



BRITISHROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

September 2019

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT



Incident Reports in September

There was a report of an infected blister (caused by rowing) that resulted in blood poisoning requiring two days hospitalisation, intravenous antibiotics and follow up oral antibiotics prior to discharge. The advice in RowSafe is to:

- Clean open wounds, such as blisters or calf abrasions with an anti-bacterial substance.

The club reminded members of the importance of hygiene, keeping cuts/blisters clean, using antibacterial gels etc.

There were several incidents where motor vessels left a mooring without due regard to the presence of passing rowing boats. Crews are advised to keep a good lookout on the landward side when passing moored boats. It is unsafe to assume that motorboat drivers are keeping a good lookout and will take action to avoid a collision.

There was a report of a collision in which a protruding bolt used to secure a bow ball made a large hole in the other boat. Clubs are advised to check these bolts and ensure that they do not protrude.

There were several incidents of antisocial behaviour. In one the occupant of a houseboat claimed that he had been awakened at 12:30 pm by shouts from a coach on a bike on the towpath. The man followed the coach back to the boathouse and threatened him with violence. The incident was reported to the police.

In another incident, a bottle of beer was dropped from a bridge onto a passing boat. In yet another incident a crew hit a bridge due to someone swinging on a rope.

There was a report of a 2x, escorted by a coach in a launch, making contact with a canoe. It is reported that the coach was simultaneously driving the launch and videoing the crew. The canoeist was (rightly) upset by the lack of concern by the coach. It is important that launch drivers are able to keep a good lookout in all directions and this is not possible when videoing. It is also important that coaches keep a good lookout, are aware of the hazards on the waterway and are able to advise their crews, in good time, so that these hazards can be avoided.

Presentation of the Royal Humane Society Awards

Arrangements have been made to present the RHS Awards of Treatments on Parchment and a Resuscitation Award to Henry Jackson and Alfie England of the Royal Agricultural University RC at the WAGS Regional AGM at Saltford on Sunday 17th November.

The rescue was described in the March 2019 monthly report.

[This report is a safety guidance document. Please read our safety message and disclaimer in RowSafe.](#)



The 2020 update to RowSafe

As 2020 will be an Olympic year it was thought appropriate to prepare the updates to RowSafe earlier than usual to give the Communications Team more time to implement them. This issue was discussed at a recent National Rowing Safety Committee and the following improvements were suggested:

- Encourage the use of head mounted mirrors and other devices to assist rowers and scullers to maintain a good lookout ahead,
- Make more explicit recommendations on the need for crotch (thigh) straps on lifejackets,
- Clarify the guidance on the use of lifejackets by rowers (see Appendix 1),
- Provide advice on how to recover a person from the water into a launch,
- Provide more detailed advice on how to perform an emergency stop safely,
- Find a new emergency stop video (does anyone have one we can use?)
- Add a note about the use of buoyancy aids in rowing
- Include a reference to lights that illuminate the bladder of the lifejacket (see [here](#))

Please write to me at safety@britishrowing.org if you would like to suggest any further improvements.

Safety Rules and Regulations

There was an enquiry from a newly appointed boathouse manager saying that he is completing a risk assessment for the coming academic year and needs to quote National Governing Body rules and regulations that the club will need to comply with. He also needs to complete the Safety Audit. The response was:-

The Safety Expectations of British Rowing are contained in [RowSafe](#). RowSafe is applicable to all clubs but, clearly, some parts of it are not applicable to some clubs. For example, the sections on Gig Rowing (Fixed Seat rowing on the sea) will probably not be applicable in the Midlands and the sections on Launches will not be applicable if you do not use a launch.

RowSafe forms the basis for the Club Safety Audit. The annual audit also requires you to upload your risk assessment and safety plans (please see the relevant sections of RowSafe). These will be reviewed and accepted (I hope) by your Regional Rowing Safety Adviser.

There is information on Risk Assessment Training and templates, etc on the website [here](#). This all looks very complex at first but as soon as you realise that Chapter 9 of RowSafe contains examples of Hazards, Barriers, Hazardous Events and Controls then it all becomes much easier. Do not worry about the jargon, that is dealt with in the training. Completing the first half of the risk assessment (the risk management plan) is just a matter of a bit of selective cutting and pasting.”

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The New Tideway Code

The 2015 version of the Tideway Code of Practice for Rowing on the Tideway has been superseded by the new 2019 version. The new version covers both Rowing and Paddling (Canoeing, Kayaking and Paddle boarding).



The new code can be found [here](#). It contains some information that is specific to the Tideway but much of the information is applicable to rowers and paddlers everywhere.

For further information please contact Tony Reynolds at safety@thames-rrc.org.

