

World Sailing Racing Rules Question and Answer Service

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Interpretation of the term "danger" in Rule 41(a)

Situation

Rule 41(a) states: "A boat shall not receive help from any outside source, except help for a crew member who is ill, injured or in danger".

Question 1

If a solo (single handed) sailor is separated from his boat does he first need to demonstrate that he cannot swim to his boat or is he considered in danger the moment he loses contact with his boat?

Answer 1

No, he is not required to demonstrate that he is ill, injured or in danger before receiving help afloat.

Help should always be provided whenever someone asks for it or if someone reasonably assesses the situation as dangerous.

Being separated from a boat is not inherently dangerous, but may be when combined with other factors like:

- level of experience and age of the sailor,
- weather conditions (water temperature, sea state, visibility, etc.)
- speed of the other boats around,
- distance from the boat,
- presence of injuries,
- dangerous wildlife,
- etc.

However, a boat seeking and receiving help when not ill, injured or in danger breaks rule 41(a) and should retire from the race.