

Personal Watercraft man overboard recovery

Candi Abbott, Powerboat and Personal Watercraft Trainer, explains a couple of options for recovering a man overboard when contending with the wobbly platform of a sit-down personal watercraft.

When running a man overboard (MOB) session, our focus must be on a safe approach and making contact with the casualty. With the relatively new implementation of discussing cold water shock during our courses, there's still a bit in the middle that can be easily overlooked, as we may presume that our MOB is able to re-board the craft unaided. But what if they can't?

Whether it's due to illness, injury or exhaustion, we are stuck with the challenge of having a small, awkward platform to work on.

Let's start by stating the obvious: Unlike a powerboat, we are unable to operate effectively off the sides of our craft due to stability factors, which therefore only leaves the stern.

Conscious casualty recovery

The key is to rotate the casualty so they are facing away from you.



Take a firm grip of the top of their personal floatation device (PFD) with both hands and lift them into a sitting position on the platform.

Unconscious casualties

A slightly different method is required, face the casualty towards you and take a firm grip of both shoulders of the PFD. Lift and pull, aiming to get their chest onto the back of the seat. Once in this

position, pull their knees forward onto the platform (90°) to take their weight and adjust their upper body on the seat. Make sure the head is rotated to one side and their airway is open and clear. You can now transfer the casualty (at slow speed) back to shore, holding onto their PFD shoulder.

In both of these situations, you are left with the choice of waiting for

assistance or riding back slowly to shore with a firm grip on their PFD to stop them slipping off.

These recovery methods are not performed practically on a PW course, but it is worth discussing the options with your students or showing them the videos that are in the Personal Watercraft eBook (eG35).

