

BWSW GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO THE USE OF TOWED INFLATABLES

WARNING

FATAL AND LIFE CHANGING INJURIES HAVE OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF USING INFLATABLES. PARTICIPANTS MUST TAKE EVERY CARE FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF OTHERS

Each club and centre will have its own specific requirements in relation to its own site and equipment to ensure as safe as possible a user experience. These requirements should be clearly addressed in the club or centres completed and properly documented risk assessments. Nothing in this guidance can be considered a substitute for undertaking and maintaining appropriate site-specific risk assessments and acting on the findings of those risk assessments. This guidance focuses on the particular risks relating to driving inflatables and should be read in conjunction with the safety recommendations relating to water skiing and wakeboarding (e.g. ensuring your facility has a procedure for accidents including systems for ensuring speedy access to the site for emergency services and immediate communication to all relevant on-site personnel). Boat drivers and observers should be fully aware of the current BWSW Safety Recommendations for Boats including the use of a kill cord, at all times.

The risks of riding inflatables including the warning set out above must be brought to the attention of participants and the parents or guardians of participants under 18 years old. Every participant and the parents or guardians of participants under the age of 18 must carefully read, complete and sign a form of Towed Inflatables Liability Release and Assumption of Risk Agreement before any participation is permitted.

What are "inflatables"?

Inflatable equipment includes a variety of designs including 'ringos', 'tubes', 'biscuits', 'sausages', 'bananas', 'sledges', and many other trade names. They are all designed to carry one or more riders while being towed along the water. BWSW has no expertise in testing the safety, design or suitability of inflatable equipment and facilities must make their own investigations here.

Towed inflatables are an excellent entry level tool for introducing new participants to towed watersports and fun for participants as a water-based activity rather than a sport. The rider attempts to hold on while the craft is towed by a boat (or in some cases towed on a cable tow). This should be done in a safe way so that the riders have a fun experience and are not deliberately or dangerously thrown from the inflatable by the driver. Even when safely used, it is a possibility that riders will fall into the water during the activity, or a rider deliberately exits the inflatable. It must be remembered that the responsibility and duty of care expected of the driver and observer is not only to the fallen rider but to any potential rider(s) still on the inflatable as well. It is therefore essential that if towed inflatable rides are being conducted the users must follow the manufacturers' recommendations for use and robust procedures are in place to segregate any fallen riders from other water traffic and to ensure that any fallen riders are quickly sighted and safely recovered. This means the strictest safety procedures must be followed for safe enjoyment of towed inflatables.

Special considerations for boat drivers and observers

The driver of the towing craft is responsible for the safety of the riders. To help with this responsibility, there must be a comprehensively briefed and competent observer in the boat at all times. The observer must inform the driver immediately if any rider falls from the inflatable and must continue to observe the fallen rider until they are either picked up by the towing boat or have remounted the towed inflatable. The slower speed appropriate for towing inflatables may impact forward visibility, which goes to emphasise the importance of the driver looking forward and a fully briefed and competent observer watching the riders and relaying information to the driver. The driver will also be aware of the riders by using the rear-view mirror.

The driving skills required for towing inflatables and other towables are distinctly different from those required for other boat driving activities. Every inflatable rides the water differently and any change in either water condition or wind condition can have a marked effect on the way a particular inflatable can be towed safely.

Boat drivers towing inflatables should hold a recognised boat driving qualification. The current minimum level recommended qualification is BWSW Ski Boat Driver Level 1 (SBD1) for inland waters or Ski Boat Driver Level 2 (SBD2) for coastal waters (see BWSW website for centres offering training). Higher qualifications are also available and as part of ensuring the highest standards it is recommended that drivers look to take the SBD1 or SBD2 theoretical module followed by the SBD3 inflatables module which contains practical driving skills for inflatables. Drivers should also have received additional training specifically in respect of driving of inflatables on-water under supervision. SBD1 qualified drivers are recommended to take the SBD2 qualification if driving on coastal waters.

It is important to remember that the riders have no control over the path of the inflatable and it must be clearly understood that the boat driver determines what happens to the towed craft. For example, when the boat turns sharply visibility will be further reduced and the towed craft will slide across the water in a manner described as 'on the whip' which creates particular dangers. If the boat is driven too fast or over water that is too rough, the towed craft may dive into the water or capsize.

