



PORT MARINE SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Royal Escape Race 2026 (RER26)

Port Marine Safety Risk Assessment Version 2.0 - 19 January 2026
Prepared by Event Safety Officer: Richard Cooper

Event	Royal Escape Race 2026	Date	22 May 2026
Organising Authority	Sussex Yacht Club	Event Website	https://www.sussexyachtclub.org.uk/royal-escape-race/
Route	Brighton to Fécamp France	Operating Area	South Coast, Offshore, Northern France
Number of boats	Between 10 and 40 boats	Type or Design	Mixed fleet Sailing and Motor Sailing Yachts
Race Director	Louis Browne	Principle Race Office	Lou Carr
Start Race Officer	Ian Odell	Finish Race Officer	Lou Carr
VHF Channels	Ch72	Call Sign	"Royal Escape Race Control"
Supporting documents	Notice of Race (NOR) and Sailing Instructions (SIs) RER Emergency Action Plan (EAP) & Appendices A, B, C, D.		

Record of Notifications

Authority	Date informed	Authority	Date Informed
Dover VTS		Shoreham Port Authority	
Fécamp Port authority		UK Coastguard	
French Coastguard		Shoreham RNLI/NCI	

Contacts

UK Coastguard (Solent) VHF16	+44 23 9255 2100	Sussex Yacht Club	+44 1273 464868
CROSS Jobourg (French MRCC) VHF16	+33 2 33 52 72 72	Fécamp SRF	+33 2 35 28 23 50
Fécamp Port Authority VHF12	+33 2 35 10 60 00	Brighton Marina (HO) VHF 80	+44 1273 819919
Shoreham Port Authority VHF 14	+44 1273 598100	Dover VTS VHF 11	+44 1304 206063

1. Introduction

The Royal Escape Race is organised by the Sussex Yacht Club and was first raced in 1977. It marks the escape of King Charles II on the coal barge "Surprise" from Shoreham to Fécamp in France on the 15th October 1651. The race is an open event of mixed yachts and motor sailers of various sizes most of which are fully crewed but some maybe solo or double handed.

All boats are responsible for their own management and safety and for deciding whether to start or to continue in the race. Safety boats (RIBs) are only provided in the start area. All the boats are self-sufficient keelboats or multihulls with cabins, required to meet Category 3 or 4 World Sailing Offshore Special Regulations as prescribed by the NOR and SIs.

Recognising the special hazards of offshore sailing, all crew are strongly advised by the organisers to wear a life jacket with harness irrespective of the weather conditions.

The race does attract some spectator boats in the vicinity of the start area.

2. Scope and Aims of the Document

This paper assesses the likely risks that may be encountered in the race and defines the measures needed to reduce these to as low a level as reasonably practical. It sits alongside, and should be read in conjunction with, the Royal Escape Race Emergency Action Plan.

3. Racing Area

The Race area is cross English Channel from the start off Brighton in UK to the finish off Fécamp in France. The race area is outside the main shipping lanes and wind farms, all of which are listed as race prohibited areas (obstructions).

The start is located between the two piers off Brighton beach. The start vessel is "Watchful" and at least two support ribs are present to marshal competitor boats and keep spectator boats clear. These ribs are also available to the Start RO in the event of an incident in the start area.

The finish is located to the west of the harbour entrance of Fécamp.

4. Risks and Safety

There is a risk of collision and grounding, which is always present in sailing.

There is a risk of close-quarters situations between yachts racing and commercial vessels, particularly in the mid channel where the route crosses the extended tracks of (yet outside of) the Eastern Channel Traffic Separation Lanes.

There is a risk of injury to the crew of the yachts, most notably in cases of gear breakage, collision or whilst gybing (being hit by the boom).

Weather conditions such as very light or very strong winds or poor visibility may increase the above risks.

All the participating yachts are self-sufficient keelboats from about 6 metres to 12 metres in length. Drafts are mostly up to 2 metres, but a few may draw 2.5 metres or more. All are required to carry VHF radios and safety equipment in line with World Sailing Offshore Special Regulations. Most carry an AIS transponder. All competing boats are issued with a Yellow Brick Tracker.

As is normal with events of this type, the majority of safety cover is provided by competitors on a mutual help basis. Once out of the start area there is no on the water management resources.

