

Watercraft

The Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) uses a range of watercraft for cargo operations, personnel transfer and search and rescue. Inflatable rubber boats (IRBs), rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) and LARCs (Lighter, Amphibious, Resupply, Cargo) are used for cargo and personnel transfers and are available for search and rescue purposes. Jet barges and Uniflote pontoons are also used for station resupply, with aluminium and plastic work boats used for designated science activities.

Any watercraft operation must comply with the Australian Maritime and Safety Authority (AMSA) survey, which directs the use of all commercial vessels under Australian and international maritime law. The AAD also has a comprehensive set of standard operating procedures outlining operational parameters, minimum crewing and safety equipment that must be carried.

Using a single watercraft in Antarctica, even in the vicinity of the stations, can be hazardous due to unpredictable offshore winds, sea ice, ice bergs and wildlife. For example, an engine failure, even close to shore, on a windy day, can create a very serious situation. Therefore all single engine boats must be operated in tandem with another watercraft, which is capable of carrying the crew and/or towing the incapacitated watercraft.

All watercraft operators are highly experienced and must hold an AMSA Coxswain I or Master 5 certificate and must also complete further training provided by the AAD.



IRB