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One skill that you should develop, and hopefully never have to use, is how to deal with a person falling overboard. This does not happen often but if it does, how will you deal with it? If and when it happens, you need to be prepared.

As the Captain, the steps to take are:

1. Throw a flotation device to the person and alert the crew.
2. Cut the boat speed and turn to port or starboard to circle around and allow for approaching from downwind of the person in the water.
3. When close enough for the boat's momentum to carry it up beside the person, cut the engine in gear. Shutting it off in gear will stop the propeller from freewheeling (spinning) and reduce the risk of harming the person in the water.
4. Get the person to hold onto the railing. If necessary, throw them the stern line to assist in pulling them in next to the boat.
5. To get them onto the boat, use the ladder on the stern if so equipped or tie a loop in the stern line to use as a foot hold for the person to step in and lift up. It can also be useful to tie the stern line between the stern cleat and a cleat forward in the middle of the boat to set up a "step" for the person.
6. If the person is unable to lift themselves out with assistance from the crew, it may be necessary to tie a loop using a bowline around their chest and under their arms to assist in lifting.
7. Once onboard assess the person's health to determine if further medical assistance is necessary.

These steps may seem simple and straight forward but some forethought and practice will be very helpful to develop the skills to make it happen! On one of your next boat trip, try throwing something overboard and recovering it to see how it all works.

Watch for seminars and courses on similar topics that will help you to have safe and enjoyable boating trips on our local waterways!