5. Risk assessment

The control measures listed in the risk assessment table were already in place before the existence of this document. Therefore, no attempt has been made to estimate risk before control measures were in place.

Risk Level “L” implies a low level of risk, either because the probable consequence is not serious or because the likelihood of an event taking place is very low. Risk Level “M” implies a medium level of risk, because the probable consequence is more serious or the likelihood of an event is greater.

Risk type	Description of Risk	Location of Maximum Risk	Probable Consequence	Main Control Measures (Section 6)	Risk Level
Collision	1.1 Racing boat with racing boat	Start line & rounding marks	Possible damage or injury	1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.8, 1.12, 1.13, 3.8, 3.11, RRS	M
	1.2 Racing boat with spectator boat	Brighton	Possible damage or injury	IRPCAS 1.12, 1.14	L
	1.3 Racing boat with cruising boat	Channel	Possible damage or injury	IRPCAS	L
	1.4 Racing boat with commercial vessel	Shipping lanes and Fécamp Port arrival	Possible damage or injury	1.2, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.2, 2.7, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.10, 3.12, 3.13, IRPCAS	M
	1.5 Commercial vessel with spectator boat	Brighton	Possible damage or injury	IRPCAS	L
	1.6 Spectator boat with spectator or cruising boat	Brighton	Possible damage or injury	IRPCAS	L
	1.7 Racing boat with obstruction (e.g. navigation mark)	At marks of course	Possible damage or injury	1.8, 1.13, 3.11	L
	1.8 Racing boat with committee boat	At start	Possible damage or injury	1.3, 1.12, 2.2	L
Ground-ing or capsiz e	2.1 Poor navigation	Out of deep-water channels	Possible damage or injury	1.1, 3.8, 3.12	M
	2.2 Result of rig or equip- ment failure or misuse	Brighton, Fécamp & offshore	Possible damage or injury	1.7, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.12	M
	2.3 Multihull capsiz e		Probable need of external assistance	1.7, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.12	L
Boat damage	3.1 Rig or equipment failure		Minor to moderate damage	1.7, 3.4, 3.5	M
	3.2 After grounding		Nil to moderate damage	1.9, 2.3, 2.6	M
	3.3 After collision		Minor to severe damage	1.9, 2.3, 2.6	M
Personal injury	4.1 Man overboard		Possible injury, hypothermia or drowning	2.3, 2.5, 3.1	M
	4.2 Injury impacting on rescue services		Possible need for lifeboat, ambulance, or helicopter	1.4, 1.9, 2.6, 2.7	M

Other risks	5.1 High winds		Possible gear damage, collision, injury or man overboard	1.7, 2.3, 2.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.10	M
	5.2 High waves		As 5.1	1.7, 2.3, 2.5, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.10, 3.12	M
	5.3 Fog		Possible collision with damage or injury	1.7, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.10, 3.12, IRPCAS	M
	5.4 Engine failure impacting on other traffic		Possible collision with damage or injury	2.6, 2.7, 3.12, IRPCAS	L
	5.5 Close-quarters situation between racing boat & commercial vessel	Shipping lanes & Port of Fécamp	Possible collision with damage or injury	1.6, 2.2, 2.7, 2.8, 3.3, 3.4, 3.10, 3.12, 3.13	M
	5.6 Racing boat infringement of TSS	East Channel TSS	Possible collision with damage or injury; possible legal action	2.1, 2.2, 3.10, 3.12, 3.13, RRS, IRPCAS	L
	5.7 Injury to Race Officer afloat	Brighton	Possible injury	1.7, 1.8, 1.11	L

