



Club Accessibility

Accessible facilities benefit all club members whether disabled, ageing, or simply burdened with kit. If facilities are right for people with obvious disabilities, they are excellent for others.

Jetties

Jetties should be stable and wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass safely. Depressions in the surface should be sufficiently narrow to avoid tripping people and jamming wheelchair/walking frame castors etc. A raised edge guides partially sighted sailors and reduces the chances of wheelchairs (occupied or otherwise) and other mobility aids being 'lost overboard'.

Avoid wide, unstable fenders such as rubber tyres. They increase the space between the boat and the jetty, and make transfers more difficult.

Ramps to the jetty should have handrails. The surface of the ramp should have transverse strips wide enough to give a good footing for a walker but short enough to allow the wheels of a chair to pass.

If it is impossible to use jetties, some sailors may be able to transfer into moored keel boats from rubber tenders. It may be possible to use the rigging (boom etc.) to assist.

Shore

If a boat must be launched from the shore, it is essential that a firm, smooth beach is selected for the purpose. Old carpets can be laid over soft or muddy surfaces. Heavy duty rubber matting provides a longer lasting solution.

Building Access

Doors and Steps- A stiff door and a high threshold can be difficult for a wheelchair user and someone with limited mobility. Both sides of a threshold should be ramped.

Colour contrast in the environment will assist sailors with a visual impairment.

You may consider approaching your local government, sports council or charities for grant aid to assist with making buildings and facilities accessible.

Much advice is available for making buildings accessible for people with disabilities. You could contact, <http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz>, and consider attending a "No Exceptions Training" course run by the Halberg Disability Sports Foundation.



Transferring to/from boats

All sailors and volunteers should wear lifejackets when on the jetty, and sailing. Sailors using wheelchairs should (when not required for positioning) ensure lap belts and other restraints are undone when on a jetty.

For the well-being of both sailors and helpers, it is essential to learn the best way to transfer safely into and out of a boat. This will be individual to each sailor.

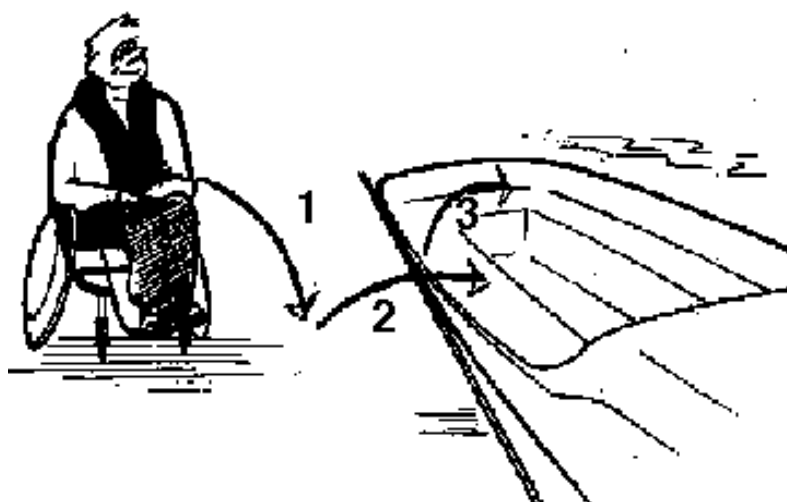
Good communication is the key to success. Discuss together the needs of the sailor and the demands of the situation; then together plan the transfer. Check whether help is needed!!

The Three Stage Transfer

It is a good idea to think of the transfer in three parts, regardless of whether a person is using a wheelchair, has difficulty walking, is visually impaired, or has an intellectual disability.

Three Stage Transfer

1. Move from the chair or standing position to a sitting position on the jetty.
2. Shift the back-side from the jetty to the deck of the boat and then transfer the legs. (Some sailors prefer to transfer their legs first.)
3. Move from the deck to the cockpit

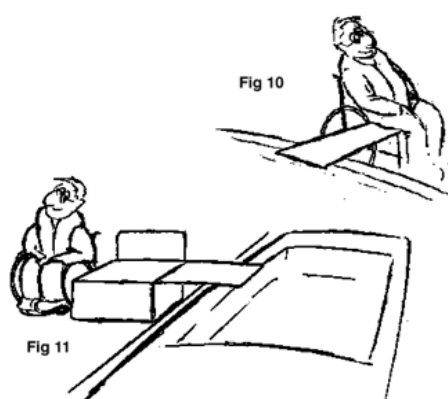




Aids to Transfer

If people with disabilities sail regularly from a fixed venue, it may be worth considering permanent aids to transfer. Such aids vary from simple to complex:

A sliding board is useful where the transfer gap is wide and the deck is at a similar height to the seat of the chair



A wharf mounted c-crane/hoist with bosun's chair or medical sling is recommended to transfer sailors who are unable to transfer independently. It is sometimes simpler to keep the sling around the sailor while sailing so that it is ready for disembarkation.

Cranes for launching boats can be used for transferring people; however, they are not for the faint-hearted.





Cushions are vital pieces of equipment for sailors with disabilities. They are:

- Essential for skin protection for those with no sensation due to paralysis
- Important for the comfort of someone with limited movement, sitting for long periods
- Useful for someone with lack of trunk stability, or in need of support to maintain a particular position e.g. to reach winches or sheets.

It is useful to have spare cushions available during transfers to use as 'stepping stones' for sailors who need constant protection. Ordinary foam wheelchair cushions can be used, but they tend to soak up water.

Before leaving the jetty, allow extra time and assistance to ensure that the sailor has orientated him/herself and has organised the boat to his/her satisfaction.

