

COVENTRY LAKE WATER SKI CLUB OBSERVER TRAINING MANUAL



COVENTRY LAKE WATER SKI CLUB WATER SKI BOAT OBSERVER TRAINING OUTLINE

The following items will be reviewed with prospective boat observers prior to acting as observers:

- Duties and responsibilities of the observer
- USA Water Ski and CT state water ski observer requirements
- Rope management
- Fallen skiers
- Emergency rescue techniques
- Skier hand and arm signals
- Securing the rope(s) to the boat

Duties and Responsibilities:

The boat observer or spotter is an integral part of the ski club safety team. Their primary responsibility is the safety of the persons being towed behind the boat. They accomplish this by observing the skier from take off through landing to ensure that they maintain control, pass skier hand and arm signals between the skier and the driver, inform the driver of fallen skiers and other dangerous situations, provide emergency water rescue as needed, and helping skiers out of the water if necessary.

In addition to water skier safety, they are responsible for rope management and helping the boat driver to maintain the boat at the dock when preparing for the next skier(s). Observers will have no other responsibilities (camera operator, etc) while in the boat. Other riders will refrain from distracting the observer, and the observer will attempt to avoid distraction. Observers may have to operate a tow rope trick release and/or ensure that the water ski boom is correctly installed in the boat.

USA Water Ski and CT water ski observer minimum requirements:

USA Water Ski mandates that all observers wear a Type III Personal Floatation Device (PFD) whenever they are performing their duties so that they can quickly enter the water to assist a fallen skier as needed.

CT state law states that an observer must be at least 12 years of age and facing the person(s) being towed.

Rope Management:

Actions at the pick-up location:

When the boat is at the skier pick up location the observer is responsible for managing the ropes once the skiers hand them over. The observer will verify that the number of ropes correspond with the number of skiers requiring them, and secure them to the trick release, pylon or tower as appropriate. This can be

accomplished either directly or through the use of a Twink, which is a short rope with a loop on each end used to attach several tow ropes to a single point. Directions for attaching the rope to the attachment points are included at the end of this document.

Once the rope(s) are secured to the boat, the observer will ensure that the ropes pass safely in front of all skiers. The observer will sit in the seat next to the driver and confirm with the driver the amount of skiers and that the ropes are securely attached to the boat. The observer will monitor the ropes as they uncoil from the skier or out of the boat to ensure that there are no knots/tangles/snags and alert the driver if one exists. If one is identified the observer will alert the driver, clear the rope of tangles, knots, or snags, ensure that the skier still has the handle and that the rope is secured to the pylon or tower, and alert the driver that it is safe to continue. They will inform the driver when all of the slack is out of the ropes and if there are fallen skiers during take off.

Additionally, when the driver is pulling skiers off a dock provide additional forward visual assistance in the drivers "blind spot". This is to the right of the driver if he is turning his head left and to the left of the driver if he is turning his head right.

Actions while pulling skiers:

Observers will monitor the tow rope(s) to ensure that they do not come loose from the attachment point(s) on the boat, that there are no snags or tangles, that they stay clear of the boat running gear, that skiers do not drop the handle while being towed, and alert the driver if these conditions exist. If a skier falls, the observer will follow the procedures outlined in the fallen skier section below.

Actions while landing skiers:

As the skiers prepare to land they will let go of the rope handle. The observer will inform the driver that all skiers are clear of the pull of the boat and immediately begin to pull the ropes into the boat. Once the boat is back to the skier pick-up location the observer will pass handles as a group to shore attendant who will pull ropes along shore so that the skiers can separate and coil them. When all of the ropes are clear of the boat and there is no danger of snagging or entanglement the observer will inform the driver so that they can clear the area as needed.

Fallen Skiers:

Immediate action:

If a skier or skiers fall, the observer will immediately alert the driver and watch the fallen skier(s) for the "all OK" signal. If there are other skiers behind the boat still skiing they will alert the safety boat via radio that there are skiers down and pull the fallen skier's ropes into the boat so that the remaining skiers will not run over them and be injured. If there are no other skiers remaining behind the boat the

observer will watch the fallen skier for signs of distress and pull the ski rope into the boat.

Uninjured skiers:

If the skiers are uninjured and intend to board the boat, the observer will assist the skier as necessary to load their equipment and come aboard. Once the skier(s) have been loaded they will inform the driver that they are all clear to head back to the dock.

