



BRITISH ROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT



The Status of RowSafe

When we re-wrote RowSafe in 2016 it was intended to contain advice and guidance. This was made clear in the disclaimer. However, the British Rowing Regulations issued in September 2018 contain the following statements

“11. Safety

11.1. All Affiliated Members and Registered Individuals must organise, manage and carry out their activities in a safe and responsible manner with due regard for any guidance, or similar advice, issued by British Rowing or other safety advisory or regulatory bodies.

11.2. Any person or organisation to whom that these Regulations apply to must comply with any such guidance or advice. A breach of any such guidance or advice by any person to whom these Regulations apply to may be treated as a disciplinary offence.

11.3. All Affiliated Members and Registered Individuals must comply with the British Rowing RowSafe guide, which provides safety advice to rowers, Clubs, events and everyone else associated with the sport of rowing. A copy of the British Rowing RowSafe guide can be downloaded from the British Rowing website. “

Section 11 of the Regulations, on Safety, is included as Appendix 1.

Parts of this section could be interpreted as making “compliance” with RowSafe compulsory even though this is not logical as RowSafe contains no requirements other than those specified in the Rules of Racing. Enforcing these regulations, as published, would put an unfair burden on RowSafe; one that it was not designed or intended to bear.

British Rowing has issued very helpful clarification that resolves this dilemma; this states as follows: -

“RowSafe - Clarification of Status

Everyone involved in rowing is expected to make sure that their actions (or lack of actions) do not compromise anyone’s safety. That expectation is reflected in the British Rowing Regulations which require everyone to organise, manage and carry out rowing in a safe and responsible manner.

RowSafe is designed to help all participants in rowing understand and put into practice what needs be done to make sure that rowing is carried out safely. It is a toolkit for everyone to use as general guidance to make sure that rowing is safe, while at the same time considering the circumstances in which rowing is taking place.

The new British Rowing Regulations (September 2018) do not make compliance with every provision and practice referred to in RowSafe a mandatory requirement. RowSafe continues to be, as has always been its intention, general guidance to clubs and their members on safe practice in rowing. As noted in RowSafe, clubs are responsible for maintaining up-to-date risk assessments, and for defining and monitoring their own safety practices, guidance and procedures specific to their environment and activities.

Applying RowSafe to the particular circumstances of water, environment and participant level should in turn provide the highest achievable levels of safety for all. This is what 'compliance with RowSafe' means in practice.

December 2018"

From time to time people tell me that "RowSafe is merely guidance so we can take it or leave it, we can ignore it if we like". I think that the regulations and this clarification make it clear that this is simply not true.

The remainder of the Section 11 of the regulations specify what Registered Individuals, Clubs, Competitions and Regional Rowing Councils **must** do. As would be expected in Regulations, this is specific and clear. This is contained within the Regulations themselves and not by reference to RowSafe. The Regulations are consistent with parts of section 1.1 of RowSafe except that RowSafe uses the formulation "are expected to" whereas the Regulations use "must".

Section 11 of the Regulations, on Safety, is included as Appendix 1.

Incident Reports

The following anonymised summaries are derived from December Incident Reports. I am grateful to the people making these reports as they provide valuable learning opportunities for everyone involved in rowing. It is important to "*Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.*"

A novice 8+ with a novice cox travelling upstream on the Tideway, in the dark, steered into the fairway to avoid a stationary 8+. They were instructed to move back towards the bank in order not to impede two 8+s rowing side by side downstream on the starboard side of the fairway. The novice cox hesitated and when he made the calls, the novice rowers did not respond immediately. They drifted out further, forcing the other 8s to stop.

Great care should be taken when novice crews are coxed by novice coxes. Coxes should be coached to understand the need to give clear and early instruction and crews should be coached to understand the need to respond immediately. The level of supervision provided to these crews, particularly in the dark, should reflect their ability.

A coaching launch on the Tideway ran out of fuel and was taken in tow by an RNLI Lifeboat. The fuel level was not checked prior to launch. A launch adrift in this way, on such a busy waterway, is a significant hazard, and one that can easily be prevented.

At a training camp, a bows of a visiting 8+ hit a wooden post in a river during a high rate race piece. The post was reported to be in the cox's "blind spot". This collision resulted in whiplash injuries to the bow rower and extensive damage to the boat (as shown below).



Section 3.5 of RowSafe deals with Training Camps and Rowing on Unfamiliar Waters. Its advice includes "Training Camp Organising Committees are expected to:

- Request safety information from the host club or venue management, this may include the venue's own Safety Rules and Navigation Plan. See the [Safety Alert - Know the river](#), especially when visiting new stretches of water.

At a competition, a 4x- arrived in start area and was told by event marshal "to turn and keep warming up around the circuit". They did as directed but collided with a 2x when they were about to complete a 10 stroke burst. The 4x- went straight over the 2x, continuing until the fin of the 4x- reached the 2x hull. The 2x was able to get to the bank although the crew was unharmed but badly shaken. The 2x was in two pieces and the crew recovered it to the club trailer.

