BRITISH ROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

November 2022

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Incidents in November 2022

Take care to check your kill switch

The kill cord was detached from the kill switch at end of session to stop the engine and test the function of kill switch. The engine didn't stop. The test was repeated with same result. The engine was stopped by pressing kill switch button.

The kill switch was inspected but no abnormality was found. The switch was moved through its full range of movement several times to ensure free operation. The kill cord refitted and the engine was started. The engine now stops correctly on removing the kill cord.

The club will continue to test kill switches by removing the kill cord to check that the engine stops.

Take care not to stop or turn upstream of buoys and other fixed obstructions

A 4x attempted to turn upstream of a buoy and were swept onto it. The pressure of the stream very quickly caused the hull to roll and the crew were tipped into the water. Three rowers climbed onto their inverted hull and the fourth climbed onto the buoy. They were all subsequently rescued.

In another incident another 4x was turning upstream of a buoy and was swept into the buoy. A rigger went under buoy and the boat quickly filled with water. The crew was rescued by two launches.

A similar incident occurred when a 2x was swept broadside on into a fallen tree and could not easily be extracted.

In another incident an 8+ had stopped to rest before spinning. It was pushed to the outside of the bend by the stream towards a mooring platform. The boat was forced against the platform and twisted side on. It started to turn over, forced by the blades wedged against the platform. The boat capsized and the crew all managed to climb up onto the platform. The boat was severely damaged will be written off.

Take care to use lights when it is dark

A 4x was doing a high rate piece with no bow lights. The following comment has been placed on the report – see "*Tideway Code page 29. By law, boats must be correctly lit in darkness and reduced visibility*".

Take care when handling boats on land

The fin of an 8 was damaged when handling the boat on land. (Faces obscured to maintain confidentiality.)

A bystander from was hit in face with bow of boat as it was turning (whilst on shoulders). The bystander was checked by paramedics and found to be uninjured.

The hull of an 8 cracked when it was lifted and turned over by two rowers, one at each end.

Take care of yourself

A J16 sculler is believed to have blacked out momentarily and capsized prior to the start of a head race. The sculler completed the race but was then taken to first aiders. Further care was refused, with their guardian's approval. A person nearby, who said he was a retired GP, gave strong advice that the rower should see a cardiologist. This information was provided to the rowers guardian.

Take Care near Weirs

Upon leaving the landing stage, the novice 4+ was caught by the flow and pushed downstream towards the weir. The rowers were unable to respond in time to prevent a collision with the weir. The stern of the boat then mounted the weir and protruded out over the top. The cox was able to push the boat up and off the weir and the crew rowed back upstream. There were no injuries to the crew but some damage to the boat.

In another incident a while trying to turn to come into the club stage, the rower allowed the boat to be broadside on to the stream and was washed over the gentle weir lip and onto the same height rock ramp. The boat lodged upright with her sitting in it safely and calmly.

Take care to avoid tight fitting shoes

Whilst waiting to land on the landing stage, a rower lost control of the riverside blade and capsized the boat. The rower had big feet that had been squeezed into shoes that were too small. Regardless of heel restraints he could not easily extract his feet

Keep a good lookout for logs

There have been several occasions where boats have collided with semi-submerged logs and this has resulted in damage to the boats, including to the steering. Semi-submerged logs can be difficult to see so it is particularly important to keep an especially good lookout at times, and in locations, where they are likely to occur. Logs, that have been resting on the bank for some time will be floated off the bank when water levels are high; this can occur following heavy rainfall and, in tidal waters, following particularly high tides.

Questions about Launches

There was a discussion with a club that is about to provide training for some of its launch drivers. The issues related to the difference between coaching and rescue launches and whether a launch with a capacity of two should carry a crew person in addition to the driver.

The response was that I would not get too concerned about the difference between coaching and rescue launches but I feel there is a valid point in relation to boat capacity.

If a capsized rower or sculler does as they have been trained to do, and climbs on top of their boat (even if it is inverted), then it is usually easy to transfer them into a launch. It is much less easy if they are bobbing about in the water. People have been rescued by all sorts of launches; the only requirement is that the launch is in the right place at the right time.

