

SAFETY & SURVIVAL

During the Volvo Ocean Race, ABN Amro Two crew had a variety of clip-in points to choose from, including fixed attachment points near the helm stations and coffee grinder, and running attachments like jacklines.

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the harness part of the device. Presumably, if harnesses were ever to undergo Coast Guard testing and approval, then an unwieldy enforcement protocol would be needed.

In the absence of clear direction, and for the guidance of the sailing public—both racing and cruising—the national governing body, U.S. Sailing, has issued written rules and recommendations for harnesses and tethers under the direction of their Safety at Sea Committee (SASC). These are outlined in the U.S. edition of the 2006-2007 ISAF Special Regulations Governing Offshore and Oceanic Equipment and Preparation, including U.S. Sailing Prescriptions. You can find an overview online at ussailing.org/safety/isaf.htm.

PS testers recommend all sailors read these “special regs.” Section 5 deals with harnesses and tethers. It concludes that an inflatable PFD and safety harness should be employed whenever conditions warrant, always in rough weather, on cold water, at night, in reduced visibility, or when sailing shorthanded.

“...The diligent use of a properly adjusted safety harness is regarded as by far the most effective way of preventing man overboard incidents,” according to the document.



U.S. Sailing 'special regs' offer direction on harness use

Worldwide, there are varying standards for sailing harnesses set by a variety of organizations: EN (European Norms), ISO (International Standards Organization), OSHA (Occupational Safety and Hazards Administration), UL (Underwriters Laboratories), and ISAF (International Sailing Federation). They all have something to say, but often in confusing or contradictory terms.

In the U.S., the Coast Guard has approved Type V inflatable PFDs with integrated harnesses. But because of the many variables in harness use, Coast Guard approval does not extend to