



Implementation guidelines for Water Safety Code

Rowing has an excellent safety record. However, it is easy to become complacent.

The water safety code places emphasis on the individual's and the club's responsibility for their actions and is a guide to the minimum standard of safe practice. It does not however prevent a club or individual from taking further measures they may deem necessary to ensure safe rowing.

The Code should be used as the basis for clubs to reflect upon or develop their own local safety rules and practices for their members to follow.

Clubs need to be pro-active in educating and training their members in safe practice including risk management.

Basics - The Code - Section I

This section of the Code sets out basic rules of good practice that all clubs and individuals must observe. Little new information has been introduced save a requirement to give a measure of the buoyancy to be expected of a boat.

Key Points:

- 1) All equipment used for rowing, sculling and coaching needs to be properly and regularly maintained to ensure that it is safe and adequate for its intended purpose and to ensure that it does not expose its users to danger.
- 2) Buoyancy compartments must be watertight to ensure effective operation.
- 3) Boats constructed after 1st April 2003 must have inherent buoyancy sufficient, together with their oars and sculls, to support a seated crew of the correct design weight in the event of being swamped.
- 4) All new boats constructed after 1st April 2003 must carry a plate indicating the maximum average crew weight the boat can carry and support a seated crew in the event of being swamped. A club or individual purchasing a new boat must ask the manufacturer to supply this information.

Date of Manufacture Boat Number

Average Crew Design Weight .Kg

With an upper limit of .Kg average crew weight, this boat when swamped will support the seated crew with .cm of freeboard in still water.

- 5) Boats built before 1st April 2003 should be subject to a risk assessment to determine whether the boat has sufficient inherent buoyancy or if additional buoyancy needs to be added.

N.B:

Methods of achieving greater buoyancy will vary and may not necessarily involve structural change to boats. Advice should be taken from the manufacturer where possible as to what, if any, additional buoyancy needs to be introduced. Such discussions or simple flotation tests may show that only slight adjustments to the boat are necessary. Buoyancy bags for instance are available from several boat manufacturers and yacht chandlers. Buoyancy should be distributed along the length of the boat so that in the event of damage to the integrity of the hull, sufficient support remains to protect the crew until a secure location is achieved or the crew is rescued.

Guidance Notes & Definitions - Section II

This section of the Code is extensive and identifies the roles, responsibilities and support information developed over the years since the previous Code was published. Our approach to safety does not remain static indeed it changes in the light of experience and the changing nature of our sport.

Safety Adviser & Medical Adviser

Your club and/or regatta organising committee must appoint a Safety Adviser and may also choose to appoint a Medical Adviser. The definitions of the roles of both posts are set out in detail. Where the club is unable to appoint a Safety Adviser, the responsibility for safety will inevitably fall upon its Committee, the responsibility cannot be absolved.

Risk Assessment & Management

Whilst rowing and sculling are recognised as "safe" activities, the medium upon which they take place can be hostile and unforgiving. Because of this, procedures have had to be developed to make sure, as far as is possible, that the practice of the sport does not expose participants to unacceptable risks. However, part of the sport's attraction is learning to understand and cope with the varying water and weather conditions that are encountered. From such experience the ability to carry out meaningful risk management is developed.

Duty of Care

We all have a responsibility to those around us and must take reasonable care to avoid any act or failure to act that we can reasonably be expected to know will affect another. This means that if we identify a hazard which could affect us, or a colleague, we must do something to minimise the hazard.

Reports - Incident Sheets

The requirement to report incidents involving injury and/or damage to person or equipment remains unaltered. (Para. 2.4). Events at which a Medical Adviser has been appointed and where an accident arises that calls for hospitalisation do now require the return of an additional form to the Medical Sub-Committee of the ARA. This information is required so that there can be a meaningful record of the type and frequency of accidents involving member clubs. Accident trends can be identified and action initiated to modify guidance where it is seen to be no longer appropriate. It is imperative that clubs keep an accurate log of all incidents including those that are potentially dangerous to help them with future risk assessment and analysis.

Individual Responsibilities

Responsibilities of individuals and of clubs are set out in Para. 2.5. It is important to read and understand this section fully.

Swimming Ability

Clubs should be pro-active in assessing the swimming competence of their members. This section includes the additional requirements for the athlete to be able to tread water, to show competency under water, and to swim both on front and back. This requirement is not included to encourage athletes to swim away from their craft in an emergency, but rather to reduce the "panic factor" associated with sudden capsizes.

Health

The health of individuals before participation in strenuous sport is mentioned and in addition to the responsibility of the athlete, coaches are reminded of their responsibilities in this respect.

Steering

The responsibilities of the cox are strongly emphasised together with the responsibilities of clubs to educate and coach the skills of steering and the rules of navigation.

Coaches

Coaches have major responsibility for the athletes in their charge, greater emphasis is put on Risk Assessment before embarking on any new activity or visiting any new location. They also have a responsibility to educate and train their charges in risk management and safe practice.

Trailer and Launch Drivers

New sections, 2.5.5 and 6 have been introduced to stress the responsibilities of launch and trailer drivers. Again, there is nothing new in the requirements but the emphasis is greater.

Equipment

Maintenance of the stock of boats held by a club is vital and a schedule of routine checks is set out in paragraph 2.6.1.2. Procedures should be in place to log repairs and quarantine unsafe equipment. Older boats will need to be checked over thoroughly to insure that their inbuilt buoyancy is adequate for the use being made of the boat. Evidence of such checks and the subsequent action taken must be carried on the boat in a prominent position.

Regatta Safety

Within this section there are no new requirements of Regatta organisers other than there is a simple Audit Form (Appendix 3) for use by Regatta Officials in checking their Safety arrangements.

Safety Aids

A detailed description of approved Safety Aids and definitions applicable to their use has been included for information.

Health

In sections 2.9., 2.10. and 2.11 is information on Hypothermia, Resuscitation and common waterborne diseases all of which provide general information for the guidance of members.

Breaches of the Code and failures to follow the Guidance Notes are serious matters and where these occur and remain unresolved there are disciplinary measures available within the Association's Rules which may be invoked against the offenders and their Clubs.

Appendices

The Appendices contain various information, forms and audit sheets. The Club Safety Audit Sheet is particularly important to clubs, not only to check their level of safety, but as a recently introduced requirement by Council to be completed and submitted to the ARA as part of the Annual Return by all clubs.

Support Provided by the ARA

The Water Safety Code on its own will not develop a safety culture. It is through the Clubs, Regions and the ARA educating and training its membership in safe practice which is the key.

To this end the ARA continues to develop a whole range of safety modules to be delivered by tutors, to be accessed through the ARA's website or through CDs. The recent Club Welfare Conferences is just one example of the ARA's commitment to support Clubs.

Club Welfare Conference CD - free to all clubs attending and available for sale to others.

The CD contains video clip presentations of 1) Water Safety , 2) Risk Management, 3) The Role of the Club Water Safety Adviser, 4) Participant Welfare, 5) ARA Child Protection procedures and an Interactive Boat Trailers and Towing section.

All the above modules are also available in a tutored form.

In the pipeline are further safety modules, the introduction of an "Interactive Learning Experience", easier "on line" incident reporting, incident log books and Rowing & Regatta magazine visual safety poster inserts and will be shortly available.

Clubs have a variety of "welfare" responsibilities, but in dealing with them in a positive and supportive manner the ARA can help the club through the necessary stages to take ownership. This is a staged process of awareness, understanding, support, knowledge and commitment.