Any potential interaction between inflatables and other water activities should be subject to the risk assessment referred to above, without exception

Risk of serious accidents

Serious accidents have occurred because riders of inflatable craft have been sent into collision with other boats, jetties, or shore banks when boat drivers do not allow sufficient turning room. Other accidents have occurred from riders being thrown out of or off the inflatable craft at excessive speed. Inflatables should not be used on crowded water or in the vicinity of any other boat or vessel.

All riders should wear suitable protective high visibility soft helmets. These should be made of a soft, high visibility material to ensure that a rider who has fallen into the water is clearly seen. It should be understood that the helmets are primarily intended to create visibility for the rider but are not approved for safety purposes by any kite mark system or other agency. Manufacturers make limited claims for their ability to give head protection in terms of the risk of serious injury. Serious injuries can occur when heads bang together during falls and helmets may offer very limited head protection. A visual in our SBD presentation makes very clear the difference that a high visibility soft helmet makes to a driver/observer in terms of being able to see those in the water.

Buoyancy aids

A buoyancy aid may not prevent a participant who is wearing the buoyancy aid from drowning. Any limitations specified by the manufacturer must be noted.

Nevertheless, it should be a mandatory requirement of every club and centre that all participants are required to wear a properly fitting buoyancy aid that is fastened and worn in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

If the buoyancy aid is a dark colour, it is advisable for the rider to wear a brightly coloured yellow or orange bib to enhance visibility.

Insurance

All our clubs and centres will want to put in place as comprehensive insurance as possible in conjunction with their brokers and advisers and also be fully alert to the BWSW affiliation requirement to take out "adequate insurance" including for on-water motorised activity. BWSW's insurance provider provides a certain level of insurance to voluntary clubs. However:

BWSW provided insurance DOES NOT COVER MOTORISED TOWED ACTIVITIES ON THE WATER. IT IS ESSENTIAL THEREFORE THAT ALL BWSW CLUBS AND CENTRES (BOTH VOLUNTARY NOT FOR PROFIT CLUBS AND COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS) SECURE THEIR OWN APPROPRIATE INSURANCE FOR SUCH MOTORISED TOWED ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING TOWED INFLATABLES. INSURANCE POLICIES MAY HAVE LIMITATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF RIDERS.

The availability of third party liability for motorised insurance is limited, and may not be sufficient to cover liability associated with serious injuries or death.

It is essential that all clubs and centres have, in conjunction with their advisers and brokers, reviewed and taken out the best available level of insurance cover in respect of the risk of personal injury and death claims.

Your attention is drawn to the annexures to this guidance.

Annexes:

- A. Check List for the Boat Driver
- **B.** On-board Observer Protocol
- C. Boat Handling Recommendations
- D. Rules for Riders of Inflatables
- E. Standard Ski Hand Signals
- F. Towed Inflatables Liability Release, Waiver and Assumption of Risk Agreement

