



The RYA does not recommend the fitting of prop guards to outboard powered craft used for rescue at RYA recognised training centres. We have studied the use of prop guards at a number of recognised centres, when such centres were using prop guards on trial in the past, and have come to the conclusion that they provide limited benefits and offer a number of significant disadvantages.

The most important point to make in support of the above is that, assuming good practice is followed by coxswains, there is no advantage in having a prop guard. Such good practice includes the wearing of a killcord at all times by the coxswain of an outboard-powered planing craft and a normal procedure of cutting the engine completely when approaching a person in the water. These two measures, together with the proper observation of IRPCS rules 5 (lookout) and 6 (safe speed) should avoid injuries to people in the water. Diligence when working in shallow water should avoid prop damage.

Our experience has also led us to the conclusion that prop guards have certain disadvantages, ranging from a dramatic loss of acceleration and top speed, to heavily increased fuel consumption and poor manoeuvrability. In addition, far from protecting the propeller against damage, there is also a high risk of causing severe damage if a piece of debris becomes trapped between the ribs of a prop guard and the propeller itself. We believe the engine manufacturers and distributors will confirm this, using the evidence of engines which have suffered bent prop shafts, shattered gearboxes and even complete failure due to having such prop guard-induced damage.

For safety boats there is a clear payoff between getting to an incident quickly and manoeuvring easily, and the extra protection offered by the guard in case of a collision which should have been avoided. In the case of small safety boats with engines of limited size, the addition of a prop guard can have a serious impact on the boat's ability to plane, particularly with extra people on board. This then has serious implications in terms of delivering casualties or reaching incidents.

To summarise, it is better to educate coxswains on good practice when driving outboard-powered boats, rather than fit expensive, heavy pieces of equipment, which do have several significant disadvantages.