In RowSafe section 4.2 Event Safety Plans and Safety Rules it is stated that Event Officers and Organising Committees are expected to use the Event Risk Assessment to produce or update the Event Safety Plan and Rules. Event Safety Rules should specify:

- The venue specific rules that everyone should abide by in order to keep themselves and others safe.
- The consequences of failing to abide by those rules.

It is further noted that Safety Rules should be few and specific. They should relate to behaviours that could have a significant impact on safety. For example, at some venues, it may be appropriate to have a rule that states that any crew that rows onto the course and impedes a race shall be disqualified.

In this case, if the Risk Assessment had included this risk (and if it did not then it should have) then the event organisers should have considered it appropriate to specify an event rule that practice starts and high speed rowing are not permitted in marshalling areas and that the consequences of doing so would be disqualification. (There is no need to be concerned about this apparently severe consequence as, providing the rule is clearly communicated and understood, there will be no such at-risk behaviour and no need to impose the penalty.)

Medical Problems and Rowing

There was an enquiry from a rower with a medical concern in relation to the way she was treated by her club, the response contained the following.

“British Rowing has no rules on medical disclosure although it is an issue that is often discussed. We have to be aware of everyone's right to confidentiality and the expectation that rowers, and others, will share information that a club can use to keep those members, and others, safe.

Clubs can overreact due to their own ignorance or lack of understanding and a general risk aversion. You may be able to educate them as you are the expert on your own condition.

There is some information in section 8.6.2 of RowSafe on Chronic Diseases and Conditions (see <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Row-Safe-April-2018-Chp-8.pdf>) where it says: -

Clubs and events often ask members and participants if they have any medical issues that may affect their safety and the safety of others. It is not necessary to provide details of any conditions, this information is confidential, but it would be appropriate to share information about what type or extent of activity would be helpful and any that may be harmful. "

Work with British Canoeing

An incident was reported to both British Rowing and British Canoeing by a canoeist. It involved one member of a group of canoeists becoming positioned between an 8+ and a 4- travelling in opposite directions. Information was shared with a colleague at British Canoeing.

IPV Code

The Intended Pleasure Vessel (IPV) Code has been issued and is available [here](#). It came into effect on 1st January 2019 and is, in effect, a legal requirement under the Merchant Shipping Regulations. Part 2 of the code applies Race Support Boats and is applicable, in some circumstances, to boats that support rowing races at sea. This was described in the November report. It is supported by Marine Guidance Note [MGN 598 M](#).

Port of London Authority (PLA) SKILLS Poster

The PLA, together with the Thames Regional Rowing Council, has recently issued a poster providing safety advice to launch drivers on the Thames; the advice it contains is also **valid for launch drivers on other waterways**. The poster can be found at https://www.boatingonthames.co.uk/assets/PLA_SKILLS_poster_A3.pdf and a copy is included with this report.

The word SKILLS is a mnemonic for: -

- S = Steers-Accredited
- K = Kill Cord
- I = ID Code
- L = Lifejackets
- L = Lights and
- S = Size

There are references on the poster to “the code”, this is ROWING ON THE TIDEWAY, A Code of Practice for Rowing on the Tidal Thames, available at http://www.pla.co.uk/assets/THE_ROWING_CODE.pdf .

RowSafe 2019

A list of topics to be included in RowSafe 2019 was included in the November report. The following additional topics have been identified as potential updates: -

- Reference to coaching safe behaviour.
- Advice on a document containing information for competitors.
- Information about the IPV code
- Expand on the consequences of rowing when injured, unwell or with back or joint pain.
- Latest information about treating concussion, include the Concussion Recognition tool (CRT5).
- Information from recent Safety Alerts
- Integrate the soon to be released Medical Panel guidance on Rowing with Epilepsy
- Extend the guidance on Waterborne diseases to include items in the Medical Panel guidance.

Please let me know (safety@britishrowing.org) if you have any comments on any of these or if you would like to make any further suggestions.

Tragic incident at an event in Africa

British Rowing was asked by FISA if I could advise on safety procedures for events that they run overseas, following a drowning in Africa. A report identifying the causes of this incident, together with recommendations to improve safety procedures, has been prepared and provided to FISA. FISA responded with thanks and appreciation. The results of this investigation remain confidential and they have little relevance to activities in the UK.

Throwlines

The British Standards Institution has constituted a panel to develop a new British Standard. The first meeting of the panel will be on 17th January and I have been authorised to represent British Rowing.

Capsize Drills in Swimming Pools

There was a request to provide assurance to a Leisure Centre Manager on the Safety of a club's proposed capsize drill. The text of the letter is in Appendix 2.

