

BRITISHROWING

# HRSA Monthly Report

June 2021

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

## Death of a rower on the water

A Senior Masters rower, in his 70s, failed to return after an outing alone when the waterway was quiet. It is understood that he preferred to scull alone, in his own boat, at times when the waterway could be expected to be quiet. He was a very competent sculler and canoeist.

The Emergency Services made searches and his boat was found in the water approximately 400m from the club. His body was found in the water the following day. Following referral to the Coroner's Office it was determined that he had suffered from a heart attack.

Colleagues in British Rowing have provided support to the club, in particular with media relations.

It is to be expected that more information will become available when further investigations are complete.

## Incidents in June

### Lifejackets and Kill Cords

There were several reports from different areas about coaches in launches not wearing lifejackets and not using kill cords. In further incidents coaches afloat were wearing lifejackets but they were not correctly fastened. Coaches are expected to set a good example and at-risk behaviour of this type sets a very bad example to people being coached and others who witness it. Conspicuous at-risk behaviour, like this, can damage the reputation of the sport that we love.

There was another incident where incorrect use of a kill cord caused a bruising to the fingers and hand of a coach. The launch driver had disconnected the kill cord from himself in order to assist an 8x+ that was approaching the pontoon at an odd angle. The coach who was subsequently injured was trying to moor the launch using one of its mooring lines. One of the blades of the 8x+ hit the throttle control lever of the launch causing its engine to go into gear and increase speed. This caused the coach's hand to become entangled in the mooring line and mooring ring.

There is information on how to use a kill cord in an RYA video [here](#) and a Safe Alert on Launch Driving [here](#). There is information on how to fit a lifejacket in a Safety Alert [here](#). There is also information on how lifejackets and kill cords can save lives in a Safety Alert [here](#).

### Backstays protect

There was a report of a collision between a 1x and a 2- due to failure to keep an adequate look out. The report contains the following "*The back stays attached to the boat avoided any serious injury.*" The report goes on to say that the "*flange where the back stay attaches has broken away from the hull and bent backwards.*" Backstays were fitted to all riggers.

## **Look out for canoeists**

There was a report from a canoe coach that contained the following:-

*A Ladies 4 collided with a Junior Kayaker, who was having trouble learning to kayak. He was attempting to paddle back closer to the bank when hit by the ladies 4. The Ladies 4, were not keeping a look-out when they rowed straight into the child, The child was wearing a buoyancy aid, which took most of the blow, but he still developed bruising to his back.*

*Please can a reminder be sent out to rowing clubs that they don't own the waterway. Other clubs and organisations use the bank side of the waterway for nautical activities, and we do try and keep all the young people out of the rower's way, it is important for all rowers to also look where they are going, when not rowing in the centre of the river.*

This extract has been edited to make it anonymous, the location was specified in the report. The advice to keep a good lookout applies everywhere but, perhaps, particularly in areas close to the bank where inexperienced people may be operating.

There was another incident, at another location where a 2- rowed into the back of a group of kayakers. It was reported that the rowers were not maintaining a good lookout.

In yet another incident the steersman of a 4x noticed a group of canoeists spread across the waterway ahead and chose to abandon the crew's high pressure piece as it would not have been safe for the 4x to proceed at pace. The 4x steered further to starboard to avoid any collision.

## **Antisocial behaviour**

There were several incidents of anti-social behaviour reported, including:-

- Throwing stones at rowers, one rower was hit on the back of the neck
- Verbal abuse of rower by a coach from another rowing club
- Youths on the bank threw a vodka bottle at a boat causing damage
- Youths on a club landing stage abusing the coach

There have been some concerns about the lack of a Police response when incidents are subsequently reported. Rowers are encouraged to carry a suitably protected mobile phone and report serious incidents as soon as it is safe to do so by phoning 999. Take photos if it is safe to do so.