Safety Alert 999 vs 112

It was suggested that a Safety Alert indicated that the response to dialling 112 from a mobile phone was different to that from dialling 999. The response was that they used to be different, but the situation has changed and 999 and 112 now have all the same features. There is a detailed explanation at <http://www.mountainsafety.co.uk/EP-999-or-112-Which-is-Best.aspx>.



The use of Personal Floatation Devices by Rowers

There continues to be some discussion about the routine wearing of lifejackets by rowers. The following clarification has been provided:-

“You will not find a British Rowing document saying do not wear a lifejacket when rowing. Our basic stance is that there are some people who should wear one and one should be provided to anyone else who wants to wear one. You will see statements in RowSafe like:-

Promote a higher level of care for junior, beginner and adaptive rowers.

- *Have policies in place for those who cannot, or who have not demonstrated or declared, swimming competence, particularly junior, beginner and adaptive rowers.*
- *Have policies in place for those who have not been trained, particularly junior, beginner and adaptive rowers. These could, for example, require the wearing of lifejackets. (section 3.6 Swimming Competence)*

Wear a lifejacket, as a cox, at all times when afloat but not use an auto inflation lifejacket in a bow loaded boat. (section 5.1 Steering and Navigation)

Wear a lifejacket if:

- *They cannot swim.*
- *They are juniors who have not completed a capsize drill.*
- *Because of a medical condition, there is a risk that they may become unconscious or immobile whilst afloat.*

Make lifejackets available to non-swimmers and participants who are nervous about the water. (section 7.3 - Safety Aids)

Make lifejackets available to all rowers and ensure that they are worn by non-swimmers and juniors who have not completed a capsize drill. (section 6.1 - People new to Rowing)

There are also, as you know, recommendations for launch drivers, coxes and coaches, etc. We cannot simultaneously say do not wear a lifejacket and that one should be available if you want one.”

A more detailed statement was also made, this is included in Appendix I.

SHARK Shoes

There was an enquiry about SHARK shoes as these are not equipped with heel restraints. There is little information available but what there is appears to show that the shoes clip onto specially equipped locations on stretchers and are able to detach from the stretcher when needed. In this case they do not need heel restraints to help a rower to remove their feet from the shoes as the shoes are intended to detach from the boat.



Indoor Rowing for Children

A mother whose 11-year-old daughter has been rowing with a junior Gig club wrote to ask whether it was advisable for her daughter to train on an indoor rowing machine and whether there was an age limit. The following advice was provided:-

There is no age limit for indoor rowing, but it is not advisable that people of your daughter's age undertake serious training on an indoor rowing machine. At that age muscles are more developed than bones and joints so strenuous exercise on a rowing machine can cause damage to the less developed parts of the body.

There is further and detailed guidance in the British Rowing document "How Much How Often". This can be found on the website [here](#).

At you daughter's age it would be better for her to row on the water or simply have fun afloat in a rowing boat. The easiest, and probably the best way to do this is in a stable single sculling boat. This could be a boat designed and constructed to be stable, or a racing boat fitted with stabilising floats on the ends of the riggers; these convert the racing boat into a very stable platform.

You can find rowing clubs by entering your postcode onto the Club Finder page on the British Rowing website [here](#).

Hepatitis B

There was a request for information from a club that has a member who is a Hepatitis B carrier. The following information was provided:-

"There is more information on Hepatitis B at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hepatitis-b/>. I understand that transmission is by exchange of bodily fluids, so it is unlikely to be a problem in the normal coaching environment. However, in the event of anyone needing first aid treatment, for example for a cut, then please ensure that the first aider is wearing gloves. This applies to all such first aid treatments provided to anyone. Do not act differently with the person who has this condition. Please check that you have sufficient gloves in your first aid kit.

If you Google "gloves first aid use", then you find something like this:-

*"Disposable **gloves** offer an added barrier against infection in a **first aid** situation. It is important that **first** aiders carry disposable, latex free **gloves** at all times. The **first aider** should wear them whenever there is a likelihood of contact with bodily fluids. "*

Latex free gloves are preferred because some people are, or become, allergic to latex. There are lots of suppliers and they are not expensive.

As far as the person with this disorder is concerned then it would be advisable for them to check with their doctor or consultant to find out whether rowing will cause them any problems. This may well depend on their particular circumstances."



Epilepsy

There was a request for advice from a person with epilepsy who was wondering about rowing. A club had told her that she had to be one year free of seizures before she could row.

The response was that I am afraid that the advice from the club is largely correct, but the real situation is a little more complex. Our Medical Panel issued detailed advice in December 2018, this can be found [here](#). (It was reproduced in the note and was quoted, in full, in the July 2019 Monthly Report.)

People with epilepsy become experts in their own disease and there is a broad spectrum of seizure types and frequencies. It is difficult to generalise.

There have been seizures afloat and this is a big concern. I understand that during a seizure, people tend to exhale, and this makes their bodies less buoyant.

