

Yacht crews rescued in heavy seas as winds break up regatta training

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THE crew of several yachts training for the 505 Regatta and Flying Dutchman Championship had to be rescued when their boats capsized in heavy seas off Durban yesterday.

The National Sea Rescue Institute's Dave Sievwright said the crews of

about 30 yachts found themselves in trouble after winds of about 40 knots began blowing.

"The winds picked up and some boats capsized, while others had their masts broken and sails torn.

"Seven to eight rescue craft were deployed. There were small two-man yachts strewn across the ocean from

Vetch's Pier to Umhlanga," said Mr Sievwright.

He said the South African Navy, fire and rescue services and Durban lifesavers had all been involved in the rescue.

The president of the 505 Regatta Association, Mr Pip Pearson, said that initially there were two people missing from one of the boats. "They have since

been accounted for," he said.

It is believed that two boats are still missing but the crew from these boats have been rescued.

Mr Sievwright said there were no casualties, but some sailors were treated for minor cuts and bruises.

Durban sailor Harry Ellens said he and his crew got back to shore just

before the wind started picking up. Mr Ian Saugmann, of Denmark and his partner, Mr Morten Ramsbek, said it had been "quite heavy" but it was "OK".

American sailor Mike Welch said it was "very windy out there, it was hard work getting back to shore".

The 505 Regatta and Flying Dutchman Championship begin on Friday.