

Picking the right gear for a day on the water is a must and simply part of sailing. We consider our options every time we slide, drop, roll, wiggle or step into our 2.4mR. We are knowledgeable and we are prudent. We are sailors. We are inherently attuned to safety. We always wear some sort of wet/dry gear, sunglasses, sunblock, hats, gloves, water shoes and personal flotation devices.

However, when was the last time you tested your dry suit (if ever)? Have you ever just jumped in the water wearing all your gear? When was the last time you went for a swim wearing your PFD? When was the last time you checked the CO² cartridge in your self-inflating life jacket? Everything gets old (not just us). Rubber gaskets dry out with age, crack and fail. The buoyant material in PFD's also ages and becomes less effective.

We had a couple noteworthy, on-the-water experiences on Charlotte Harbor of late (winter 2024). The first involved a sailor in the water, his dry suit full of water. Water weighs 1 kg/l. If 85 litres of water join an 85 kg man in his "dry" suite, his weight has essentially doubled. This makes the man much more difficult to rescue.



Michelin Man

The 2nd situation involved a man in a swamped 2.4mR, it happens. In this particular case the man was wearing a well sealed dry suit. A dry suit that was not full of water however, it was full of air. This turned the swamped sailor into the "Michelin Man", making it very difficult to move inside the confined



Swamped 2.4mR (during buoyancy test)

quarters of the 2.4mR cockpit. To add insult to injury, his self-inflating life jacket deployed filling any remaining space inside his cockpit...that's awkward!!! Having never actually used his life jacket in a deployed state, he had no idea how to remove air/CO² from it ...

more awkward!! In this case the members of the support team were knowledgeable and well prepared. The three-member team quickly pumped out the boat, helped remove some CO² from the PFD and sent the sailor on his way (in). Ba-da-bing, ba-da-boom!

Not all support teams are as well prepared. If a high-speed pump had not been available (aboard the support vessel), then a tow would have been required. Towing a swamped 2.4mR in 25 knots of breeze with 1-meter chop would certainly prove interesting. Knowledge, skill and technique would make the task possible however, with the Michelin Man at the helm and unable to keep the bow up, success would be

the Michelin Man at the helm and unable to keep the bow up, success would be uncertain.

The moral of these stories is:

- know your gear and how to use it
- test your gear in a manner consistent with the way it's intended to be used
- ensure the support vessels are equipped with the correct gear for the fleet and with personnel trained in it's use