

A SAFE WAY TO GET your PWs afloat

Paul Glatzel, RYA Trainer and Centre Inspector, discusses his experiences of the new RYA/PYA Personal Watercraft course for Superyachts

Using PWs (Personal Watercraft) from yachts is becoming increasingly difficult. Some areas ban them altogether, while others require a licence for their use. Although there are relatively few accidents, they tend to achieve a disproportionate level of publicity, perhaps due to the very emotional response some people have to these water toys.

It was against this backdrop that the PYA approached the RYA (Royal Yachting Association) to find a solution. The result was the creation of a new course - the RYA Introduction to PW Safety, which could be run by superyachts recognised as RYA training centres. The course was launched in early 2007 and the first superyacht to achieve recognition was MY Kogo.

My involvement began with Kogo, training their instructors and assisting in the recognition process. Since then, I've run many PW instructor courses for this sector and worked with many yachts to achieve recognition across the Med and further afield.

My aim here is to share my experiences, both in training the crews and getting the yachts recognised, helping you to decide whether it's for you.

What is the course?

In brief, RYA PW instructors on a superyacht run a short course (recognised by the RYA) to give guests a good understanding of how to helm a PW safely and avoid collisions. Typically, the course will last about an hour, with the guest receiving a certificate confirming they can 'operate a PW in good conditions under supervision'.

Who does it suit?

The course works best when the Captain is 100% supportive of the instructors. They can help their instructors through a strong guest briefing and supporting those faced with guests who consider they are a gift to the world of PWs and don't need to do the course.

Equally, the management company has a big part to play. Yachts insisting on 'Water Toys Indemnification' forms being signed before anyone plays with anything are creating an environment where safety is seen to be key. This reinforces the support for the instructors and affords everyone greater protection in the event of an incident.

What are the benefits?

From an owner's or charter agent's point of view, the benefit is potentially a more attractive yacht, and thus more bookings. I've been on a few yachts that had simply stopped operating PWs - far from ideal for the guests. The course enables PWs to be used in a structured, managed way resulting in certification that can be presented to the relevant authorities.

From a Captain's or crew's perspective, the ability to issue an internationally recognised certificate carrying the RYA logo helps when dealing with the authorities. The structure of the course and the skills of the instructor help improve the experience for the guests - even the difficult ones!

Additionally, if there is an accident and the yacht can produce a structured, recognised process for the operation of PWs, this will help the Captain and crew in their interaction with the authorities and potentially, the local Police. If the yacht has been following the procedures set out by the RYA, then the RYA is likely to take a proactive position in any subsequent investigation.

So, how is the course going?

Momentum takes a while to build and, while a good number of yachts sought recognition in 2007, many more have done so in 2008. This upward trend looks set to continue as a number of charter agents strongly advise their yachts to undertake to become recognised. Crew are also realising the value of the instructor qualification in improving their position in the job market.

If you think this is for you...

Be aware that you can't achieve training centre status overnight. If your boss is on board this weekend and you want to get recognised within four days, it isn't going to happen! Whilst the process is not overly onerous, you will need to spend time getting the rules and procedures created and documented.

Instructor courses are not run every week, so you need to plan ahead, and the RYA inspector will need to visit you wherever you are in the world.

To run the RYA Introduction to PW Safety course, the yacht needs two things:

1. One or more RYA PW Instructors on board
2. Recognition as an RYA training centre

Becoming an instructor

Prior to training as an instructor you need:

- at least two years' PW experience
- a good level of theory knowledge, eg charts, tides, buoyage, collision regs etc
- the RYA Personal Watercraft Proficiency Certificate - this one day course is often run immediately before the instructor course.

The instructor course lasts three days and qualifies the instructor to teach both the one day course at a normal shorebased centre, and the shorter course on a superyacht.

Be prepared!

- Make sure your theory knowledge is up to scratch. 'We don't do tides in the Med' is not an acceptable response when the instructor ticket qualifies you to teach in tidal locations.
- You must be able to talk lucidly about all of the areas of the one day course.
- It's one thing being able to drive a bike fast and jump waves, but you need to show your ability to bring the bike alongside the teaching platform - typically a RIB.
- Practice slow speed manoeuvres
- Ensure your slow speed, close quarters boat handling is up to speed before the course - some basic practice will generally suffice.

If you are sending crew on a course, give them plenty of notice so they can prepare. Too many find out the night before, which materially reduces their chances of success. It can be a demanding course.

Becoming an RYA recognised training centre

To gain recognition you need to:

- define key operating rules and procedures regarding the use of PWs.
- ensure that everyone involved understands and applies these rules every time PWs are launched (whether for guests or crew)
- have a safety craft afloat whenever PWs are deployed, which is kitted out to a certain level.
- keep a record of courses run and certificates issued
- make local assessments to check the suitability of your operating area for PWs
- have a suitably qualified person supervising PW operations

If these rules are not applied universally, the yacht cannot maintain training centre status. In my experience, most well run yachts already apply most of them.

Full information on instructor training and applying to be a recognised training centre is available from the RYA on: training@rya.org.uk, or call +44 2380 604100

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A note from Paul Mara, the RYA's Chief Power Instructor

Since the start of this new course, I have been impressed by the standards maintained on board the superyachts I have visited. These standards indicate a highly safety-motivated sector, which is a credit to the Captains and crews involved.

If you have any queries about the course, please do get in touch.

Whether you are looking to work as crew onboard a yacht, or looking for crew to work on your yacht, do not hesitate to contact CNI crew placement offices at: crew@ftl.cnyachts.com (USA) or db@ant.cnyachts.com (Europe)

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- RYA Personal Watercraft Instructor Courses ~ at RYA Centres and on yachts.
- Production of documentation for yachts to become RYA Training Centres.

We have extensive experience of the production of documentation having done so for over half of all yachts that have become recognised and have run numerous Instructor courses for the sector.

[superyachtuk](http://superyachtuk.com) [British Marine](http://BritishMarine.com) [RYA Training Centre](http://RYATrainingCentre.com) [YACHTSMEN'S](http://YACHTSMEN'S.com)

For a no obligation discussion and advice about your yacht becoming a RYA Training Centre contact Paul Glatzel on +44 1202 686666 or via paul@powerboattraininguk.co.uk | www.powerboattraininguk.co.uk

Help your guests to play safe

The RYA Introduction to PW Safety Course gives you peace of mind, while your guests have fun afloat.

Basic training in high and low speed driving skills and safety awareness.

For details of how to offer this course contact:
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