It is possible to rescue a rower or sculler without having them climb into the launch. Sometimes all they have to do is hold onto the boat while the launch tows it to safety (usually the bank). This requires the launch driver to ensure that the propeller never gets anywhere near the person being rescued.

It is also possible to assist a sculler by righting their boat and supporting it while they climb back in.

Launch drivers sometimes have to be inventive and find a way that they can assist someone in need.

There was another question from another club about the appropriate safety launch to rowing boat ratio assuming that there is a RYA Level 2 Powerboat qualified driver in each launch.

The response was I am afraid that real life is never that simple. The number of safety launches needed, if any, is dependent on many factors including:-

- the conditions at the time at the venue where the rowing takes place
- the types of boat being used and
- the maturity (skill, experience, capability, etc.) of the rowers involved

You should be able to use your risk assessment to determine the level of support your rowers need under these different conditions. There is further guidance in RowSafe and there are links to training and support material on Risk Assessment on the Safety Page here.

Lights on Paddleboards

I was asked whether there are any regulations regarding lights on paddleboards as the nights draw in.

My response was that the legal requirements for paddled boats on the Tidal Thames are specified on page 32 of "THE TIDEWAY CODE A Code of Practice for rowing and paddling on the Tidal Thames". This states:-

Lighting paddled boats

"As far as possible, the following lights should be firmly fixed to the boat. On SUPs or kayaks and canoes low to the water, lights may have to be fixed to the chest and back of the paddler rather than the boat.

On the bow: a constant (not flashing) white light.

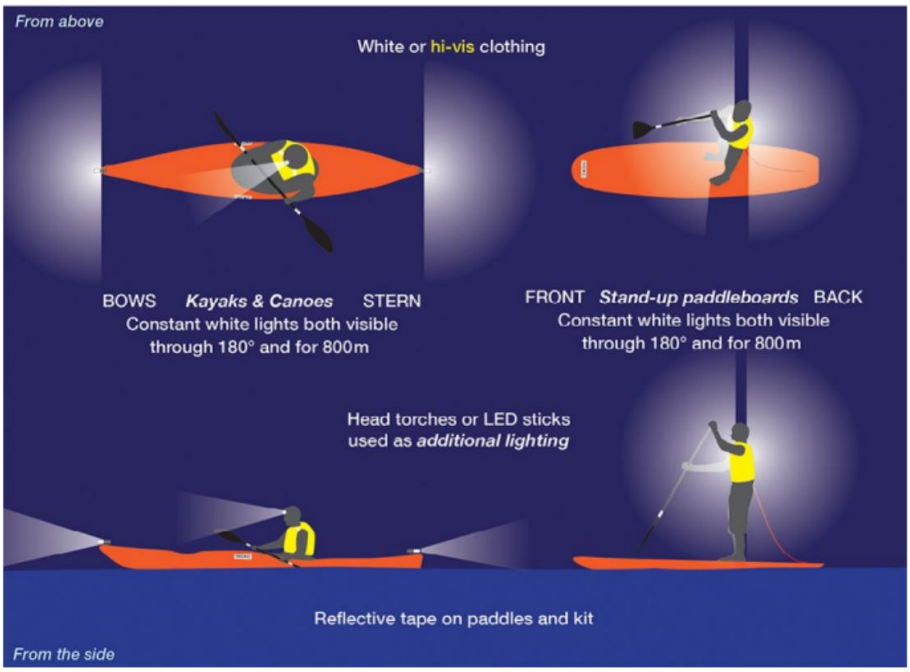
On the stern: a constant (not flashing) white light.

Note: In the Tideway Code Areas a flashing white light is required on the bows of rowing boats to help determine their direction of travel. It is not required by, and should not be used by, paddled boats.

