dropped before the victim is attached to the boat or the engines should be in neutral.

H) Get the victim back on board.
The engines should be off with the victim along side the boat unless the boat would be in danger. MOST TRANSMISSIONS DO NOT STOP THE PROPELLERS COMPLETELY WHEN IN NEUTRAL. If the propellers are still turning the victim can be struck by the propeller blades and severely injured.

Boats with low freeboard the victim can be often be lifted on board along side. Swim ladders or platforms on the stern can aid in getting a person on board.

On sailboats a halyard can be used to lift a person on board. Boats with a lifesling on board have a block and tackle to use with a halyard to lift a person up with a sling under their arms. Many power boats also have davits or other devices or places that allow a lifting line to be attached high enough to lift a person on board.

Other ways can be: a line over the side with loops at intervals to form a ladder, a paddle tied at both ends to make a ladder rung, a line with a bowline to form a stirrup. Two large crew members can sometimes also pull a person aboard.

EXTREME CAUTION SHOULD BE USED WITH LINES OVERBOARD TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY DO NOT GET TANGLED WITH THE PROPELLER.

I) TREAT THE PIW AS IF THEY HAVE HYPOTHERMIA WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN GOTTEN ABOARD.

RETURN METHODS

QUICK-STOP RECOVERY

One advantage of the Quick Stop method is the immediate reduction of speed that occurs when turning into the wind. The separation from the PIW is also small.

Bring the boat up to close hauled if it is not already close hauled.
Tack into the wind - leave the head sail cleated (do not tack it)
Continue turning until headed down wind
    Some advise to keep the main sheeted in when turning down wind - but not all boats will turn down wind with the main sheeted in, also some wind and sea conditions will make the boat handle badly without easing out the main.
Hold course down wind until the PIW is aft of abeam.
    Some recommend furling or dropping the head sail at this point if possible, the pickup can be made without adjusting the head sail.
Jibe the boat.
Steer toward the PIW as if picking up a mooring buoy.
Stop the boat along side the PIW by easing or backing the sails.
When along side the PIW - EASE ALL THE SHEETS and VANG
    This prevents the boat from sailing off while recovering the PIW.
Recover the PIW.

QUICK-TURN RECOVERY (Also called FIGURE-8)

The Quick-Turn or Figure 8 avoids jibing during a recovery. In heavy weather or large boats jibing may be difficult especially with a short handed crew.

Steer the boat onto a beam reach, trim the sails as required.
When onto the beam reach tack into the wind and fall off into a deep broad reach.
    The boat will cross it's original track when going down wind.
When the PIW is abeam of the boat head up onto a close reach.
Ease the sheets to slow the boat alongside the PIW and stop the boat next to the PIW.
Recover the PIW.

HEAVE-TO

The Heave-To method is fast, but it works best when already on a close hauled course. Another factor is that some boats are difficult to put into a Heave-To position.

Immediately tack the boat, do not release the jib.
Move the tiller (helm) to leeward and trim the mainsail so the boat is on a close hauled course.
The boat should be slightly to windward of the PIW and slowly drifting down to the PIW.

QUICK-STOP (VARIATION)

Can be used when already on a close hauled course. This has the same advantages as the standard Quick-Stop Maneuver.

Bear off down wind, leave the head sail cleated.
Continue turning until headed down wind, ease the main as required for a controlled turn.
Jibe the boat.
Hold course down wind until the PIW is aft of abeam.
Steer toward the PIW as if picking up a mooring buoy.
    Some boats are able to sail up with the jib backwinded, others require a tack below the PIW to come to the original tack.
Ease the sheets to slow the boat alongside the PIW and stop the boat next to the PIW.
Recover the PIW.