Cardiovascular issues in Masters

There has been more discussion on this subject. It has been suggested that we undertake research to determine the risk of cardiovascular events, particularly in masters who train vigorously.

It was explained that there would be too many problems in framing this research and that the number of cardiovascular events in masters was so small that it would not be possible to draw safe conclusions from such a restricted study.

It is also likely that elderly active oarsmen, even those who train like current Olympic aspirants, will survive longer than their couch-potato counterparts.

Updating information on your CRSA

There was a request for the database of Club Rowing Safety Adviser (CRSA) to be updated. It was explained that we are trying to encourage people to take a self-service approach and update details directly into the Club Hub database. If you go to the [Club Hub portal](#) then you will find explanations and training material. Then go [here](#) and scroll down and "Club Members". You may need to select your club. Find your name and click on "Club Role". (You may have to ask your Club Secretary to do this as you may not have access.) The CRSA role is changed by looking at the role of the relevant club members.



Support for the Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA)

There was an incident report that concerned an injury to a Gig cox. At a regatta, beach marshalls were helping with the change of boats' crews between races. One crew tried to bail water from a boat and the cox was not given time to get out of the boat safely. The boat was lifted, and she fell backwards hitting her arm on the seats.

A briefing was given to all the beach marshalls about following safety rules on moving gigs, the marshalls involved were spoken to and it was explained that no boat must be moved without ensuring everyone is out of the boat. It was decided that there will be one experienced person to be in charge and to ensure all marshalls follow the safety rules on moving gigs.

Information was shared with the CPGA Safety Adviser.

Work with British Canoeing

An Incident Report contained the following:-

There was a group of junior kayakers from a named Canoe Club travelling downstream. The large motorboat carried on at his speed of approximately 9 knots and ploughed right through these children in their kayaks and just expected them to get out of his way. (It is important to note that the wash being created was considerable and ran the significant risk of capsizing or swamping the children in their kayaks.)

This was provided to colleagues at British Canoeing.

Buoyancy bags

There was an enquiry about the use of buoyancy bags in boats not equipped with sealed under seat compartments. The following information was provided.

It is very difficult to make specific recommendations because all boats are different. As a general rule I would suggest that we treat a boat like a lifejacket, yes, I know that this sounds strange. Most lifejackets provide 150 Newtons of buoyancy. This is the same buoyancy as a 15-litre buoyancy bag when fully immersed. Even without under seat buoyancy bags, the boat will have some buoyancy due to the air trapped under the canvases so you will probably need less than 15 litres of air per person in buoyancy bags.

I dealt with this issue in some detail in my monthly report of January 2019 (this was attached to the reply).

Buoyancy bags are commonly used in sailing dinghies and are available in all sorts of shapes and sizes. I expect that you will need cylindrical bags to fit under seats, these are sometimes known as "pillow bags". If you Google "buoyancy bags" then you should find lots of suppliers.

RowSafe contains advice rather than requirements, it actually defines what we expect clubs and rowers to do. Please use your risk assessment to determine what you need in the place where you row. Having said that, my personal recommendation is that you should fit under seat buoyancy bags as this is always going to be safer than not fitting them.

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Appendix 1

The use of Lifejackets by Rowers and Scullers

This advice note addresses the issue of whether or not it is appropriate for rowers and scullers, but not coxes, to wear lifejackets when afloat. Coxes should wear lifejackets at all times when afloat.

There are some circumstances where it is appropriate for rowers and scullers to wear lifejackets, these are listed in RowSafe as follows:

Rowers and Scullers should wear a lifejacket if:

- *They cannot swim.*
- *They are juniors who have not completed a capsize drill.*
- *Because of a medical condition, there is a risk that they may become unconscious or immobile whilst afloat.*

In addition, lifejackets should be made available to non-swimmers and rowers and scullers who are nervous about being on the water.

The reasons why it is not, in general, appropriate for rowers and scullers to wear lifejackets are:-

- *Wearing a lifejacket presents an increased risk to an athlete in the event of a capsize; athletes can become trapped underneath the shell of an upturned boat and lifejackets can make it harder to facilitate a rescue to the coaching launch or for the rower or sculler to climb on top of their boat. In the event of a capsize, the priority is to remove the individual from the water as soon as possible and wearing a lifejacket can slow this process down; athletes who have worn lifejackets have required them to be deflated before a rescue can take place.*
- *Wearing a lifejacket can increase the risk of a capsize by preventing athletes rowing with the good technique that would ordinarily reduce the risk of capsize.*

Rowing boats are inherently buoyant. Rowers and scullers are taught that in the event of a capsize they should hold onto the boat and climb onto it so as to minimise the extent and time for which their bodies are immersed in water. The wearing of an inflated lifejacket makes climbing on top of a boat unnecessarily difficult.

Stephen Worley
Honorary Rowing Safety Adviser
British Rowing