If the skier(s) intend to deep out and continue skiing, the observer will monitor the tow rope, keeping the driver alert to its position so that the boat does not pass over it and cause entanglement with the running gear. They will assist the skier(s) in retrieving the tow rope(s) and once the skiers have indicated that they are ready to continue skiing, alert the driver. If the rope has been pulled back into the boat and the skier intends to continue skiing the observer will pass the handle to the skier and watch the rope as it is pulled out of the boat to ensure that there are no knots, tangles or snags, inform the driver when all of the slack is out of the ropes and if there are fallen skiers during take off.

Injured Skiers:

If a skier(s) is injured during a fall or if the skier does not give the “all OK” signal, the observer will alert the driver/pick up boat/safety coordinator to the situation by radio or other means. If there are still other skiers behind the boat, the observer will continue to monitor them until they have safely landed and all ropes have been either pulled into the boat or dropped off at the skier pick-up location. If necessary the boat will move to the injured skier’s location to render assistance to the pick-up boat if needed. If there are no other skiers the observer will remain seated, observe the fallen skier and monitor the ropes while the driver moves back to the skier promptly. Once at the skier’s location and it is safe to move around the boat, the observer will move to the location closest to the skier to determine if the skier is injured or unconscious. If the skier is injured and conscious, the observer will provide whatever assistance necessary, to include entering the water, but will not force the skier to board the boat or make any movements that could further injure them. The observer will wait with the injured skier for a qualified safety coordinator or medical personnel to arrive to render first aid.

Removing the fallen skier from the water:

If the fallen skier is unable to climb aboard the safety boat with little or no assistance, the event needs to be stopped and the victim needs to be floated to shore with appropriate care being given by the observer. Under no circumstances shall an injured skier be hauled passively over the side of the boat. A swim platform is not intended for transportation of injured skiers, however there may be a rare occasion in which this may be done

Emergency Rescue Techniques:

If a skier is unconscious, the observer will immediately enter the water, stabilize the skier, and ensure that their face is out of the water so that they are able to breathe. Only move the skier to ensure that their life is preserved; no other movement will be attempted except by qualified safety personnel. If the skier is face down and unconscious, the observer will stabilize the skier's head, neck, and spine, and roll the skier over using the water rescue roll-over technique. To do this, approach the skier from the side and using your hands, clamp their upper body in your arms while using one hand to cup the back of their head and the other to grasp their chin, stabilizing their upper body while moving them as little as possible. Once you have stabilized their upper body, roll them over you, keeping your arms and hand firmly clamped to them, minimizing their movement. Once you have rolled them onto their back, clear their airway and check to see if they are breathing. **Provide only those measures that are necessary to preserve life!** Use common sense and do what is necessary to ensure the victim's survival.

Skier hand and arm signals:

Due to the amount of noise created by the boat and rushing of the wind and the water it is difficult for the observer to communicate with the skier. Skiers will communicate with the boat driver and observer using a variety of hand and arm signals. These signals can be used by either the skier, observer or driver to ensure clear communication:

The seven skier hand signals



1. Increase Boat Speed



2. Decrease Boat Speed



3. Turn Boat Around



4. Return To The Dock



5. Immediately Stop The Boat



6. I'm O.K.

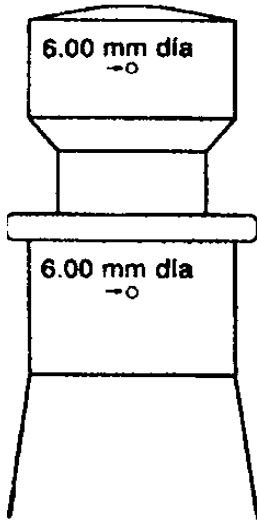


7. Skier Is O.K. After A Fall

1. **Increase boat speed:** Point the thumb upwards while holding the handle with the other hand.
2. **Decrease boat speed:** Point the thumb downwards while holding the handle with the other hand.
3. **Turn Boat around:** Point your finger upwards; you can also make small circles with it while pointing towards the sky and holding the handle with your other hand.
4. **Return to the dock/starting point:** Pat the top of your head several times while holding the handle with your other hand.
5. **Immediately stop the boat:** Make a cutting motion with across your throat with your hand while holding the handle with the other hand. To make a controlled stop, point in the direction that you wish to drop, or that you wish the skier to drop (usually the driver's side) after making the cutting motion. The boat will pull out towards in the direction opposite the direction that you pointed and the skier should turn and ski in the direction in which you pointed. The boat will come to a stop and the speed created by the maneuver will allow the skier to ski closer to the boat. The skier should ski in such a manner that allows them to stop prior to reaching the boat.
6. **I'm OK:** The skier joins his thumb and finger together at the tips forming an "o" while holding the other fingers up.
7. **Skier is OK after a fall:** Skier reaches up with both hands and clasps them over his head **OR** clearly waves at the boat, indicating that they are OK.

