

Preparing for an ORCV equipment audit

What to expect

An equipment audit is an inspection conducted by an accredited National Equipment Auditor (NEA) who represents Australian Sailing. It does not remove or replace the owner's ultimate responsibility for safety, nor does it cover crew training/experience or an assessment of hull structure, stability or integrity. The audit is simply an independent assessment that the owner has complied with Australian Sailing Special Regulations and it is valid until the end of June each year. For that reason, the owner must self-audit prior to each race to ensure compliance. An Equipment Audit form is available on the Australian Sailing (AS) website

<http://www.sailing.org.au/sport-services/safety/nea-scheme/>

The compliance requirements are set by Australian Sailing in the Blue e-book together with any updates available on the AS website. <http://www.sailing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/170601-Special-Regulations-Part-1-Keelboats-1.pdf>



The requirements set out in the Special Regulations are the minimum requirements each designated Category of Race. The ORCV and other Clubs often categorise a race as a nominated Category "plus" (e.g. "Category 2 plus") indicating that additional items are needed. These are all clearly laid out in the Notice of Race. For people new to ocean racing the Special Regulations can appear overwhelming, but there is plenty of assistance and advice available to owners via the ORCV. For owners renewing, the process should be a lot easier the second time.

While some requirements are "black and white", others require a degree of interpretation. In such cases, the national body (AS) sets policy and provides guidance to the auditors.

People frustrated by the need for, or interpretation of, a requirement should **not** take that out on the auditor. Auditors are volunteers and they do not set the rules. In the case of a dispute, there is a well-defined resolution process involving other auditors and the ORCV and ultimately owners may refer the matter to AS for an Interpretation, in accordance with SR 1.01.5.

The audit is ideally a one off audit (renewed annually), taking about an hour and a half. More often than not, it includes a short "revisit" to verify resolution of a "short list" of items needing further work. The revisit should take no longer than 15mins. Any audit taking longer than an hour and a half, or requiring two or more revisits is indicative of poor preparation by the owner and will incur a fee.

Preparations – 6 weeks before you need it

Why 6 weeks? Because preparation takes 2 to 3 times longer than you think! Firstly, download the relevant audit form from ORCV 'race documents' and AS web sites. Work through the list yourself, with the Blue e-book beside you, and make your own list. Remember the Blue e-Book and Notice of Race takes precedence over any checklists the ORCV or other clubs might produce. You will end up with lists; things to check, things to buy, things to fix.

It will take a couple of weeks to prepare the first time around and make sure the crew all help.

Requirements come in four main categories:

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1. The actual boat
2. Stuff that typically lives on the boat
3. Stuff that lives in the shed(s)
4. Personal (crew owned) gear

When an auditor checks, they are going to first want to know that you have it, secondly, know it's in service/it works, and finally that you know how to use it. This is particularly the case for the more complex things like emergency steering.

A couple of tips:

- Proving something is in service is much easier if you have with you copies of the service certificates
- Personal (crew owned) gear and certificates are the hardest things to collect and keep in one place, you need all of the crew gear present for the audit
- Sometimes it is helpful to take photos of more complex things like the emergency steering set up on the boat. This provides the added advantage of helping with crew training
- Medical kits take weeks to collate, allowing for documentation a pharmacist may need (see ORCV web site and/or contact the ORCV office for this), time to order in items not normally kept in stock and tracking down some of the more obscure items. Laminate a summary of each kit along with expiry dates, ensure it is visible on the kit.
- Stuff needs to be on the boat for the audit, not in the locker or off getting serviced
- Involve the crew, especially watch leads. It is not safe for only one person to know what and where each safety item is.

Preparations – 4 weeks before you need it

First find an auditor and book the audit. A list of auditors is available on the ORCV Web site and the ORCV Yearbook. Nothing is more stressful, for everyone involved than a late audit. Respect people's time; give them at least 1 week's notice.



Next job – Do your own audit !!

If you do your own audit first, you will soon realise any obvious shortcomings.

Preparations – 2 weeks before you need it (the day of the audit)

On the day of the audit, with the owner present, lay out all the equipment in the boat so as to make the audit fast and easy. The auditor will love you for that.

Also listen, ask questions and get involved with the audit; it is a great chance to find better solutions for things as the auditors have seen lots of boats and various solutions to compliance problems. They are generally happy to help.



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Please don't leave your audit till the last minute. Ideally a month before the first race is sufficient time. Unnecessary stress for boat owners and auditors, not to mention office staff who need to collate all your documentation can easily be avoided.

Preparations – Race day

It goes without saying that the boat and gear presented for the audit should be the same or better than the boat and gear for the race. There are disturbing anecdotes of people trying to “bend” the rules; borrowing gear for audits, tipping out what they consider “excess” water or fuel requirements, leaving items deliberately at home. The Notice of Race requires a compliant boat for the race start, so for that reason owners are encouraged to self-audit again before they leave the dock and ensure their boat complies.

Safety spot checks will be done prior to the race, so if something is missing, the boat will be deemed non-compliant and will be unable to race. A check may be also done at the finish of the race too!

Finally, owners are reminded of some of the key Fundamental Rules of sailing:

- Rule 1.1: Helping those in danger
- Rule 1.2: Life-saving equipment and personal buoyancy
- Rule 3: Acceptance of the rules
- Rule 4: Decision to Race

As well as Special Regulation 1.02 : Owner's Responsibility:

- Safety sole and inescapable responsibility of Person in Charge
- Seaworthiness of the vessel
- Experienced Crew
- Training
- Soundness of rigging and safety equipment

As well as local state boating regulations.



Have fun, we want you to race

But more importantly we want you to come home again!!