

SHARING THE WATER WITH SEAPLANES



MARINE SAFETY AWARENESS

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In certain areas of New Zealand, seaplanes operate on areas of water which are also used by other marine vessels

The purpose of this handout is to inform you, the mariner, of seaplane practices and their interface with you and other waterway users.

Common questions asked of seaplane operators include:

- Why are seaplanes permitted in water area with other boats?
- How does a seaplane pilot determine a take-off or landing direction?
- Who has right of way on the water?
- Can a seaplane manoeuvre effectively on the water?
- Should a conventional (power or sail) vessel manoeuvre to avoid a seaplane?
- How can I make a seaplane pilot's operation easier?
- Where can I get more information?

PERMISSION FOR SEAPLANE OPERATIONS

Seaplanes operate in several water areas of New Zealand. They are permitted to operate in any area where a conventional power boat is also allowed. Special approvals are sometimes granted to allow seaplanes to operations on waterways restricted only to sail craft. They also have approval to operate at speeds in excess of the marked speed limit for some areas for the purpose of take-off and landing.

TAKE-OFF AND LANDING DIRECTIONS

Almost all aircraft are designed to operate best when taking off or landing into wind. This is because the wind provides 'free' airspeed. The aircraft needs a certain speed to lift off and a headwind assists in this process. On a similar basis aircraft also land into wind, as they will then touch down at a slower speed relative to the water surface, resulting in less 'impact' on landing. Most aircraft can take off or either across the wind or even downwind, but these types of take-offs and landings are generally less common and can only happen on light wind days.

RIGHT OF WAY ON THE WATER

Under marine regulations applying in New Zealand no person navigating a vessel, including windsurfer or kite board shall impede a seaplane in the process of landing and take-off. Although this is law, a seaplane pilot will not continue to land or take-off unless they have first determined that the path is clear, and will remain clear of boats. When an aircraft is taxiing on the water it is considered a power driven vessel and normal right of way rules apply.

CAN A SEAPLANE MANOEUVRE ON THE WATER?

Seaplanes are often described as fairly poorly designed boats, however they can manoeuvre quite effectively on the water, either when taxiing slowly or planing at speed. One training exercise in a seaplane requires the pilot to turn the aircraft in circles, slowly and quickly! The aircraft achieves these turns by the use of small rudders or by the use of the aircraft's 'air' control surfaces when moving more quickly. In strong winds it is often more difficult to turn the aircraft downwind, as its streamlined shape gives least resistance when pointed into wind, hence it doesn't like turning away from a strong breeze. When this occurs the pilot will often undertake a controlled drift downwind and use the aircraft's engine to 'tack' across the breeze.

SHOULD ANOTHER VESSEL MANOEUVRE TO AVOID A SEAPLANE?

As regards 'right of way' rules, treat a seaplane as you would any other power boat and manoeuvre accordingly. Common sense applies in most instances. The seaplane pilot will be expecting you to act as if he was just another power boat. In most instances it will be sufficient to just continue what you are doing – so long as this wasn't going to bring you into an imminent collision situation.

HOW CAN I HELP?

The most difficult situation of any vessel captain is when another vessel is being operated unpredictably. Try to avoid sudden changes of direction, particularly when operating at speed. If your vessel generates a large wake, then try to avoid crossing just ahead of a taxiing aircraft, as he is in a similar situation as a small boat and will not thank you for getting some 'rock and roll'

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

If a seaplane is moored near you, ask the pilot or please feel free to contact Auckland Seaplanes.

Contact: **Auckland Seaplanes**
info@aucklandseaplanes.com
Tel. 09-3901121