

IRC RATING PROTESTS

Changes in this version – December 2024

RRS rule number changes to comply with the RRS 2025–2028.

Edited to reflect current IRC rules.

Minor edits for clarity.

Preamble

This guidance focusses on protests concerning alleged breaches of IRC measurement rules. It should be read in conjunction with the RYA guidance on Measurement Protests.

The IRC rules, notices and interpretations are available from the rating office website at <https://ircrating.org/irc-rule>.

IRC Race Management Guidelines are available at <https://ircrating.org/irc-racing/race-management>.

Authority: Who is the “authority responsible for interpreting the rule”?

For the purposes of RRS 63.5(d), the authority responsible for interpreting the rule is the IRC Rating Authority. See IRC rule 4.1.

General contact is via info@rorcrating.com and irc@ycf-club.fr. It is recommended that requests are copied to both addresses. The IRC Rating Offices are not normally open outside of office hours or at weekends. It is recommended that event organisers for significant events contact the IRC Rating Authority before the event to agree a contact point should this become necessary.

The authority responsible for interpreting the IRC rule specifically does not include equipment inspectors, IRC measurers or any other third parties.

Compliance: When is a boat non-compliant with her IRC certificate?

A boat’s rated dimensions are declared on her certificate.

When any rated dimension is found to exceed a maximum value or to be less than a minimum value, then the boat is not in compliance with her certificate. See IRC rule 8.10.

For series production boats, rated dimensions may have been standardised by the Rating Authority and these dimensions are not subject to protest. Protest committees should check with the Rating Authority before finding that such a boat is non-compliant. See IRC rule 9.5.

Measurement must be carried out in accordance with the definitions and procedures in the ERS and the IRC Rules and measurement accuracy must be considered in deciding whether a boat complies with her certificate. See IRC rule 13.

Note: measurement accuracy does not refer to the tolerances defined in IRC rule 9.8. Those are for the sole purpose of rating reviews and (if relevant) protests. Accuracy in this context means accuracy of measurement and recording of rated data.

IRC rule 12.1 states that all linear measurements are recorded in metres to two places of decimals, i.e. to the nearest centimetre. Non-compliance therefore requires a discrepancy of at least 5mm. To this must be added any uncertainty arising from the measurement. In good conditions, this should not generally be greater than an additional 5 mm, resulting in a practical tolerance in most cases of 10mm.

Boat weight is recorded to the nearest 10kg. The uncertainty in this instance relates primarily to the load cell accuracy. This is often quoted as a percentage of maximum load. Load cells used by the IRC Rating Authority have a quoted accuracy of $\pm 0.2\%$ of maximum load, i.e. a load cell rated for 10 tonnes (10000kg) will have an accuracy of ± 20 kg. Most load cells also read to the nearest 10kg adding another 5kg to this.

Generally, therefore, linear dimensions in error by greater than 10mm, and weights in error by greater than 0.2% of load cell capacity ± 5 kg, can be taken to mean that the boat is not in compliance with her certificate. For HSA, FSA and SPA (i.e. areas), non-compliance will be indicated by the compounded linear errors.

When does an IRC certificate become invalid?

Change of ownership and/or any changes in sail number automatically invalidate the rating certificate. See IRC rule 8.8. A boat on charter has not changed ownership, her certificate therefore remains valid.

Otherwise, only the IRC Rating Authority may declare invalid, withdraw, or re-issue an IRC certificate. A protest committee has no authority to declare an IRC certificate invalid.

The Rating Authority may withdraw a certificate when it has evidence that the boat does not comply with her certificate or for other reasons. See IRC rule 8.11.

A certificate may be declared invalid as a result of a rating review, see Protest decisions section below.

Owners are required to declare all physical changes to the boat that might affect the performance of the boat; this may result in the certificate being invalidated. See IRC rule 8.9).

Clearly, actions such as polishing the hull or adjusting rig tension before a race will affect the performance of a boat. IRC rule 8.9 is not intended to prevent these and other similar

practices. It is aimed at physical changes which might affect the rating; removal or addition of ballast, removal of furniture or other fittings, modifications to hull, keel or rudder, etc. The IRC Rating Authority will advise in specific instances.

A list of all boats holding current valid IRC certificates and their Time Correctors (TCCs) is published on <https://ircrating.org/irc-racing/online-tcc-listings>, and their rated data can be found on <https://ircrating.org/boat-data-for-valid-irc-certificates/> both of which are updated daily.

What is an IRC one-design certificate?

IRC one-design certificates are clearly identified by the words (irrespective of the certificate print language) ONE-DESIGN adjacent to the TCC.

A one-design certificate requires that, in addition to the IRC rules, the boat must comply with the one-design class rules. In the event of conflict, the IRC Rules take precedence. See IRC rule 13.7.

Protest committees will need to refer to the relevant one-design class rules.

What is an IRC Endorsed Certificate?

A Notice of Race may require that boats hold an Endorsed IRC certificate.

IRC rule 8.5 defines an Endorsed certificate as: "... one for which the data on the certificate has been audited and if necessary verified by measurement, or other methods in accordance with current published standards."

An endorsed certificate is identified by the notation "ENDORSED" in English.

Because the requirement to hold an Endorsed certificate is invoked by a notice of race, a boat failing to comply breaks a rule of the notice of race rather than an IRC rule.

What is an IRC secondary certificate?

A secondary certificate is an additional certificate that specifies an alternative configuration for a boat. The permitted variations between the primary and secondary certificates are specified in IRC rule 8.2.1.

A secondary certificate will be clearly identified as such and owners shall declare the use of the primary or secondary certificate to the race organiser before the rating deadline.