Securing ropes to the boat:

Tow ropes can be attached to the boat in various ways, depending on the type of boat and how it is equipped. A water-ski boat has a pylon that rises from the floor to a height that makes it roughly level for the skier's waist. It is designed to accept tow ropes, and can also be outfitted with various other pieces of equipment, such as trick releases and boom mounts. If the boat has a wakeboard tower, you will find that it has a rope attachment point similar to the top of the pylon located at the top center of the tower. There are different ways of securing the tow rope depending on the type of pylon the boat is equipped with.



Common Ski Pylon

The "Twist-Tie" Technique: The most common pylon you will find has a larger diameter top so that the rope will not easily slip over it. To attach the rope, you can put the loop over the top, flip it over so that the rope "X"s on itself, then put the bottom of the "x" back over the pylon so that the rope is snug to it.



The "Twist-Tie" Technique.

The "Bight" Technique: If the top of the pylon is too large to allow the "X" technique, you can reach through the loop and grab a piece of the rope, pull it through the loop, and put it on the pylon. When pulled tight, the rope will snug up against the pylon.



The “Bight” technique.

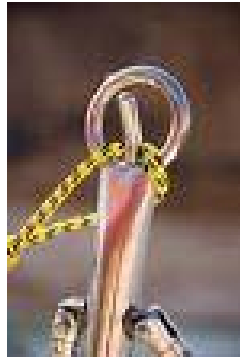
Other Methods: If you are adjusting the length of the rope to a point that has no loop, you can tie a simple knot will not damage the rope, will hold the rope tight when pressure is applied from the handle end, but will untie easily when worked from the loop end. To tie the knot, determine how long you want the rope to be, hold the spot indicating the desired length up to the pylon, and wrap the rope three times around the pylon, starting at the desired spot and working from the loop end. Once the rope is wrapped around the pylon three times, make a loop in the handle side, flip it on to the pylon and pull it tight. This should cause the rope to tighten around the pylon and itself in such a way that it won't slip when pulled from the handle end. Once the rope is tight, coil the remaining loop end and stow it behind the pylon so that it is out of the way.



“Loop and Finger” type pylon

The other type of pylon you will find in a ski boat the “Loop and Finger” type which consists of a large metal loop with a small metal finger sticking out of it at an angle towards the front of the boat. This type of pylon is commonly found on Ski Nautique ski boats. To attach the rope to this type of pylon, thread the rope through the metal loop and hook it around the metal finger using the “X” pattern

described above. An alternate method is to put the loop over the metal loop and push it down to the bottom so that it rests behind the metal finger.



**“Loop and Finger”
attachment method**

Operating a Trick Release:

The trick release is a mechanism that holds a tow rope when a skier is being towed behind the boat but cannot easily let go of the rope in the event of a fall. The release trigger is a piece of rope attached to a lever that is operated by an observer in the boat. When the skier falls, the observer pulls the trigger rope which activates the lever, releasing the rope pin and tow rope. Trick skiers, swivel skiers, adiago doubles, trios, and other show ski acts utilize the trick ski release due to being attached to the tow rope using a harness, or strapping the rope onto their feet or in some other manner in which it cannot easily be released. To load the trick release, pull the trigger rope and release the pin from the lever, put the pin through the loop of the twink or the tow rope, and push the pin back up into the lever, locking it into place. The observer is required to hold the release trigger the entire time that the skier is attached to the release. Show ski safety regulations require that the observer hold no more than one trick release trigger in each hand. If it necessary to trigger the release, the observer will alert the driver and monitor the rope to ensure that it does not become entangled in the boat running gear. Also, signal skier to disconnect his/her harness release if a fall occurs.

Common Trick Release.



Using a “Twink”:

A Twink is a piece of nylon braided rope with a closed loop on each end that is used to attach several tow ropes to a single pylon or Trick Release. When using a Twink to attach several ropes to the boat, the observer passes the Twink through the loops of the towropes, then passes the loop on the end of the Twink over the loop on the other end so that it locks down on itself, securing the towropes onto the twink. Attach the twink to the pylon using the methods described above.



Tow Rope Twink



Tow Ropes Attached to Twink



Twink attached to Pylon

If you follow the guidelines and instructions outlined above, you will be able to ensure a safe, constructive water ski session regardless of the type of skiing that you intend to do. Towed water sports techniques are all different for the varying disciplines, but the duties and responsibilities of the observer are the same for each one.