

**RULE 22 — CAPSIZED, ANCHORED OR AGROUND; RESCUING**

**If possible, a boat shall avoid a boat that is capsized or has not regained control after capsizing, is anchored or aground, or is trying to help a person or vessel in danger. A boat is capsized when her masthead is in the water.**

Rule 22 is a common sense rule of safety, and as such it complements rule 1 (Safety). These two rules place the safety of sailors and their boats well above the importance of any race they may be in. The rationale for rule 22 is clear: if a boat is anchored, aground or capsized it cannot very well “move” to get out of another boat’s way, and it may be in danger; and if one boat is in the act of rescuing another boat or person, no other boat should hinder the rescue in any way.

Note that rule 22 requires you to “avoid” the boats described in the rule. In my opinion, this means not only avoid contact but keep away from them as well. However, the rule’s opening phrase (“If possible...”) clarifies that if for whatever reasonable reason it is not possible for you to avoid them, you should not be penalized. This further emphasizes the safety principle in that if you are attempting to assist a boat that otherwise has right-of-way over you, you should not be penalized.

Also note that the definition *Obstruction* states that boats which others must “avoid” under rule 22 are considered “*obstructions*.” This is a further safety aspect requiring outside boats to give inside boats *room* to avoid these boats in distress under rule 19 (Room to Pass an Obstruction).

Finally, note that a sailboat is considered “capsized” based on the location of its masthead. Given that it is possible to “capsize” a boat without the very top of the mast ever touching the water, I interpret “masthead” to include the top few feet of the mast. Note also that rule 22 offers protection to a sailboat while she is regaining control after capsizing.