ANNEXE A

CHECK LIST FOR THE BOAT DRIVER

- 1. It is the driver's responsibility to check the boat. All safety inhibitors must be working and the boat must be well maintained and fit for purpose
- 2. Always appoint a competent observer and ensure they are comprehensively briefed. BWSW guidance relating to observer protocols must be complied with at all times
- 3. Always follow the inflatable's manufacturer's recommendations
- 4. Check the inflatable is in good repair, including the ropes and towing 'eye'
- 5. Do not overload the inflatable with riders
- 6. Always use a towrope of the type recommended by the manufacturer
- 7. Check that local rules allow towed inflatables on the water
- 8. Check the water is clear of floating debris and other obstructions
- 9. Do not use inflatables on crowded waters
- 10. Do not tow an inflatable at night or in any other low light conditions
- 11. Do not tow an inflatable in conditions that could create an unstable or unpredictable water surface
- 12. Boat insurance must cover inflatable equipment and attention must be paid to any limitations on the number of permitted riders covered by insurance
- 13. All those under 18 should not ride inflatables without permission and advice from the parent or guardian and without the risks associated with the activity being explained to them
- 14. Every rider must complete and sign (and the parent or guardian must for sign for any rider under the age of 18) a Liability Release, Waiver and Assumption of Risk Agreement
- 15. Ensure that each rider is wearing an appropriate high visibility, soft helmet and buoyancy aid
- 16. Make sure each rider knows BWSW standard aural and hand signals (see below)
- 17. Do not start a tow until all riders confirm they are ready
- 18. If a rider falls into the water, stop immediately and when safe to do so return slowly and pick them up. They can re-board the inflatable at the back. However, if they do not want to continue or cannot re-board the inflatable without assistance, the driver must stop the engine and the rider will enter the boat from the footplate. Make sure the fallen rider re-boards the inflatable in a manner that does not cause damage to the inflatable or danger to other riders.
- 19. Drivers and observers must not encourage the other to operate in a fashion that could jeopardise the safety of participants. The observer is expected to report any concerns about the driver's responsibilities and vice versa.
- 20. Drivers should consider a fixed safe course to drive to. However, drivers must drive in a way that utilises the entire area of water and avoids crossing one's own wake and the wake from other boats where possible. If the observer does not feel this recommendation is being observed by the driver, the observer must tell the driver and, if considered sufficiently serious, report it to the relevant safety person.
- 21. All safety checks must be carried out by the driver before the ride commences. These checks are to be validated by the observer.
- 22. The driver must deliver a comprehensive safety briefing to the riders, including all safety procedures, safe use of the equipment and checking that (i) all riders have signed the Towed Inflatables Liability Release, Waiver and Assumption of Risk Agreement and (ii) that no riders have any medical conditions that have not been disclosed on the signed Towed Inflatables Liability Release, Waiver and Assumption of Risk Agreement.
- 23. The driver must not exceed the manufacturer's recommended speed for the inflatable Excessive speed is unacceptable.

24. The driver is responsible for the observer's compliance with the on-board observer protocols (Annex B). The driver has overall responsibility for the ride.		

ANNEXE B

ON-BOARD OBSERVER PROTOCOLS

As an observer (or spotter) in a boat for an inflatable ride you have a very important role assisting the driver at all times with safe practice. You are not a passenger. While the driver ultimately has overall responsibility for the ride the observer must understand and comply with the following protocols. Part of the observer's role is to 'double check' safety procedure compliance by the driver.

- 1. Begin by turning your phone to silent and do not take any calls. There are to be no distractions while you are observing.
- 2. Prior to the activity beginning, check the inflatable is suitably inflated.
- 3. Check all ropes are fit for purpose.
- 4. You and the driver should introduce yourselves to the group, and the consenting adult(s).
- 5. You and the driver should explain clearly and precisely who you are, your names and what your roles are.
- 6. Count the number of children/people in the group. Where relevant confirm with the consenting adult(s) the number of people taking part.
- 7. Explain to participants and the consenting adult(s) they are there to have fun but that safety is paramount and they need to listen carefully to the safety briefing.
- 8. Issue all riders with a soft, high-visibility helmet and check it is correctly fastened. Also check buoyancy aids are correctly fitted. All riders should be issued with a bright yellow/orange bib.
- 9. Talk all riders through what you will be doing, how to signal faster, slower or stop. If they fall off, they should put both hands in the air (get them to do this on the dock). At the end of the briefing ask an individual one of the basic hand signals to ensure they have been listening. Also reiterate hands in the air with ALL riders.
- 10. Show them how to get in or onto the inflatable and how to sit in or on the inflatable.
- 11. Explain that the observer will report any actions of the riders which might mean the ride is stopped and that an individual rider may be taken off the inflatable. Confirm this policy with the consenting adult(s).
- 12. Complete all on-site communication checks.
- 13. If someone wants to stop and get off, the stop signal (cutting throat) will be shown, at which point the observer will instruct the driver to stop.
- 14. Be aware of the BWSW guidance for inflatables.
- 15. If a rider falls into the water, the driver must stop immediately and when safe to do so return slowly and pick up the fallen rider. They can re-board the inflatable at the back. However, if they do not want to continue or cannot re-board the inflatable without assistance, the driver must stop the engine and the rider will enter the boat from the footplate. Make sure the fallen rider re-boards the inflatable in a manner that does not cause damage to the inflatable or danger to the other riders.
- 16. Drivers and observers must not encourage the other to operate in a fashion that could jeopardise the safety of participants. The observer is expected to report any concerns about the driver's responsibilities and vice versa.
- 17. Drivers will not be given a set course to drive. However, drivers must drive in a way that utilises the entire area of water and avoids crossing your own wake and the wake of other boats. If the observer does not feel this recommendation is being observed by the driver to, the observer must tell the driver and, if considered sufficiently serious, report it to the relevant safety person. The observer should know how to stop the boat with the ignition switch or kill cord if the driver is unable to do so. For example, if the driver is unexpectedly taken ill or if the driver is thrown overboard on coastal waters.