## **Hip Fracture**

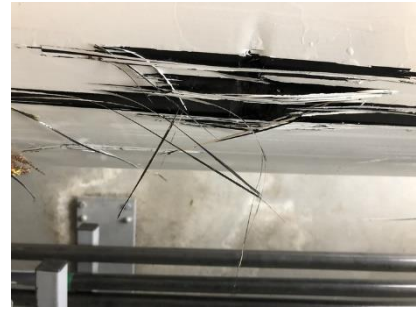
A rower fell two or three feet from steps after putting a boat on racks in the boathouse. This resulted in a hip fracture and the rower subsequently attended hospital as an inpatient for a hip operation.

There is advice on working from steps and "hop-ups" in the Safety in Club Premises guide on Work at Height [here](#).

## Interaction of rowing boats and motor boats

There were several incidents where motor boat drivers caused harm or inconvenience to rowing boats or vice versa. These include:-

- An apparently drunken motor boat driver driving erratically and causing excessive wash
- A fleet of motor boats causing excessive wash that pushed rowing boats into a pontoon causing damage including that shown opposite.
- An 8 hit a hire boat because the cox was not keeping a good lookout ahead
- Another 8 hit an inflatable raft crossing ahead and punctured it.
- Yet another 8 rowed into the stern of a motor boat in a congested area due to inadequate lookout.
- The passage of a motor boat on a canal was allegedly obstructed by a large group of rowers.
- A 2x was hit by a motor boat
- The wash from a motor boat swamped an entire J14 4x+ event at a regatta
- The rigger of a 2x was hit by an overtaking narrow boat causing the bow of the 2x to hit the narrow boat and be damaged as shown opposite.
- There was a near collision with a fishing launch whose driver was using a mobile phone and not keeping a good lookout.
- A 4x had a head on collision of with a motor boat that was on the wrong side of the canal.



These examples all demonstrate the need to keep a good lookout and be extra careful around motor boats.

## Capsizes and Cold Water Shock

I was asked to comment on the incidence of cold water shock experienced during the Simple Capsizes as listed in the Analysis of Reported incidents. The person asking this question has a rowing colleague (a nurse, with a sailing background) who had expressed concern, and believes that rowers should wear life jackets all year round. The person asking has been coaching Junior and Adult Novices in 1x's from 2004 to 2020 and has seen and assisted in many simple capsizes but they had never witnessed incapacity from cold water shock and was keen to know more.

The issue of the use of lifejackets by rowers was explained in my report of September 2019 available [here](#). In general these are not needed as, in the event of a capsize, the boat becomes the rower's liferaft.

My response was that It is difficult to provide a clear answer as the only information we have is that contained in Incident Reports. However, these are usually comprehensive and detailed so I am confident that what I am about to write will provide a fair picture.

None of the simple capsizes should involve cold water shock, if they did then they would not be "simple" capsizes. Rowers are briefed on what happens to their bodies as they enter cold water and this helps them to avoid cold water shock.

I am occasionally asked about rowers using lifejackets. Clubs make them available to rowers who wish to wear them (or whose parents wish them to) but there are difficulties. Lifejackets tend to get in the way when rowing and can cause capsizes; they also cause rowers to overheat in the summer.

We teach rowers that if they capsize then their boat becomes their liferaft. They should climb on top of their inverted boat and paddle it to safety or wait to be rescued. Climbing out of the water onto a boat would be impossible if they were wearing an inflated lifejacket.

## Newsletter article - Back to Basics

Some weeks ago I wrote an article for the British Rowing Newsletter, at that time we were returning to rowing. It is reproduced below just in case you missed it.

