

## **SAFETY BULLETIN 01 OF 2022:**

### **RIB & Small Commercial Vessel Passengers**

#### **(need to declare relevant pre-existing medical conditions)**

This Safety Bulletin is issued following three accidents to passengers aboard two small commercial Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIB) with different operators between 15<sup>th</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

On each occasion the passenger was seated in a forward 'Jockey Seat', a forward-facing seat where the passenger sits astride, and sustained a back injury. On two occasions this consisted on a fracture to one of their spinal vertebrae and in all cases muscle damage. Fortunately, all are expected to make a full recovery.

On two of the three occasions it was subsequently discovered that the casualty had a pre-existing medical condition that had not been declared to the operator at the time of booking. In one case the passenger concerned had suffered, for over 20 years, with osteoarthritis in her back but, as it had not significantly affected her activities, had not reported it when her party booked either this or previous trips. In the second case the passenger concerned was undergoing medical treatment and taking medication for a kidney and back condition, which had also not been declared. In the third case the passenger had no knowledge of any pre-existing condition.

The results of this unfortunate lack of disclosure in two cases meant that, given the relatively benign conditions, there was no reason for the skipper intervening with the group's individual seat choices. The three injured passengers had each chosen one of the forward seats, rather than a seat further aft, despite having been advised, and in two cases being aware from previous trips, that these seats experienced more motion.

The voyages were all appropriately planned and executed and in each case the vessels were operating at reduced speeds (of between ten and eighteen knots) when the vessels experienced a slamming motion. On each occasion the passenger signaled to the Skipper that they were now suffering from back pain. The vessel was then manoeuvred to enable the skipper to attend to and assess the passenger. In two cases the voyages were immediately aborted, and arrangements made to slowly return to Saint Helier, where ambulances were arranged to meet the vessel. In the third case the injured passenger asked for the voyage to proceed but shortly after the voyage was aborted and the vessel diverted to St Catherine's where all passengers were transferred to St Helier by minibus, dropping the injured passenger at Accident and Emergency.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Passengers are reminded that the medical declaration part of the booking forms for RIB trips and trips on other small commercial vessels are there for your safety, and care should be taken in completing them. Please also take full account of any seating guidance and other information given during pre-departure briefings which are also for your own safety.

In addition to declarations made by or on behalf of passengers at the point of booking; operators are requested to implement procedures to ensure that each passenger is again requested to confirm their medical declaration prior to boarding. This enables any changes to passenger fitness since the time of booking to be picked up and for the skipper to make appropriate decisions as to suitability for travel and with respect to seating arrangements, and vessel routing, in view of the circumstances and anticipated sea conditions.

06 April 2022