

Flood *action*



Last year, many clubs were unable to train on the water because of flooding. If it happens again, what preparations can be made?

Jon McLeod reports

- Starting the session by rowing upstream so that the return is downstream.
- Using bigger, faster boats like eights rather than singles.
- Steering close to the bank and on the inside of bends where the water speed is likely to be less.

The horrendous flooding that hit last winter wreaked havoc across the country, particularly the south-west, leading to huge damage and destruction. It also highlighted the inherent dangers of flooding.

Of course, many rowing clubs, especially along the Thames, were on the frontlines as the weather battered the land, the waters rose and the rivers burst their banks.

Since then much work has been done along the waterways to reduce future problems, but inevitably people will be bracing themselves for another deluge this winter.

For clubs the first step is to ensure that the local flood risk assessment and safety plan is in place, including the criteria for cancelling water activity.

And the following information can be used when formulating a risk assessment and preparing plans to help clubs cope should flooding occur.

1. Fast-flowing water

High water levels lead to faster flows and the consequential dangers, including difficulties in boating, rowers being unable to make headway against the flow and losing control of the boat on the water.

Potential responses:

- Finding a land-based training alternative.
- Finding an alternative stretch of water (such as a canal) where the flow is slower.

2. Water turbulence

Fast moving water can lead to greater turbulence in the river, often just below the surface and invisible from the bank or boat. Therefore steering and retaining control of boats can be challenging. Singles and pairs in particular can capsize if one blade gets caught in a vortex while swimming can be very difficult or impossible due to undertows. Turbulence can be a particular problem downstream of obstructions like bridges.

Potential responses:

- Land training.
- Alternative stretch of water.
- Avoid areas that can be expected to be turbulent.
- Using coxed rather than coxless boats. ➤

LAND TRAINING IDEAS

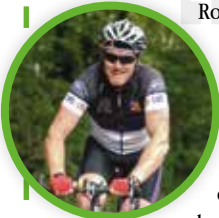
IF THE RISING WATER LEVELS FORCE YOUR CREW OFF THE RIVER, THERE ARE STILL SOME GREAT LAND-BASED TRAINING OPTIONS...



We had flooding for the best part of four weeks in February. We dealt with the problem by using the time to focus specifically on strength training. As we couldn't get out on the water we

undertook intensive land training both on the ergos and in a strength and conditioning gym. I tried to mix up training with some *group triathlons* and runs.

Frank Flight, University of York BC



Rowing in Bristol is pretty unique due to the fact that we are privileged to row on controlled water, but high wind and very occasionally ice will stop us getting out on the water. In which case there are plenty of land training options. Obviously ergos, circuit training,

running, hill sprints, swimming. *Cycling* is also a preferred alternative.

Andrew Osborne, City of Bristol RC



When the water has been too high to row on the water, the best land training that we have done is *500-metre sprints in teams*. This made an ergo session fun and it was different from the usual long ergos we do on a regular basis during the winter. I think it also helps bring the squad together in a fun way.

Michaela Bailey, Exeter RC



As we were unable to get near the clubhouse, let alone the river, for several weeks this winter, our women's squad had to improvise. We did *British Military Fitness* style sessions together in

Windsor Great Park, went cycling, *swimming* and joined the junior squad for extra circuit training sessions in a local school gym on weekend mornings.

Judy Walker, Staines BC



Great Marlow School Boat Club move boats after flooding affected Marlow last winter – they managed to continue water training by relocating to Dorney Lake

3. Stationary objects such as buoys

The flow of water past anchored or stationary objects can cause boats to be swept into them. Moored boats, navigation and mooring buoys, bridges, pontoons, weirs, floating docks and other obstructions can create hazards.

Potential responses:

- Land training.
- Alternative stretch of water.
- Revision of the circulation plan to take the obstructions into account.
- Taking care to avoid the obstructions.
- Not stopping upstream of an obstruction.
- Using coxed rather than coxless boats.
- Having a coach in a launch supervise the outing and provide an extra lookout.

4. Solid objects below the water

It can be possible to row over flooded meadows or farmland where rivers have burst their banks but fixed obstructions below the waterline can cause dangers.

Potential responses:

- Land training.
- Careful navigation and local knowledge to avoid obstructions.
- Keeping a good look-out for indicators of obstructions.
- Operating a buddy system.

5. Contaminated water

Flood water can be contaminated with untreated sewage, farm animal waste and other materials. If the water is ingested or enters the body through uncovered cuts or grazes, it can cause illnesses such as Weil's disease.

Potential responses:

- Land training.
- Avoiding or minimising exposure to the water.
- Keeping all cuts and grazes covered with a water-proof dressing.
- Washing or showering after the outing.
- Avoid eating when afloat and maintain good hand hygiene.

Further steps

Additional general safety measures and provisions for when flooding occurs include having a suitable launch to rescue crews, appropriate first aid equipment and training, access to life jackets and buoyancy aids and potentially having helpers to throw lines from the bank.

For more information on risk assessment see the foundation training pack at www.rowhow.org/free/risk_assessment and www.britishrowing.org/sites/default/files/rowsafe/1-2-RiskAssessment-v1.pdf

You can find advice on dealing with hypothermia on RowHow at www.rowhow.org □



Overflow in York

Flood water can be contaminated with untreated sewage