### **Back to Basics**

*It is great that we have been able to go afloat again. It's been a while so it is easy to forget some of the basics. Let's do it safely today so that we can do it again tomorrow.*

*If you are rowing or coxing then keep a good lookout, Be aware of where you are on the waterway and keep to where you should be. You don't want to have a [collision](#) with anyone or anything.*

*If you are coxing or coaching afloat, ensure that your lifejacket has been checked. Give it a quick [check](#) before you put it on. [Fit the lifejacket](#) and the crotch strap correctly.*

*If you are [driving a launch](#), has the engine been serviced? Have you [checked](#) it? Is it reliable? What about the steering? Does the engine stop when you detach the kill cord? Is the other end of the kill cord attached to you?*

*These are all simple basic checks that could help to ensure that you can stay safe today and have another go tomorrow."*

## Automatic v Manual Lifejackets

There were several discussions about manual and auto-inflation lifejackets. One of these focussed on the way to tell which is which. I checked this with Wayne Bellamy of the RNLI. The answer is really very simple and it all relates to the shape of the toggle on the manual inflation cord.

**Manual inflation = "T-bar" toggle**

**(Manual override for) Auto-inflation = Teardrop toggle**

This is shown in the RNLI Lifejackets and Buoyancy Aid Guide, [here](#). See the diagram on pages 10 & 11 (reproduced in Appendix 1 below).

This also shows that the pressure actuated lifejacket has a T bar toggle but these only actuate when a couple of metres below the surface so it is best to treat them as if they are manual.

In all cases then users should pull the manual inflation toggle as soon as possible if they know that they are going to enter the water.

The Following links provide further information on Lifejackets:-

RNLI Lifejacket Maintenance [here](#).

RNLI How to fit your Lifejacket [here](#)

RNLI How to fit lifejacket crotch straps [here](#)

RYA Kill Cord Information [here](#).

## What do we do if we find someone unconscious in the water

Someone wrote with the following comment and question *"We are facing an increase of open water swimmers, paddleboarders and small inflatable boats. Is there a section anywhere on the BR website that has a procedure of what to do if a third party ends up unconscious in the water? What should rowers do to help?"*

There is nothing specific on third parties but, as I expect you know there is a moral duty to help anyone in distress. In some circumstances this can become a legal duty.

The next question is how do we rescue someone, this depends on the help that is needed. It could be as simple as offer a tow, or offer buddy rescue. It could be a matter of taking them ashore and offering first aid. It all depends on the circumstances. There is information on Buddy Rescue in the capsized drill training on Row How [here](#). There is resuscitation training at <https://lifesaver.org.uk/> this is referenced in RowSafe.

If they are unconscious then you need to act fast. Have a look at the Safety Alert [here](#), this applies to both rowers and non-rowers. It is not unusual for rowers to rescue non-rowers. I have written about this in several Monthly Reports.

It is not possible to perform any effective form of resuscitation in the water or in a rowing boat. Take the person ashore or into a larger boat.

In some cases it could be just a matter of calling for help, if help is nearby.

## Health and Safety requirements for clubs that have employees

There was a question about whether a club that has four employees plus some occasional part-time paid helpers is required to have a documented Health and Safety Policy and a documented risk assessment.

The response was that the answer to the question about the number of employees depends on the definition of "employee". There is a definition on the government website [here](#). If we apply this definition then your part-timers are probably not employees.

Having less than 5 employees does not make much difference, it only affects the need for a policy and risk assessments to be documented. You still need to have a policy and to complete a risk assessment. In both cases this is very simple and is explained in the HSE leaflet [indg449](#). You should display the H&S Law poster or issue each employee with a [H&S Law Leaflet](#).

There is clear guidance on managing and assessing risk in a small business with templates and examples [here](#). Do not be too impressed or worried about the example risk assessments. Most rowing clubs are much simpler than the businesses in the examples and the risk assessment, etc., will be much shorter.

Your risk assessment should also include risks to people you do not employ (e.g. part-time or occasional workers, club members and others). Section 3 of the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#) imposes the duty on employers to protect them. That is why the "etc." appears in the title.

Please be careful with young workers, whether they are employees or not. Young people lack experience, sometimes do not recognise hazards and tend to have more energy and less maturity than their older colleagues. The easiest way to do this is to keep them away from any relatively high risk activities.

## Legionella control in a rowing club's showers

I was asked for advice on the management of Legionella in a club's water system with particular attention to its showers, and to the requirement for a Legionella written control scheme. The following guidance was provided.

