

Hovercrafting (until Jan 2010)



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Introduction

This factsheet is a briefing note to Leaders and Instructors detailing the necessary safety checks to be undertaken prior to and during the activity of hovercrafting. It also details the assessment procedure for adults seeking to operate hovercraft as a Scout activity, prior to January 2010, where a County has not yet implemented the Hovercrafting Permit Scheme. From January 2010 (or earlier if the County had implemented the Hovercrafting Permit Scheme), please use the new factsheets produced to support this updated scheme.

It is NOT a technical document and does not contain any information on the building, operation or driving of hovercraft.

Flight Briefing

Before any Scout is taken on a hovercraft flight, no matter what kind, he must be fully briefed. At a minimum the following information should be given:

1 Helmet

Helmets are to be worn at all times when on board the craft. Should be a good fit and capable of adjustment.

2 Buoyancy Aid

Buoyancy aids are to be worn at all times when on board the craft, with particular emphasis when the craft is operating over water. During a land-based operation a buoyancy aid should be regarded as additional padding against knocks. It should be sized and adjusted to requirement.

3 Purpose of the Flight

Every flying experience should have a purpose. It should be explained to the Scout along with the method of achievement.

4 During the Flight

Explain the sensations of a hovercraft flight - in particular the operation of the fans, noise levels and the operation of the ground effect. It should be explained that the driver is often fully occupied before and during the flight with the primary duty of ensuring the safety of the passengers and the craft. Instruction should be given in the correct method of stopping the hovercraft in the event of an emergency.

Operational Area

Strict attention should be given to the safety aspects of the area being used for the flight. Carry through a full risk assessment procedure with particular emphasis on spectator safety, debris hazards to craft and individuals, and the management of the Scouts who are not directly involved in flying at the time. As with all other forms of air activity, this last group should under the control of a designated Leader with no other responsibilities.

It is strongly recommended that operations should not be carried out over tidal waters. If this is unavoidable, then plans must be in place for rescue and recovery in the event of breakdown over water or mud.

Operator Assessment and Authorisation Members of the Hovercraft Club of Great Britain (HCGB) may be either competition or cruising drivers.

The former are licensed by the HCGB and have to complete a 'rolling' series of events to retain their qualification. A logbook system exists, but is not mandatory to the granting of a licence. Where it does exist, it may be taken as evidence of competence.

Many cruising drivers hold a licence issued by the HCGB and may also hold a logbook - but neither is mandatory and they may well have been issued to either novice or experienced practitioner. In these circumstances it is therefore necessary for the Assistant County/Area Commissioner (Air Activities) or County/Area Air Activity Adviser to institute assessment procedures in common with other forms of hazardous activity.

Checks should include membership of the HCGB, a history of active hovercraft usage and a practical assessment arranged with the regional organisation of the Club. Contact telephone and fax numbers and Internet

Craft Safety

The HCGB issues its Design and Construction Requirements annually and all hovercraft should meet prevailing standards. Competition craft are inspected at every event; cruising craft are subject to annual checks. Craft logbooks should record conformity.

Skills Acquisition

As with all air activities, hovercraft flights should be used as an opportunity to acquire new skills or to improve existing ones. Ensure that all flights are progressive in this context.

Contact

Hovercraft Club of Great Britain – Membership and experience checks:

Racing drivers: 01322 700658

Cruising drivers: 01705 584371