18.	The observer should also be able to contact the emergency services or coast guard if necessary. Ir
	which case the observer must know the location of the site or area where the boat is operating.

19. If using a mobile phone; the App 'What Three Words' will identify the exact location for the emergency services. On coastal waters the observer should know how to make contact with the coast guard, which could be by phone or could be by VHF radio.

ANNEXE C

BOAT HANDLING

- 1. Do not drive a continuous figure of eight course. Use the entire area available
- 2. Tow in a manner suitable for the water and wind conditions and always execute wide turns.
- 3. Do not increase speed on turns.
- 4. If an inflatable does go out "on the whip", reduce speed immediately.
- 5. Do not tow an inflatable if there are other boats or people in the vicinity or risk of the same. There should be no risk of proximity to other boats, other water users, structures (e.g. jetties) or the shore.
- 6. Do not tow an inflatable over a jump or through a slalom course.
- 7. Do not use excessive manoeuvres to try to throw riders out of/off the inflatable.
- 8. Do not respond to requests from riders to "go faster".
- 9. Do not tow an inflatable in shallow water.
- 10. Leave sufficient space to avoid all obstacles, at least a towropes distance from any solid object.
- 11. Do not continue a tow if a rider falls until the fallen rider(s) are picked up.
- 12. Always approach a fallen rider at an appropriate controlled speed on the driver's side of the boat.
- 13. Always switch off the engine before boarding a rider from the water.

ANNEXE D

RULES FOR RIDERS OF INFLATABLES

INFLATABLE RIDERS: BE AWARE THAT FATAL AND SERIOUS ACCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE USE OF INFLATABLES. IT IS A CONDITION OF USE OF INFLATABLES THAT ALL RIDERS TAKE THE GREATEST CARE FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF OTHERS. IN ALL SITUATIONS A HELMET MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES.

WARNING

A buoyancy aid, whether it is a ski vest or other form of buoyancy aid may not prevent a participant who is wearing the buoyancy aid from drowning

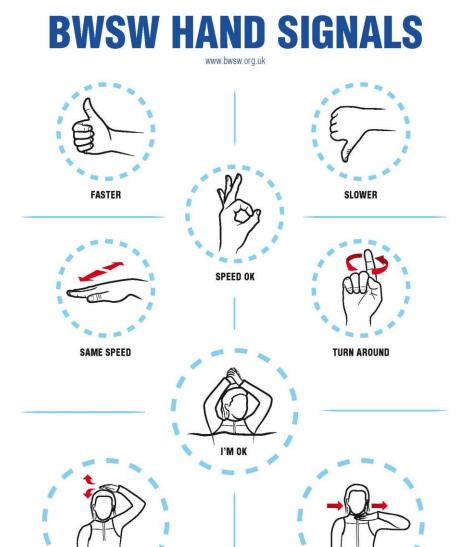
- 1. Wear a properly buoyancy aid that is fastened and worn in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Always read the manufacturer's instructions when putting on a ski vest or buoyancy aid.
- 2. Wear high-visibility soft head helmet but be aware of the manufacturer's warnings and their limited protection in the event of a clash of heads or bodies. The helmets are not subject to any kite mark or other standard and cannot be relied on to give more than very limited head protection.
- 3. Do not ride an inflatable unless you are a good swimmer and confident in the water.
- 4. Do not ride an inflatable if you have any medical condition that is incompatible with a physically demanding, rough ride (e.g. back or joint issues).
- 5. Know the BWSW standard hand and aural signals (see Annex E).
- 6. Do not stand up on the inflatable.
- 7. Do not try to throw other riders overboard.
- 8. Do not attempt to steer an inflatable.
- 9. Do not attempt to abandon or dismount an inflatable during a ride.
- 10. Do not hold the towing rope.
- 11. Do not fasten any part of your body or buoyancy aid to an inflatable. Do not pass any limb through any holding loop or strap, simply grip it from the outside.
- 12. Do not shout "HIT IT", "READY" or similar until the rope is taught and all riders are ready.
- 13. If you fall into the water, remain where you are, put your arms high above your head to indicate you are 'OK' and wait for the boat to come to you.
- 14. **DO NOT**, other than in exceptional circumstances try to swim to the shore or other structure.
- 15. Always follow the boat driver's and the observer's instructions. You might be asked to try to re-board the inflatable or you might be asked to get into the boat.