- Each light must be visible for 800m and through 180° – the boat must effectively have white lighting visible through 360°.
- Red or other coloured lights should never be used.
- Lights must have good batteries, be waterproof and diffused, so as not to 'dazzle' other river users or members of your group.
- Unidirectional lights are not permitted as they are not safe. At least one spare light should be carried and additional lights such as head torches can be used to warn approaching vessels of your presence, but can also 'dazzle' other river users if used inconsiderately.
- White LED sticks, attached to the paddler, may be used and reflective tape on paddles is recommended to improve visibility.
- When paddling as a group, all boats in the group must carry lights. It is not sufficient to have a single set of lights to cover the whole group.

If you do not have the correct lights, you are breaking the law so you do not go afloat."

Page 33 of the code contains the following picture:-



There may soon be a new version for Canoeists and SUP users called Paddling on the Tideway. I have seen a draft and this contains the same picture.

Different rules may apply in other jurisdictions, please check with your Navigation Authority.

The River Dee Bylaws contains the following:-

"A vessel under oars may exhibit the lights required for sailing vessels but if not an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light should be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision."

At this level I believe that a paddled boat would be considered a vessel under oars.

The RNLI Paddling guidance (available as a link from here) recommends that lights are fitted.

Take Care when Rowing on the Sea

My colleague at British Canoeing wrote to share their recent Safety Alert, as follows:-

Solo Paddling - Sea Kayaking

In just three months this year, there have been 3 serious incidents involving solo sea paddlers in the UK. Tragically two of these resulted in fatalities – neither called for help.

The third, following a call for help, resulted in a rescue off the coast of Barra, Outer Hebrides, where the observation and commitment of a passing commercial aircraft was crucial in its success.

British Canoeing recognise that solo paddling is widely practised but issues the following guidance.

If you row on the sea then please take note of this guidance and please carry a means to call for help. There is more information in the Safety Alert on calling for help and guidance on the RNLI website here.

Dry Robes and Hoodies

The Umpires from the North West Region have issued safety advice on the use of Dryrobes and hoodies. I responded to say that I issued a Safety Alert on Dryrobes in March 2022. This was circulated to all clubs and the chairs of all the National Committees and all the Regional Rowing Safety Advisers. I don't know what happened to it in the North West.

Guidance on Dryrobes and Hoodies was incorporated into the 2022 edition of RowSafe. This stated that Safety Rules should include:

- Not wear Dryrobes, denims, jeans, or heavy cotton clothing at any time when afloat.
- Not wear a hoodie when rowing or sculling as the thumbs tend to catch in the pocket, or when coxing in a bow-loader as it could become entangled and impede a rapid exit.

Documentation for the World Coastal Championships

The safety documentation for the World Coastal Championships and World Beach Spring Championships were reviewed, were excellent and should be used as a model for other similar events. The following comments were made.

The documents are long and detailed but can be used to generate summaries and briefing notes for people with specific responsibilities. For example, launch drivers can be given instructions and provided with laminated notes for them to carry when afloat. They probably will not be able to remember all the details in the safety documentation.

In the event of a serious incident when there is "grave and imminent danger of loss of life" then it is likely that someone, associated with the competition or not, will declare MAYDAY. The Coastguard will then take control and then probably broadcast a message instructing every vessel in the vicinity of the casualty, whether involved with the event or not, to proceed to assist the casualty at the position indicated.

The Coastguard will take control and, if necessary, request a response from the RNLI and Air Sea Rescue helicopter. All of the event's safety assets will be under the control of the Coastguard. It is likely that they will instruct all racing boats to evacuate the area and ask the organisers to check that they are all safely ashore. Once a MAYDAY has been declared then the competition organisers will no longer have control. A similar process operates inland as soon as the emergency services are involved with an incident.

It may help to have discussions with the Coastguard before the event starts so that everyone can understand what is likely to happen in the event of a serious incident.

You could also ask the Coastguard or navigating authority to issue a "Notice to Mariners" declaring an exclusion zone.

Posters

A club that is revamping its noticeboards would like to know what posters are available from British Rowing particularly related to:-

- Safety
- Capsize drill
- Resuscitation
- Rowing Technique, and
- Tideway navigation

The response was that I believe that we now focus on videos and online training courses rather than posters.

