

## Risk Assessment – Cruiser Sailing Passage to Marchwood (Southampton Water)

Activity: Skippered small craft passage (sailing cruiser)

Location: St Denys Boat Club (River Itchen) to Marchwood (Southampton Water)

Activity Type: Skippered club passage – skipper-led dynamic risk management

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### Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a supervised cruiser sailing passage from St Denys Boat Club to Marchwood in Southampton Water. The route transits a high-density commercial port area with frequent movements of cruise ships, container ships, Ro-Ro and tanker traffic, often supported by tugs. Particular risks include close-quarters situations around Dock Head, large-vessel turning and swinging movements near berths, and restricted-visibility procedures that can limit safe small-craft operations. Conservative routing, strong lookout discipline, and close adherence to Southampton VTS navigation guidance are required, with clear go/no-go thresholds for visibility and weather.

### Participant Responsibilities

All crew are responsible for supporting their own safety and that of the vessel. Crew must follow the skipper's instructions, wear lifejackets at all times on deck, assist with lookout duties, and be ready for rapid sail/engine manoeuvres in response to traffic. Crew must maintain a tidy deck and secure loose gear to reduce trip hazards.

### Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures (Port / Solent guidance aligned)	Risk Level	Further Actions
Large commercial shipping in Southampton Water (UK's major cruise, container and Ro-Ro port)	All on board / other vessels	Collision; severe injury; vessel damage	Keep clear of main channel where practicable; cross promptly at ~90°; do not impede constrained-by-draught vessels; maintain continuous lookout; monitor	Medium	Skipper brief on crossing points and traffic peaks

			Southampton VTS; engine ready		
Restricted visibility and 'Dock Head pass' constraints in the Port of Southampton area	All on board / other vessels	Collision or grounding in poor visibility	Avoid transits in restricted visibility; slow down; enhanced lookout; sound signals; comply with port navigation guidance and abort if visibility below agreed threshold	Medium	Define visibility go/no-go; carry fog signals and ensure radar reflector
Tug operations (escorting/assisting large vessels) – tow lines, wash, sudden manoeuvres	All on board / other vessels	Allision/collision ; injury from wash	Give tugs wide berth; do not pass between tug and ship; anticipate tow line; maintain predictable course; reduce speed in wash	Medium	Include tug/escort briefing and 'no-cross' rule
Container ships and other large vessels swinging/turning near Marchwood berth / Dock Head area	All on board / other vessels	Collision risk due to large turning circle and limited visibility from ship	Stay well clear of turning basins and berths; avoid loitering; keep out of ship's blind sector; do not cross close ahead; follow VTS traffic advice	Medium	Route plan to keep outside turning areas; use AIS awareness if available
Wash and wind effects from cruise ships and fast commercial craft	All on board	Loss of control; crew falls; gear damage	Secure loose gear; reef early; maintain safe offing; reduce speed and take wash at safe angle; keep crew seated/holding-on during wake	Medium	Brief crew on wake management and seating rules
Crossing/operating near ferry routes and high leisure traffic around Southampton Water entrances	All on board / other craft	Close-quarters situations; collision	Enhanced lookout; avoid cutting across known routes; make early, obvious course changes; maintain separation	Medium	Time passage to avoid peak ferry/cruise movement windows
Grounding risk near shore/shallows when avoiding traffic (temptation to hug edges)	All on board	Grounding; damage; delay	Maintain safe under-keel clearance; use charts and depth alarms; avoid uncharted shortcuts; plan safe 'waiting' areas with adequate depth	Medium	Pre-plan contingency holding areas outside channels
Man overboard (cold water, strong tidal streams, commercial wash)	Individual overboard	Drowning; hypothermia; separation	Lifejackets worn; MOB drill; recovery aids ready; immediate action plan; consider tethering on deck in rough conditions	High	Confirm recovery capability and roles
Mechanical failure in confined water (engine/steering) with	All on board /	Loss of control; collision;	Pre-departure checks; anchor ready; sails ready; VHF ready; tow plan; avoid committing to high-traffic zones	Medium	Mandatory engine test and steering check

traffic	other vessels	grounding	without reliable propulsion		before departure
Crew slips/trips during frequent manoeuvres (busy port environment)	All on board	Sprains, fractures, overboard risk	Non-slip footwear; tidy decks; brief on safe movement; keep hands clear of winches/cleats; assign clear roles	Medium	Skipper to supervise sail/line handling in high workload phases

### General Notes

- Passage planning must include tidal gates, weather margins, and clearly defined abort points.
- A float plan must be filed with a shore contact including route, crew list, and ETAs.
- VHF: monitor appropriate port and harbour working channels; Channel 16 for distress only.
- Review annually or following any incident, near miss, or significant route change.