

South African Weather Service buoy deployment procedure

(SVPB drifters)

- **48 hours before deployment:**

The buoys are usually activated about 48 hours before deployment. We do not remove it from the crate at this stage.

The operator using a local buoy receiver checks if the buoy data is OK, and someone checks on the Argos listings at the Bureau. In case people don't know how to use the local buoy receiver, or Argos message format is unknown, they just check that the buoy is transmitting with a beeper. Normally, if we get a beep on the beeper everything is OK. and the buoy can be deployed.

If there is some doubt about the signal we do not deploy - we put another in its place. That gives us some time to check the buoy and if its OK we deploy it at some later stage.

- **Pre-deployment:**

The buoy is removed from the crate and taken down to the poop deck shortly before deployment.

If its a full on drifter we check again with the beeper, but there's no point in checking a 1/3 drifter because we don't know if its sleeping or not.

- **Deployment:**

When time comes to deploy we have at least 3 persons and we untangle the cables and the drogue. One person holds the float over the side of the ship, another holds the drogue and the last will hold the trailing end. Be very careful not to get a bit of cable around your ankle ! Ship reduces speed to about 5 knots. The tail end of the buoy is dropped and the drag from the sea then pulls the drogue and float from the hands of the people who are holding it. Sometimes during bad weather things can get very rough and uncontrolled. Although some deployments took place at 18 knots SAWB estimate they don't loose more than 1/50 of the buoys.