- The Safety Basics training material can be found on Row How here
- The capsize drill online courses can be found on Row How here.
- There are several printable posters on CPR and similar topics on the St John's Ambulance website here.
- There is some useful information on rowing technique in a video from World Rowing on YouTube here.
- The old (ARA) version of the Perfect Stroke poster can be found here, and further information on the British Rowing website here.
- It is probably worth a look at the Resources area of the Coach area of the Rower Development Guide. There is lots of useful material here.
- There is a poster on Tideway Navigation here.

Guidance for rowing clubs that wish to try Coastal Rowing

A colleague in Australia wrote to say that she thought it would be good to put together a comprehensive transition document for clubs that wanted to get into coastal rowing. The focus of the document would be all the steps that her club went through and the issues they dealt with. She asked whether, if they completed such a project, we would be interested in it? They would ask for my guidance and review.

My response was that I am always willing to help anyone who wants to promote rowing and safety. I would be happy, too, to review whatever is produced or advise in any way they wish.

Here in the UK we have various styles of coastal rowing, both fixed seat and sliding seat. We have Cornish Pilot Gigs all around the coast (it is the boats that are Cornish, not the rowers); there are about 8,000 people who do this. There are also several other types of fixed seat boats.

We also have two coastal associations (about 30 clubs) who use boats that are similar to traditional river boats but shorter and wider. We also have clubs that use FISA (World Rowing) Coastal Boats.

There is one important difference between the UK and Australia. In Australia, the main population centres are on, or close to, the coast and most people live near the coast. In the UK the main population centres are inland and most people live inland although this is a relatively small country and nowhere is very far from the coast.

Australian rowing clubs are well placed to introduce their members to coastal rowing, but this would be more difficult in some parts of the UK. I would be happy to share whatever you produce with my colleagues in British Rowing but I would expect it to have less impact here than it would in Australia.

World Rowing is keen to promote and support Coastal Rowing in FISA coastal boats. World Rowing has published a series of videos on YouTube. The links are listed below:-

Coaches introduction to Coastal Rowing [G1.1]
Coastal Rowing Race Module Online Introduction (#1)
Coastal Rowing SAFE Overview Keynote (#2)
Coastal Rowing SAFE Float Plan & Nav Hazards (#3)
Coastal Rowing SAFE Pre Launch (#4)
Coastal Rowing Launching & Landing Keynote (#5)
Coastal Rescue Drills Keynote (#6)
Coastal Rowing Race Tech - Phases (#7)
Coastal Rowing Race Tech - Boat Entry (#8)
Coastal Rowing Race Tech - Boat Exit (#9)
Coastal Rowing Race Tech - Race turns (#10)
Coastal Rowing Race Tech - Watership (#11)
Coastal Rowing - Beach Sprint Race Logistics (#12)
Coastal Rowing - Running a selection race for beach sprint (#13)
Beach Start - Coastal Rowing Endurance C2x

Coastal Rowing Safety

I was recently asked several questions by a coach at a coastal rowing club. The responses were:-

Manual Inflation Lifejackets

Manual inflation life jackets are appropriate for anyone who, if they enter the water, is likely to be conscious and capable of actuating them. If they, or the water, is very cold then this could be a problem but sea water is a few degrees warmer than land water (rivers, lakes, etc.) and in crew boats there are others around who can help. If a person panics when they enter the water and tries to swim (rather than actuate the lifejacket) then they are at serious risk. This is demonstrated here and here.

If a person knows that they are about to enter the water then it is best to inflate the lifejacket before they do so. This will help them to keep their head above the water.

Lifejacket vs Buoyancy Aid

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) produces a useful information sheet available here. This is intended for agricultural workers but the principles apply to everyone. The RNLI publishes similar information here, but with more pictures. Both provide information on maintenance and checking.

The HSE information sheet states that "*Buoyancy aids: 50 N. These have a buoyancy of no less than 50 Newtons for the average adult and are intended for use in sheltered waters when help is close at hand and the user is a swimmer; and in circumstances where more bulky or buoyant devices would impair the user's activity or actually endanger them.*"

and

"*Lifejackets: 150 N. These have a buoyancy of no less than 150 Newtons for the average adult and are intended for use in tidal waters or when foul weather clothing is being used; and where the wearers may not be capable of helping themselves due to injury or exhaustion (or where there may be a delay in rescue).* "

The other important feature of lifejackets is that they will hold an unconscious person in the water, face up and with their mouth and nose clear of the water. If that person starts in a face down position, then the lifejacket will turn them face up. Inflated lifejackets are brightly coloured (buoyancy aids often are not) and are relatively easy for a rescuer to spot.

