

## **AQEC MEMORANDUM 2014-005**

### **USING BOAT HOOK FOR PERSON IN WATER RECOVERY**

#### **QUESTION:**

*“I have high freeboard on my boat and its dangerous reaching over the side to recover a person in the water. Why can't I use a boat hook?”*

#### **AQEC/SNC RESPONSE:**

*This has been a topic of discussion over the years. There are numerous type boat hooks for small boat use and some are dangerous. To say you can use a boat hook in general terms, may be dangerous to the person in the water (PIW).*



*The goal for recovering a person in the water is to get them on board in the most efficient means possible without injuring the crew or the person in the water.*

*We see a variety of boat hooks while conducting QE checkrides and numerous ways on how the PIW is brought on board. It boils down to a risk management issue and what is the safest way to recover a PIW for both the person on board attempting to reach over the gunnel without falling overboard to bring the PIW aboard or maneuvering the PIW to the boarding ladder or swim platform. A person with short arms versus a person with longer arms can be the difference in whether to use a boat hook or not or whether freeboard is a determining factor. The above photos show different types of boat hooks that we see on Aux boats. We also see all shapes, sizes and physical conditions of Coxswains and Crews and best practices must dictate how to perform the required task.*

*Refer to page #2 for additional information.*

*The Boat Crew Qualification Guide for Coxswain states:*

**COX-07-02-AUX - Recover A Person From the Water Using The Direct Pick-Up Method**

- + Made approach based on the predominant forces. Facility slowed as final approach made.*
- + Maneuvered alongside PIW.*
- + Placed engine(s) in neutral when PIW was abeam of the boat.*
- + Made all steering adjustments, keeping the boat's stern away from the PIW.*
- + Directed pickup man to recover the PIW at the boat's lowest freeboard.*
- + Ensured crewmembers did not endanger themselves while retrieving PIW.*
- + Made an initial patient assessment and simulated administering first aid as needed.*

*The Coxswain Qualification Guide does not reference the use of a boat hook; however does specify the CX maneuver the boat alongside the PIW for the pickup. Bringing the person aboard is the key to the recovery process and depending on conditions it is the Coxswain's call. As a general rule for a QE mission, the PIW should be recovered at the lowest freeboard. If there is a high freeboard and it is impossible to bring the person aboard without jeopardizing the safety of the crew and the PIW, then using a boat hook is authorized to maneuver the person to a swim platform or boarding ladder.*

*If the boat you are using has a low freeboard, maneuvering the boat for a PIW recovery is the preferred method.*

***The Boat Crew Seamanship Manual (20-36) states:***

***Chapter 20 - Heavy Weather Addendum***

*“The use of the boat hook must not be ruled out if the PIW is too far away to retrieve by hand. It is better to use a boat hook and recover on the first approach than to back down or run stern to the surf/swell to make another approach. There may only be one chance to make the rescue – it has to be good!”*

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