I think that your primary method of control should be based on using thermal disinfection. There is more on this [here](#) and information for smaller buildings [here](#). I know that the first of these is intended for Health Services but the basic science is the same. In a simple system, this should be the basis for your written scheme of control.

There is guidance for duty holders [here](#). This is intended for much larger installations and much of it need not apply.

In my view, the first thing to do is to understand the system. I suspect that it consists of a boiler, hot water tanks, pipes, shower heads and taps. I also suspect that the showers are fed by both hot and cold water and that there is a mixer valve. Having a schematic would help and, if the system is simple then this should also be simple.

If the system is old or has been modified then there may be dead legs, (pipes that go nowhere, or are seldom used, where there is water and little or no flow). If you have them

then please consider having them removed. If the system is relatively new and has not been modified then there are probably no dead legs.

### Legionella testing

There are several companies who will sell you a Legionella testing kit and service. They will send sample bottles that you fill and return to them. They will then analyse the samples and send you the results. This can cost less than £50. Simply google "legionella testing kit". There are also home test kits where you can perform the analysis yourself, just google "legionella self-testing kit".

You may wish to have a digital thermometer with a probe to measure water temperature, if you do then google "legionella thermometer".

Other search engines are available.

Alternatively you can pay any one of lots of people, lots of money, to do this for you.

If there are measurements then it is helpful to have action levels, these are defined in Table 2.2 of [HSG272 part 2](#) as follows:-

**Table 2.2** Action levels following legionella sampling in hot and cold water systems

<b>Legionella bacteria (cfu/l)</b>	<b>Recommended actions</b>
>100 cfu/l and up to 1000	Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ if the minority of samples are positive, the system should be resampled. If similar results are found again, a review of the control measures and risk assessment should be carried out to identify any remedial actions necessary or</li> <li>■ if the majority of samples are positive, the system may be colonised, albeit at a low level. An immediate review of the control measures and risk assessment should be carried out to identify any other remedial action required. Disinfection of the system should be considered</li> </ul>
>1000 cfu/l	The system should be resampled and an immediate review of the control measures and risk assessment carried out to identify any remedial actions, including possible disinfection of the system. Retesting should take place a few days after disinfection and at frequent intervals afterwards until a satisfactory level of control is achieved.

### Written control scheme.

There is guidance on this in [HSG272 part2](#) Appendix 2.2. This will help with complex systems but if your system is simple and the tests show that the Legionella concentrations are low (see above) then the plan can be simple.

In these circumstances then I would recommend that you have a statement on each of the following:-

- purpose (to maintain a safe water system)
- scope (the domestic water system at your club)
- risk assessment; (see previous note, who can be harmed and how and what you are going to do about it)



- management structure: (you)
- a simple schematic of the system identifying the piping routes, storage and header tanks, calorifiers and relevant items of plant, especially water softeners, filters, strainers, pumps and all water outlets; include sentinel points\* for sampling
- the correct and safe operation of the system; (keep this simple)
- precautions in place to prevent or minimise risk associated with the system; (annual test/analysis + quarterly thermal disinfection)
- a record of your test results and log of the dates and temperatures of your thermal disinfections;
- what you will do if the readings are high
- health and safety information, including details on storage, handling, use and disposal of any chemical used in both the treatment of the system and testing of the system water; (probably not relevant in your case)
- incident plan, which covers the following situations:
  - very high levels or repeat positive water analyses for legionella;
  - an outbreak of legionellosis, suspected or confirmed as being centred at the site;
  - an outbreak of legionellosis, the exact source of which has yet to be confirmed, but which is believed to be centred in an area which includes the site

The concern about an outbreak applies mostly to cooling towers and similar equipment that can impact on anyone in the vicinity. In the case of showers it is only likely to affect people who are in or near the showers. The normal response in the case of an outbreak is to take samples for analysis and then complete a (thermal) disinfection.