Crew number/weight/position

Boats with one design certificates must comply with their one-design class rules in relation to crew number/weight. See IRC rule 22.4.1.

Otherwise, the crew weight shall not exceed 85kg multiplied by the Crew Number printed on the certificate. See IRC rule 22.4.2.

These requirements may be changed by the notice of race. See IRC rule 22.4.3.

Crew Number and the calculated crew weight are printed on the IRC certificate.

Crew categorisation

There are no rules on the categorisation of crew within IRC unless stated in a notice of race. See IRC rule 22.5.1.

Protest decisions

When a boat is found to be non-compliant with her certificate (see Compliance section above), she is to be penalized for the race for which the protest is valid. If the protest committee decides that the boat also broke the same rule in earlier races in the same event, the penalty may be imposed for all such races. No further protest is necessary. See RRS 60.5(d)(3) and 78.1.

If the boat can rectify the non-compliance, for example when a boat was found to be racing with more spinnakers on board than permitted by her certificate, the boat will be able continue racing in the event and no change in certificate is necessary.

IRC rules give the protest committee options for penalties other than disqualification. However, if the protest committee wishes to consider these options, a new certificate is required because the penalty options available depend upon the magnitude of the resulting change to the TCC. See IRC rules 10.3 and 10.4

A protest committee does not have the power to order that a new IRC certificate be issued. Therefore, when it finds that a boat does not comply with her certificate, it is recommended that the protest committee requests a rating review (see IRC Rating Review section below and IRC rule 10.1). If the review cannot be completed before subsequent races, the boat may be allowed to continue racing pending the conclusions of the review. See the RYA guidance on Measurement Protests, section 8.

Note: IRC rule 10.1 permits the IRC Rating Authority to charge a fee for a rating review. No fee is normally charged although the Rating Authority reserves the right to charge in cases of abuse.

If no rating review is requested, the only penalty available to the protest committee is disqualification, unless the Notice of Race or Sailing Instructions have made the class rules a discretionary penalty.

When, because of review, the TCC increases, the IRC Rating Authority will invalidate the existing certificate and will normally issue a new certificate with a corrected TCC. See IRC rule 9.9.

In all cases where the TCC increases because of an error by a Rule Authority or the Rating Authority of which the boat could not reasonably have been aware, the penalty to be applied is at the discretion of the protest committee. See IRC rule 10.3.

In all other cases:

- When the TCC is increased by not more than 0.005, the original certificate remains valid up to but excluding the race in which the protest was lodged. The penalty to be applied is at the discretion of the protest committee. See IRC rules 9.6 and 10.4.
- If the TCC increases by more than 0.005, the original certificate is invalidated from the date of issue. In this case, the boat was effectively racing without a certificate and there is no provision for a discretionary penalty. The boat is to be disqualified. See IRC rule 9.7.

In addition, when IRC rules 10.3 or 10.4 are found to apply, the protest committee may order that races in the event scored with the invalid rating are to be re-scored with the corrected rating.

Note: if the TCC increases by more than 0.005, the option to re-score is not available.

IRC Rating Review

IRC Rating Review provides a mechanism for checking the validity of a certificate. IRC rule 9 defines the process.

A rating review may be requested by the owner of a boat (a first-party review) or by an interested party (a third-party review), which includes not only other boats but also bodies such as race committees or protest committees.

See Protest decisions section above, for why a protest committee may need to request a rating review

Rating reviews are conducted by the IRC Rating Authority and generally a protest committee will not be directly involved.

When a boat is penalised by a protest committee because her certificate has been invalidated by a rating review, the boat is responsible for measurement and rating costs. Otherwise, the protestor is responsible for costs. See IRC rule 10.5.

Penalties

When a protest committee has discretion to decide the appropriate penalty for the infringement, the penalty may range from no penalty to disqualification.

The following guidelines are recommended in assessing penalties:

- The option to impose a penalty less than DSQ should not normally be used when the protest committee is satisfied that the breach was deliberate. In such cases, the protest committee should also consider action under RRS 2 or 69.

- Except in the most trivial of cases or when the non-compliance arises from an error by the Rule Authority or Rating Authority (see above), non-compliance with an IRC certificate should always attract at least a 20% place penalty.
- For more significant infringements, the penalty should increase to 50%.
- If a more significant penalty than a 50% place penalty is considered appropriate, then the proper penalty is probably disqualification.

The penalties above are suggested for a first offence. The penalty for subsequent breaches should normally be greater. Any penalty should exceed any possible gain.

Practical issues

In the majority of cases, it is probable that some measurement will be required. If the event has appointed a technical committee, then it will normally be able to carry out the necessary work. Otherwise, the protest committee is recommended to contact the local IRC Rule Authority to locate a measurer. Contact details are given for all countries on www.ircrating.org. The IRC website offers practical guidance on equipment inspection at events: <https://ircrating.org/irc-racing/race-management/equipment-inspection/>

In some instances, particularly with large yachts, it may not be possible to conduct the required re-measurement immediately. This does not however prevent a protest committee from ordering the re-measurement; it simply means that the regatta results will be subject to the eventual outcome. This is, however, a very rare occurrence.

It is impractical to list on an IRC certificate every detail of a boat's measurement record, but the notes towards the top of each certificate provide basic detail such as most recent measurement dates; also shown on the copies available at <https://ircrating.org/boat-data-for-valid-irc-certificates/>. The IRC Rating Authority will always be happy to provide such further relevant information as it holds.

It is also likely that there will be occasions when a protest committee receives conflicting advice. If the protest committee is unclear about the meaning of the IRC rules it should contact the IRC Rating Authority with the full background and information.