

## Safety Alert - Outboard Motor Safety Checks

Many clubs use outboard motors on their coaching and safety launches and it is tempting take them for granted. This could be a dangerous mistake. Defects do develop and it is worth a quick check, prior to each outing, to ensure that the boat and its engine are working correctly.

The motor should not start if it is in gear (except for some small engines that do not have selectable gears). With the kill cord removed, check that the motor will not turn over if it is in gear.

Check that the gear selector works correctly; the motor should not slip in or out of gear

Check that the kill cord works. One end should be attached to the motor or the boat and the other end should be connected to the driver's leg or lifejacket. Start the motor and detach the kill cord (from the motor or boat); the motor should stop immediately.

Check that the outboard is securely fixed to the boat. If you think that outboards never fall of launches then have a look at the examples on YouTube (search YouTube for "outboard falls off").

Ensure that you have a secondary means of propulsion, in practice this means carry paddles or oars. If you operate where there can be a strong tide or current then you should also carry an anchor with chain or rope. The length of the rope should be at least three times the depth of water.

Have a look at the RNLI guide to checking outboards at <http://completeguide.rnli.org/outboard-pre-start.html>

If you are going afloat in the dark then check that the navigation lights are switched on and are working correctly. As launches used for coaching can normally be classed as power driven vessels capable of exceeding 7 knots, they should display an all-round white light and port and starboard navigation lights.

Also, check that the lights on the boats that you are accompanying work correctly and in accordance with the requirements of your navigating authority.

**Never, ever go out at night alone. Either have at least two people in the launch or stay close to another boat at all times. They may need your assistance and you may need theirs.**

Stephen Worley – Honorary Rowing Safety Adviser

[safety@britishrowing.org](mailto:safety@britishrowing.org)

December 2015