

PVC Signal Flagstaffs

There are race committees and officials who use ¾", 7/8" and 1" diameter PVC, schedule 40, water pipe as signal flagstaffs since it is readily available, light in weight, has no splinters and is inexpensive. However, it does not float. And most of us who use signal flagstaffs made of PVC pipe have seen them roll off the foredeck of a signal boat, never to be seen again. Of course this always happens during a countdown sequence or at the start of a race, and it always seems to be the postponement, individual recall and general recall flags that go overboard and sink to the bottom.

Floating PVC flagstaffs are the answer. Fill the pipe, or at least the ends and all the holes drilled into it, with foam. A product which can be purchased from a building supply house or hardware store is Great Stuff, Triple Expanding, Polyurethane Foam Sealant. When purchasing the foam also purchase a pint of acetone. The acetone is used for clean up as well as using an acetone wetted paper towel to wipe away the labeling on the pipe. After filling the pipe with foam, the likelihood is that all the material in the pressurized container will not be used. Unscrew the filling tube from the can and pour acetone into the tube. The acetone cleans the filling tube so it can be used again. A word of caution. The foam is not water soluble. Be careful and keep it away from your eyes and off of clothing.

When the pipe is completely filled with foam, it also serves another purpose which is to make the pipe firm. A ¾" diameter PVC pipe 5 or 10 feet long has a lot of undesirable whip.

Jere Woltz

6/23/01

Note: Be very careful using the expandable foam, it expands a lot more than you think it will!!!!!!