\* The sentinel points would typically be the taps furthest (far sentinel) and the nearest (near sentinel) to the hot water heater (calorifier).

Please remember that the route of entry of the Legionella bacterium is by inhalation of contaminated droplets and the primary organ affected are the lungs.

## Support for Nelson Boat Club, Canada

There was a request from this club for permission to use the British Rowing Capsize and Recovery video. This is available on YouTube [here](#).

It was explained that this is in the public domain and the club is welcome to link to it from its website; please could they acknowledge British Rowing.

We also have some online safety training modules that may be interesting:

- Safety Basics - Understanding and Managing Risk
- Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia
- Capsize and Recovery for Rowers
- Capsize and Recovery for Coaches

These are freely available through the RowHow section of our website. It is necessary to register with British Rowing so that they can be accessed. Instructions on how to do this are contained in Appendix I of my April Monthly Report, (this was attached). There is a Monthly Report Archive [here](#).

## Videos for Risk Assessment Training

The final set of videos to incorporate into the training have been reviewed and approved.

### Cover photo of RowSafe

There was a comment that the cover photo on RowSafe 2021 shows a sculler looking ahead but not wearing hi-vis kit. This photo was selected from a set of stock images and was the most appropriate available. Last month I asked whether anyone could provide a better image for RowSafe 2022 and for it to be sent to [safety@britishrowing.org](mailto:safety@britishrowing.org). The following photos were provided (thanks Lewis).



If you think that you can produce a better photo then please let me know.

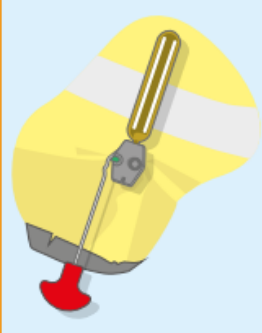
# Appendix 1 - Lifejacket type indication

## AUTOMATIC OR MANUAL



There are three inflation methods of gas-only lifejackets. Choose one that best suits your activity. Most inflatable lifejackets are inflated by piercing a bottle filled with carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) attached to the firing head. Orally-inflated-only lifejackets (ones without a gas cylinder) are not recommended for everyday use.

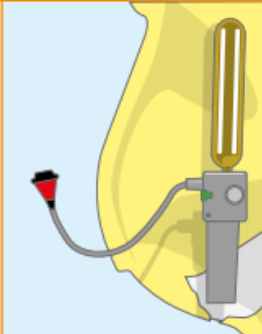
### Manual



Manually inflated lifejackets are operated by pulling a cord, which pushes a firing pin into the CO<sub>2</sub> bottle, which inflates the lifejacket. Manual activation prevents the possibility of false activation, which can be caused by a damp automatic mechanism or the wearer being hit by a large wave.

Of course, manual activation will not work if you are unconscious, or suffering from the effects of cold water shock.

### Automatic - water activated



Water activated automatic firing heads have a small pellet or bobbin that holds back a powerful spring. When the pellet/bobbin contacts water it dissolves very rapidly, releasing the spring which pushes the firing pin into the gas bottle.

Due to the effects of cold water shock, most people choose a lifejacket that will inflate automatically if they enter the water.

### Automatic - pressure activated



Hydrostatic (Hammar) lifejackets work the same way as an automatic lifejacket (with a dissolving pellet) but the pellet is protected by a case that only lets water in once it is submerged under water. It won't fire unless fully submerged.

Choose this type of lifejacket if you take part in an activity where you are regularly soaked by waves or excessive spray.

CO<sub>2</sub> bottles in hydrostatic lifejackets are less likely to suffer from corrosion.



Automatic lifejackets always have a means to manually activate the CO<sub>2</sub> bottle as well as a mouthpiece to allow oral inflation.

The primary means of inflating a lifejacket should always be the pull cord. Always aim to inflate your lifejacket before entering the water.

Newer lifejackets may have indicators to show if gas bottles are empty or if automatic firing systems have been triggered.