



Disability Awareness

Ask sailors how their disabilities may affect their sailing, and how you may help.

Avoid the assumption that all people who use wheelchairs are without movement or feeling below the waist, or that all people using white sticks are totally blind (but be aware that they may be!).

Managing a disability is very much the responsibility of the individual concerned. However, able-bodied assistants should be aware that:

- Travelling to a sailing club in a remote location may pose a problem for someone who can not drive. Public transport may be possible for some but out of the question for others.
- Where possible sailors should be involved in all aspects of sailing, including rigging, launch and retrieval, and de-rigging of boats. Sailors who are not physically able to be involved, can instruct or supervise a volunteer.
- Moving around the site is an important consideration. Mud, sand, soft or slippery surfaces are difficult for the less agile. Rough terrain is hazardous for people with visual impairment.
- Embarking and disembarking is not easy and can be assisted by using the correct equipment.
- Moving around the boat must be considered. Will it be necessary to provide an additional thwart or a sliding seat?

Safety of sailors with disabilities is a priority as it is with all sailors. A lack of balance, mobility or agility may require extra support, seats, harnesses and extra consideration needs to be given to the most suitable buoyancy aids.

Time afloat must be discussed with sailors so that they know what is planned and how they are to 'manage' their needs.

Weather conditions often dictate the comfort of someone who can not move around much in the boat, or has poor temperature control. Similarly, rough seas and strong winds can be especially challenging for sailors who are less physical able.

Sailors themselves are the best to identify any needs and considerations that might impact on their involvement. Additional support can be sought from professionals (e.g. physio/occupational therapist) and also other groups around NZ who have experience making sailing accessible to many regardless of ability.