

08. Safety

The Raphaëla Le Gouvello education packet - Windsurfing solo across the Indian Ocean

<http://www.respectocean.com>



Life on board



During her crossing, Raphaëla will be alone, with no one to rely on but herself to stay safe and reach the island of Réunion safe and sound...

For that reason, she has taken every on-board safety precaution.

Rule No. 1: Be safety conscious to the extreme

To survive for two months in the middle of the ocean, Raphaëla must stay ever focused on her health and fitness. She must get enough hours of rejuvenating sleep, eat a balanced diet, and observe a strict regime of hygiene. Only with such discipline can she remain constantly on the alert, ready to face any unpleasant surprise.

"During the crossing, the sailboard is my life in the middle of the ocean. I am haunted by the dream of falling into the water, having forgotten to attach the safety cord to my harness or wrist. That's my lifeline connecting me to the vessel. I'm in the water, desperately trying to get back onboard as the sailboard quickly slips away, carried by the wind and the waves. In a raging sea, even the best swimmer in the world could never reach it."

Taken from *Au coeur du Pacifique*, by Raphaëla Le Gouvello, Editions Glénat.



Activity

Describe an activity that requires being safety conscious (like riding a bike, swimming...).

Say why you must be careful and what precautions you must take.

The right gear

On board, Raphaëla always wears equipment designed for extreme conditions. Her hip harness is made of a light, quick-drying synthetic material reinforced with leather and lined with foam for comfort. Strapped to the harness is a stainless steel hook that latches to the sail so that she will remain attached to the board even if she falls in the water. She also wears a kite-surf "survival" vest with pockets containing everything she might need in case of a problem—to cut a line, stop a cut from bleeding... On her back she carries water in a soft "camel bag" she can drink hands-free through a tube.

On her feet, Raphaëla wears anti-slip windsurfing boots and booties, even though the board has an anti-slip finish as well. For her hands, she has gloves she'll wear intermittently to gradually let protective calluses develop on her palms.



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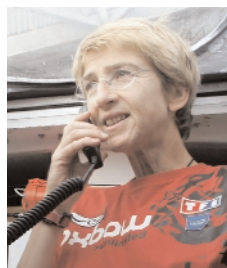


Be seen

Raphaëla isn't safe from a dunking, even at night! To stay visible, she always carries products like fluorescein and cyanolub that become fluorescent upon use. If the sailboard capsizes during daylight hours, fluorescein poured in the water will create a color tracer visible by cargo ships and airplanes, even from very far away. Cyanolub, which comes in a plastic tube, becomes fluorescent when shaken and is visible even at night!

Other devices enable Raphaëla to signal her whereabouts with light and sound. A flashing light emits a very bright light. Each night, Raphaëla will hook it up so that passing freighters can see her and avoid collisions at night.

Her Kannad beacon can be used to emit an international radio-frequency distress signal.



Weather reports

Raphaëla is linked to land by radio. She can reach people on her backup team and get their help, to fix malfunctioning equipment, for example. She is in close contact, as well, with a meteorologist who will send her forecasts of weather for the area she is entering. Raphaëla has trained with Pierre Lasnier of MétéoMer who taught her how to read the precise data she will be receiving thanks to software installed on her computer. She will be able to prepare for perilous conditions before they hit.



Airbag

The decision to install an airbag system was made during one of Raphaëla's previous crossings when she capsized and really struggled to get her sailboard right side up again. Even though the board floats like a cork, its designer, Guy Saillard, has equipped it with a gigantic airbag for back up safety. Folded at the rear of the board, it can be activated from inside or outside the cabin. It inflates with air by means of an electric pump. The inflated airbag automatically turns the sailboard right side up. Raphaëla just has to deflate and re-stow the bag, then reset the system so that it can be used again if needed.

Activities

Do some reading to learn the main properties of water and air.

- Explain how the air bag system rights Raphaëla's sailboard.
- How else are airbags used?