6. Primary Control Measures & Assets Planning

Measure	Comments
1.1 Use of tidal predictions	Race is across tidal flow of channel, port of arrival accessible at all tidal states.
1.2 Limit competitor numbers	Provide organisational and race management capacity to suit numbers. Entrance numbers limited by space constraints in Fecamp.
1.3 Planning of starting sequences	Set class splits and start sequence so number of boats per start is appropriate. Provide some separation between starting faster boats and slower boats.
1.4 Advance safety briefing with authorities	Liaise with relevant port and safety organizations. Eg RNLI, HMCG, Dover and FrenchMRCC, Fecamp Port authority, Shoreham Port Authority
1.5 Advance briefing by the Race Officers	Compulsory attendance to skippers briefing. Written instructions and detailed forms issued as appropriate
1.6 Shipping movement monitoring	Liaise with VTS for East Channel shipping lanes prior to race. Race control Monitors Race boat Tracker and competitors monitor channel 11 VTS on second VHF.
1.7 Weather monitoring	Be aware of weather forecast. If necessary, postpone or abandon some or all classes. SYC will generally not start a race when F8 or greater is forecast in the race area during the expected duration of the race.
1.8 Manning	Ensure adequate competent personnel for race management in Brighton & Fécamp. Race Management fully briefed by either written or verbal instructions.
1.9 Emergency / contingency procedures	Follow Emergency Action Plan (or as amended by Race Director)

1.10 Media management	Single contact to control information to media in an emergency. This is restricted to Race Officer, Race Director, Event Safety Officer or SYC Office Manager.
1.11 Race management team welfare	Adequate clothing, equipment and provisions for the expected conditions. Lifejackets to be worn on a committee boat in adverse weather, and on a RIB at all times. Work within safety limits of committee boat and RIB, which may well be below those of competitors
1.12 Start line	Set an appropriate start line for number and size of boats; designate a spectator boat area
1.13 Liaise with other race committees	Endeavour to establish what other races are taking place and set race areas and courses to reduce potential conflicts as appropriate
1.14 Support RIBs at start	Marshall competitors before start. Patrol Spectator areas. Available to Start RO for incident response.

6.1. Communications

Measure	Comments
2.1 Notice of Race	Advises preliminary details of event and conditions of entry including the applicable rules and regulations.
2.2 Sailing Instructions / amendments	Instructions to competitors in advance.
2.3 Safety requirements	Appropriate to the category of event, specify World Sailing Offshore Special Regulations to be met.
2.4 Crew lists	Ashore contact and on-board crew details for each boat inc any minors.
2.5 Shore and Committee Vessel signals	Amendments, postponement, abandonment / cancellation notified by appropriate means, e.g. RER website, email, Whatsapp, text message or VHF
2.6 Radio communications	Require boats to carry VHF radio and specify channel in use with competitors
2.7 Communication with Authorities	When racing monitor port control and VTS channel and communicate as necessary
2.8 Mobile telephone	Communication between race management team, competitors and outside contacts. Require boats to carry working mobile phone.
2.9 International regs for prevention of collision at Sea	Use for Right Of Way for non racing and racing traffic. SI's refer to use during hours of darkness.

6.2. Other control measures

Measure	Comments
3.1 Safety inspections	Reserve right to check on board safety equipment by race scrutineers
3.2 Record starters	May be required later to find out which boats are unaccounted
3.3 Postponement / abandonment of start	In the event of conflicting commercial shipping movements or unsuitable weather
3.4 Abandonment during race	In the event of unsuitable weather or other factors requiring abandonment of one or more classes

3.5 Shorten course	Course cannot be shortened ability to nominate a mark to obtain a result.
3.6 Race observers	Observers ashore monitor race progress via tracker and record and compare declarations of finishers those of the starters
3.7 Monitoring of weather / sea conditions	Ashore by race control team and afloat by competitors.
3.8 Finish line position and length	Appropriate to number and size of competing boats; due to the handicap spread of the fleet finishers are usually well spaced Finish line avoids area of traffic to/from Fécamp
3.9 Retirement monitoring	Reporting by competitors and recording of retirements and monitoring of trackers.
3.10 Course setting	Course avoids entering shipping lanes and offshore wind farms.
3.11 Mark rounding	Minimal marks on course beyond start area.
3.12 Course restrictions	Shipping lanes and wind farms are nominated prohibited areas (obstructions) of the course.
3.13 Commercial vessel considerations	IRPCAS or other rules for avoiding close-quarters situations with commercial vessels. Monitor VTS on second VHF recommended near shipping lanes.
3.14 Competitor mutual monitoring & support	Competitors are strongly encouraged to keep an eye out for other competitors who may be having difficulties and to provide mutual support in the event of an emergency; to this end, all competitors should actively monitor CH16 to facilitate easy contact and avoid unnecessary action A competitor who suspends racing to investigate another competitor for whom they have genuine concern may apply for redress

END