ANNEXE E

STANDARD WATER SKI AND WAKEBOARD SIGNALS

Aural signals: "IN GEAR" & "HIT IT"

Hand signals:



ANNEXE F

FORM OF TOWED INFLATABLES LIABILITY RELEASE, WAIVER AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT

TOWED INFLATABLE LIABILITY RELEASE, WAIVER AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT

WARNING

Participation in any activity involving the use or and riding on inflatables including 'ringos', 'tubes', 'biscuits', 'sausages', 'bananas', 'sledges' etc. towed behind boats or by cable pulls is an inherently risky activity bringing with it the risk of serious physical injury and even death

Please carefully read, complete and sign as indicated

It is essential that you recognise that participating in these activities involves risk. If you voluntarily participate in any activity involving the use of inflatables you will, by your involvement/participation, agree that you will:

- do everything possible to avoid or minimise such risk
- exercise good judgment in the decisions you make relating to your involvement/participation
- confirm that you understand the hazards of riding inflatables, and
- confirm that you understand the hazards of inflatables and being in close proximity to motorised boats moving at speed on the water.

It is a condition of you voluntarily participating in any activity involving the use of inflatables that:

- you will act sensibly, exercise good judgment and use all due care (including following instructions from the boat driver/observer and adhering to the club/centre rules, procedures and protocols at all times)
- you will have regard to the safety of yourself as well as others on site, and
- you assume all risk involved in such activities.

You also need to be a good swimmer and in good mental and physical condition to ride inflatables, and you must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Riding inflatables is a physically strenuous activity. Accordingly, you will assume the risk of injury as a result of heart attack, panic, hyperventilation and all other medical conditions. If you are in any doubt about your fitness to ride an inflatable, you should not participate in the activity and should consult with your doctor and obtain clearance from your doctor that you are fit to participate.

Consent

You will only be permitted to participate inflatable riding activities if you are over 18 years of age or if you are under 18 if your parent or guardian has given their written consent for you to participate. Where a participant is a minor, it is the responsibility of their parent or guardian to ensure that the minor for whom they are responsible understands that they must act in accordance with the conditions set out in this agreement. By allowing a minor to participate the parent or guardian shall be deemed to have assumed the risks and given the waiver and indemnity set out in this agreement in respect of and on behalf of such minor.

participate in activit indemnity set out in	ies involving riding inflatables, I agree to assume the risks and give the waiver and this agreement.	
PRINTED NAME:	(Participant)	
SIGNATURE:	(Participant)	
DATE:		
OR		
[INSERT NAME OF MINO importance of this a accordance with the consideration of the acknowledge and a	confirm I am the parent or legal guardian of	
PRINTED NAME:	(Parent/Legal Guardian)	
SIGNATURE:	(Parent/Legal Guardian)	
Liability Release and Waiver		
officers, employees observer (each a "F	will release and exempt	

I, the undersigned confirm that I am 18 years of age or older and that understand that I must act in accordance with the conditions set out in this agreement and in consideration of being permitted to

Indemnity

I/minor (as the case may be) might suffer as a result of my/their participation in such activity

and hereby waive to the fullest extent permitted by law, all claims whatsoever which I/minor (as the case may be) may have against the Released Parties, or any of them. I acknowledge there are limitations on the insurance cover available for on-water motorised activities and which may therefore be insufficient to meet a personal injury claim. I nevertheless willingly agree to

participate in such activities.

