

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. ➤