Heel Restraints on BAT Logic Shoes

There has been an extensive exchange of e-mails with a Sales Representative from Project B Rowing, BAT Logic, about the cord and clip method of providing heel restraints on rowing shoes. These shoes clip into a backplate that is installed in a boat or indoor rowing machine. In the event of a capsize, it is intended that the rower should release their feet from the shoes rather than remove the shoes from the boat. In these circumstances, the shoes need heel restraints.

There was also concern because of the message that Bat Logic promotes on its website (<https://batlogic.net/>). It appears from the videos (including those on how to install the system and how to change shoes) that these shoes do not need heel restraints. Clearly, they do need heel restraints.

The clips used in this design are made from marine grade 316 stainless steel and appear to be sufficiently robust. The cord is made from nylon, it is coloured black so may well be sufficiently resistant to UV light. Further information was requested on the properties of the cord but this has not been forthcoming, 3mm dyneema cord was suggested.

It is intended that one end of the cord is tied into the boat and the other end clipped to the heel of the shoe. There is little information (and no pictures) on the website showing how the cord is fitted in the boat.

This situation was deemed unsatisfactory because there is insufficient information on the cord and there is misleading information on the website.

Appendix 1 - The Safety Section of the British Rowing Regulations

11. Safety

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11.3. All Affiliated Members and Registered Individuals must comply with the British Rowing RowSafe guide, which provides safety advice to rowers, Clubs, events and everyone else associated with the sport of rowing. A copy of the British Rowing RowSafe guide can be downloaded from the British Rowing website.

11.4. Registered Individuals must:

11.4.1. Take responsibility for their own safety both on and off the water; and

11.4.2. Ensure that their actions both on and off the water do not put others at risk.

11.5. Clubs must:

11.5.1. Ensure a positive safety culture;

11.5.2. Establish and publish a safety policy in which they commit to safety;

11.5.3. Provide a safe environment for their members and others to enjoy their sport;

11.5.4. Appoint a Club Rowing Safety Advisor(s) to lead and advise on promoting safe practice;

11.5.5. Establish and communicate safety rules that define what is, and what is not, appropriate behaviour on and off the water;

11.5.6. Provide their members with education and training in risk assessment and safe practice;

11.5.7. Complete the British Rowing Annual Safety Audit and implement any recommendations made as a result of this Audit;

11.5.8. Liaise with all water users and other stakeholders (such as the local sailing club) to ensure that neither will put the other at risk;

11.5.9. Encourage Club members to be accountable for safety and report all incidents; and

11.5.10. Take appropriate action if its members fail to abide by its Safety Rules.

11.6. Competitions must:

11.6.1. Complete and maintain a risk assessment and use this to define its safety plans for the event;

11.6.2. Promote and communicate safe practice in all activities associated with the event;

11.6.3. Appoint an event Rowing Safety Advisor to lead and advise

11.6.4. Support their event Rowing Safety Advisor and take their advice into account.

11.7. Regional Rowing Councils must:

11.7.1. Develop and encourage a positive safety culture and safe practice in the region;

11.7.2. Support Clubs and events in organising their activities and encourage them to follow good practice based on the risks associated with the type of Club, waters and activities in the region;

11.7.3. Promote safety education and training;

11.7.4. Review the safety provision of events within the region and provide or withhold approval for each of them to be held;

11.7.5. Review safety at Clubs and events and provide feedback to those Clubs and events;

11.7.6. Maintain contact with navigation and other authorities to assist their Clubs and events to operate safely; and

11.7.7. Appoint a Regional Rowing Safety Advisor to lead and advise on promoting safe practice.

Appendix 2 - Capsize Drills in Swimming Pools

Rowing Clubs routinely organise capsize drills in swimming pools in order to ensure that rowers can swim and to give them an opportunity to learn about, and experience, capsize and recovery in a safe and controlled environment.

There are two separate activities with different characteristics. The first is the swim test, this is described in section 3.6 of [RowSafe](#), Swimming Competence. This states that “*ideally, everyone taking part in rowing should be able to:*

- *Swim at least 50 metres in light clothing (rowing kit).*
- *Tread water for at least two minutes.*
- *Swim under water for at least five metres.*

However, these times and distances could be extended so that they are appropriate to the venue where rowing takes place.”

This activity could safely be undertaken during public swimming sessions or during a private session when one end of the pool is being used for capsize training and the other for the swim test.

Capsize training forms the second part of the activity. This involves a rowing boat (usually a single sculling boat) being used in the pool. Clubs are well aware of the need to thoroughly clean the boat prior to use and do so scrupulously.

All Level 2 coaches are trained to teach the capsize drill. The training includes both a classroom session and a pool session. All Level 2 coaches have seen the capsize drill being demonstrated and the vast majority have experienced it for themselves. The capsize drill is summarised in the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcPE8-gENLo>.

Coaches are taught to take great care over the safety of the people they are coaching. This is emphasised in their Capsize and Recovery training where it is normal to have two supporters in the water during each capsize. In the rare event of anyone needing help, they are well placed to provide it.