

Charting Progress DMYC's Summer Seminar Series

Summer temperatures may have curtailed Dubai Marina Yacht Club's Rally program for a few months, but that doesn't mean the activity has stopped. On June 19th the club ran the first of a series of 'Summer Seminars' for its members. Designed to provide its boaters with pragmatic and useful advice on common interest topics, the first of the series was attended by a score of boaters keen to refresh their knowledge on navigation techniques.

For the chart navigation workshop DMYC partnered with the sea school Marine Concept who were assisted by DMYC's instructor-qualified Phil Blake. Attendee and owner of a Sunseeker Manhattan 60, Richard Hewlett, enthused about the day. "Indeed it was a great workshop and helped to refresh our knowledge. It was nice to get together with other sailors with common interests. I do thank M/s Marine Concept LLC and DMYC for the event"

The program is due to continue with Blake saying, "Building upon the warm reception for this first workshop, going forward we'll be partnering with a variety of marine service providers to offer interesting, topical and genuinely useful seminars for our boaters."

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Capital Plans

Personal watercraft registration

As Sheikh Hamdan bin Mubarak, Minister of Public Works and Chairman of the National Transport Authority, opened the new Unified Marine Registration Centre (UMRC) at Mina Port, Abu Dhabi, he announced the Coastguard in the UAE's capital would shortly more closely regulate the use of personal watercraft.

The UMRC are currently handling the registration of all boats – a process that falls between the Critical National Infrastructure Authority, the Ministry of Environment and Water, the National Transport Authority and the Department of Transport – and the word is that personal watercraft will soon follow. With an average call-out rate for watercraft incidents averaging at one per fortnight, the majority for minor issues like running out of fuel, there have also been several serious incidents. The marine police are threatening riders who ride too close to beaches, boats or in restricted zones with heavy fines. But the creation of dedicated 'Jet Ski Zones' should help alleviate this issue. Rental operators in Abu Dhabi are welcoming the changes they believe will help clean up the image of their sport.

New laws for Under 24's?

New regulations forthcoming for UAE boaters

With the new legislation for vessels over the size of 24 meters recently released in the UAE, there is much muttering around the marinas of the suspected impending regulations for craft under 24 meters. What information we have been able to glean about the 'new regs' raises as many questions as answers. The desire of the NTA to bring 'law and order to the high seas' and ensure a safe and secure boating environment for all is undeniable. In following a European-style directive rather than British-style one however, many current owners may initially be unimpressed with changes 'for the better'.

If elements such as the ability for private vessels to charter are implemented, some will welcome them. Such measures however will no doubt be subject to further conditions laid down by the chambers of commerce and tourism. This will mean so many permissions will have to be applied for and paperwork completed, only the most motivated will prevail. It will probably be a while before the right hand is introduced to its left colleague.

A basic qualification or minimum training requirement for all owners is also being touted, which will be great business for anyone in the training field - but will international qualifications be accepted? Also, what if an individual doesn't have the necessary qualification, will they be able to own a boat if their captain does? An annual survey at the time of registration and re-registration is another whisper that is doing the rounds. Rumour also has it stricter assessment of passenger numbers and sufficient safety equipment will also be included, in the new regulations, as will limits on the number of passengers on flybridges. All very proper, but a blow to the party and charter markets. Finally, of course, with regards to alcohol onboard, there is the talk of an approach more in line with those regulations that exist on land.

We can only echo the sentiments of an individual who is involved the process, who told us, "I believe the NTA would love the smaller recreational market to be largely self-regulated, as it is in many other countries, albeit adhering to regulations regarding the safety, security and environment that no sane person could counter. But that also takes a modicum responsibility on behalf of the practitioners... which as we all know from being out on the water is not there yet."