I agree with you that in coastal conditions, lifejackets are always preferred to buoyancy aids.

Control Commission checks

The world is changing and, as a general rule, rowers are expected to look after themselves. They can no longer expect others to check their boats for them, they should learn to do this for themselves.

Premature Inflation

There is a problem with spray, etc. causing an auto-inflation lifejacket to inflate. There is another type of auto-inflation lifejacket that will not inflate due to wetness alone. These respond to pressure as well as wetness as explained in the RNLI leaflet. This states:-

"*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 a few centimetres under water. It won't fire unless fully submerged.*"

Both types of auto-inflation lifejackets can be inflated by pulling the toggle.

Carrying un-inflated lifejackets on rowing boats.

Un-inflated lifejackets may not float and the casings of many have dark colours and they may not be easy, for a person who is floating, to find. A Gig coach recently told me that he had checked and their un-inflated lifejackets do float. It may be best to carry foam filled lifejackets as these are brightly coloured and float high in the water. It may also be a good idea to tie them to the boat using a long line that can easily be untied by people with cold hands. They would be of no use if the wind blew them away.

Crotch or thigh straps

These fit to the front and back of the chest strap and pass between the legs. They prevent an inflated lifejacket from riding up and not keeping their mouth above the water or coming off over the wearer's head. This is described and demonstrated here.

Avoid lifejacket strap entanglement

This is mostly a matter of being tidy with the loose ends and ensuring that the lifejacket is correctly fitted. The chest strap should be tightened so that it is just possible to fit the wearer's fist between the strap and the chest. Loose ends should be tucked in.

Which Lifejacket

We do not normally recommend a particular lifejacket manufacturer or type although we did republish the recall notice for some lifejackets that were marketed on the internet. This was described in my July Monthly Report, available here. The archive of Monthly Reports is here. The July report also shows a photo of a coastal boat carrying lifejackets.

I have never seen a lifejacket that does not fit over the head. The part of the lifejacket that goes behind the head is important because it keeps the wearer's nose and mouth above the water.

RowSafe Scotland

A few weeks ago, I was asked whether Rowing Ireland could use RowSafe as the basis for their safety advice, this was agreed.

I was recently asked whether Scottish Rowing could do something similar. This, too, was agreed and an editable version of the latest version of RowSafe was provided.

RowSafe 2023

The next revision of RowSafe is due to be issued in April 2023. We have started to collect topics that should be addressed in this revision. If there are any topics that you would like to suggest then please write to me at safety@britishrowing.org.

Take care of rowers with epilepsy and others that have seizures

There have been three requests for information this month. In general the response has been to refer to the British Rowing Guidelines on Rowers with Epilepsy. These guidelines apply to rowers, coxes and people who drive launches. They were developed by the British Rowing Medical Panel and are consistent with the rules for drivers issued by the DVLA.

In a previous case, the medical advice has been that:-

The club should undertake a full risk assessment, including the frequency and triggers for the seizures, and match this to the BR guidance on seizures. It was also suggested that the rower provides a GP assessment (the GP should be aware of the BR guidance).

Sadly buoyancy aids would not be of much assistance during a seizure, especially when this is associated with a heavy dissociation or profound muscle weakness, which could limit the rower's ability to self-right or swim to safety.

Please ensure that the GP understands the physical and psychological pressures associated with the particular type of rowing involved. The important issue is that the rower may suffer seizures and the type, and quality of those seizures, rather than their cause. The advice to follow the guidance of the rower's doctor is still valid providing the general risks of rowing are explained. Those general risks include stress, physical exertion, being on water and, possibly, being in remote locations. The doctor's advice should constitute an individual risk assessment for this rower.