I, the above signed will undertake not to take any legal action against any Released Party in respect of any personal injury, death and property damage howsoever caused including, but not limited to, product liability, equipment malfunction, breach of contract, breach of statutory duty or negligence (except in respect of personal injury or death caused by the Released Party's own negligence) as a result of my/minor's (as the case may be) participation in any inflatable riding activities at or in conjunction with the center and to indemnify the Released Parties against all losses, liabilities, damages, costs and expenses (on an indemnity basis) arising out of or in connection with legal action resulting therefrom including costs and expenses (on an indemnity basis) incurred by any Released Party in the successful defense of any such legal action.

Rules for Riders of Inflatables

It is critical that you note and observe the rules for riders of inflatables set out in the annex D to this agreement, as well as all other pre-ride safety guidance and instructions.

I, the above signed acknowledge that I have read the rules for riders of inflatables annexed to this agreement, and that I fully understand and agree to abide by those rules as well as all other pre-ride safety guidance and instructions during my participation in inflatable riding activities/have explained such rules and other pre-ride safety guidance and instructions to minor (as the case may be).

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ THIS AGREEMENT AND THE CENTRE'S GUIDANCE RELATING TO MY/MINOR'S (AS THE CASE MAY BE) PARTICIPATION IN INFLATABLE RIDING ACTIVITIES, FULLY UNDERSTAND THE POTENTIAL DANGERS INCIDENTAL TO ENGAGING IN SUCH ACTIVITIES, AM FULLY AWARE OF THE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES OF SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT AND THAT I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE THAT IN CONSIDERATION OF THE CENTRE PERMITTING ME/MINOR (AS THE CASE MAY BE) TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH ACTIVITIES THAT THIS AGREEMENT IS LEGALLY BINDING AND WILL PRECLUDE ME/MINOR (AS THE CASE MAY BE) FROM RECOVERING ANY MONETARY DAMAGES FROM THE RELEASED PARTIES (SAVE IN RESPECT OF ANY DAMAGES FOR PERSONAL INJURY OR DEATH RESULTING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF A RELEASED PARTY) AND WILL IMPOSE A LEGALLY BINDING OBLIGATION ON ME TO INDEMNIFY THE RELEASED PARTIES AS SET OUT IN THIS AGREEMENT.

ANNEXE - RULES FOR RIDERS OF INFLATABLES

RULES FOR RIDERS OF INFLATABLES

INFLATABLE RIDERS: BE AWARE THAT FATAL AND SERIOUS ACCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE USE OF INFLATABLES. IT IS A CONDITION OF USE OF INFLATABLES THAT ALL RIDERS TAKE THE GREATEST CARE FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF OTHERS

WARNING

A buoyancy aid, whether it is a ski vest or other form of buoyancy aid may not prevent a participant who is wearing the buoyancy aid from drowning

- Wear a properly fitting ski vest or buoyancy aid that is fastened and worn in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Always read the manufacturer's instructions when putting on a ski vest or buoyancy aid.
- 2. Wear high-visibility soft head helmet but be aware of the manufacturer's warnings and their limited protection in the event of a clash of heads or bodies. The helmets are not subject to any kite mark or other standard and cannot be relied on to give more than very limited head protection.
- 3. Do not ride an inflatable unless you are a good swimmer and confident in the water.
- 4. Do not ride an inflatable if you have any medical condition that is incompatible with a physically demanding, rough ride (e.g. back or joint issues).
- 5. Know the BWSW standard hand and aural signals (see below).
- 6. Do not stand up on the inflatable.
- 7. Do not try to throw other riders overboard.
- 8. Do not attempt to steer an inflatable.
- 9. Do not attempt to abandon or dismount an inflatable during a ride.
- 10. Do not hold the towing rope.
- 11. Do not fasten any part of your body or buoyancy aid to an inflatable. Do not pass any limb through any holding loop or strap, simply grip it from the outside.
- 12. Do not shout "HIT IT", READY or similar until the rope is taught and all riders are ready.
- 13. If you fall into the water, remain where you are, put your arms high above your head to indicate you are 'OK' and wait for the boat to come to you.
- 14. **DO NOT**, other than in exceptional circumstances try to swim to the shore or other structure.
- 15. Always follow the boat driver's and the observer's instructions. You might be asked to try to re-board the inflatable or you might be asked to get into the boat.

STANDARD SKI SIGNALS

Aural signals: "IN GEAR" & "HIT IT"

Hand signals:

BWSW HAND SIGNALS