In one case the rower appears to have interpreted the guidelines to mean that they should be allowed to row once the club has put a "special risk assessment" in place. This rower has had severe seizures and loss of consciousness. It is difficult to imagine how a rower with these symptoms could go afloat in any rowing boat safely. The risk to the rower and others, including anyone who would have to rescue them, is just too great.

The "special risk assessment" is usually one provided by, or based on information provided by, the rower's doctor. It is not a risk assessment that the club or the rower can do for themselves. It is not possible for the club to provide sufficient risk mitigation to make rowing safe for this person. No amount of buoyancy aids or rescue equipment will be sufficient.

Subject to medical advice, there is no reason why a person who suffers seizures should not enjoy indoor rowing providing there is adequate supervision. In effect this means people to support and provide care in the event of a collapse.

Rowing Club Launches and the Boat Safety Scheme

My colleague Allan Meagan has been in discussion with the Environment Agency, and others, about the way in which this scheme will apply to club launches. The results of this discussion have been shared widely with British Rowing clubs. A summary of the new requirements is provided in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 - Further Update on Coaching/Safety Launches

This note provides an Update to the Briefing Note on Coaching/Safety Boats issued on 26 October 2022

It is intended as a further reminder of the guidance in Section 5.2 of RowSafe and not a legal requirement.

Note that the word 'should' has now replaced the word 'need' in bullet points 2-3 in the Overview below.

Following recent communications with the Environment Agency (EA) over issues relating to Club Safety Launches, Drivers and Insurances, the current position is as follows:

Overview

- The annual inspection of Coaching and Safety Launches is not required at this point, *unless the launch has an electric start system, in which case it would need to be inspected under the BSS Scheme (see below).* Manual start Launches are exempt.
- Clubs *should* arrange for all Coaching and Safety Boat Drivers to be competent up to RYA Level 2 *or equivalent level*, and Competitions *should* ensure that Powered Craft have competent drivers.
- Clubs and Competitions *should* be mindful that there is a policing system by the EA for compliance and that Inspections can take place at random.

Detail points to note

1. Annual Inspection of Coaching/Safety Launches - Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) Certification

It has been agreed that *at this point*, the EA will not require open boats with *manually started* outboard engines to be inspected annually in accordance with the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) Certification.

Where applicable, Canal and River Trust users can apply for exemption using this form.

This is an interim position until the outcome of the BSS review of non-private boats standards takes place, to which British Rowing will be consultees.

However, the EA requires compliance with parts 3,4, 5 and 6 of the BSS Examination Checking Procedures for Privately Owned and Managed Boats.

- Part 3 covers Electric and Battery systems from page 27 onwards
- Part 4 covers Electric Propulsion Systems from page 39 onwards
- Part 5 covers Spare Fuel Containers and Tanks from page 41 onwards
- Part 6 covers Fire Extinguishing, Escape and Carbon Monoxide Alarms from page 46 onwards.

The EA particularly recommends that Fire Extinguishers are also carried in accordance with Part 6.

N.B . Any powered boats other than open boats with outboard engines will continue to need BSS Certification.

2. Launch Driver Qualification

The EA noted that there is a recommendation in RowSafe that Skippers should be competent and suitably qualified. The qualification level needed depends upon risk assessment, but RYA level 2 should be sufficient.

The EA will be reviewing this area more fully, and in the meantime, they advise British Rowing to strengthen this recommendation.

Therefore, clubs should ensure that drivers are competent for the waters they use, and this may involve providing training and practical assessments in order to achieve the standard advised in British Rowing RowSafe Section 5.2.

3. Powered Boats Insurance

The EA has stipulated that clubs ensure that all Powered Boats have sufficient Public Liability Insurance Cover.

4. Ability to Inspect

The EA has the ability to visit and inspect Rowing Clubs and Competitions for compliance with their rules and this currently includes the inspection of compliance with items in points 1, 2 and 3 outlined above. Clubs and Competition Organisers should be mindful of this and ensure that the boats are maintained and fully serviceable.

The BSS Examination Checking Procedures for Privately Owned and Managed Boats can be downloaded here.

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