



Scottish Rowing Water Safety

Amended by the AGM, October 2011

PLEASE NOTE This document will be superseded by the new Scottish Rowing Water Safety Code on the 1st January 2024. You are advised to consult that document during this transition period.

It is the responsibility of every Club, School, University and Regatta (hereafter reference will only be made to Club) to ensure that their members' safety is safeguarded wherever possible and at all times. The following **Water Safety Code** and **Guidance Notes** have been compiled for your benefit. You are strongly advised to know and use them.

The Water Safety Code

- 1 Every Club is advised appoint a Safety Adviser whose task it will be to understand the notes and the requirements of Scottish Rowing Code of Practice for Water Safety and advise on their prominent display at all times, their observance and their implementation.
- 2 There should be prominently displayed in every Club and Boathouse, and Regatta Secretary's office a list of vital telephone numbers relating to safety in general:

Emergency Services - '999'	Doctors, Fire, Police, Ambulance, Local hospital A&E Dept
List details of information to be given, viz:	Service required, location of incident, situation, access details etc. Offshore or river rescue. Local river or harbour police, RNLI (for coastal waters), Coastguard (for coastal waters), Lifeguards.
Clear directions to the nearest telephone point should be displayed.	

- 3 Safety and First Aid equipment should be readily available in every Club boathouse to include:
 - First Aid Box (fully stocked, contents listed and replaced, as used, box contents to be checked monthly)
 - Thermal exposure blankets
 - Life buoys and rescue lines/throw-bags
 - Lifejackets
- 4 All Clubs should ensure that they carry and maintain adequate comprehensive insurance to cover personal injury to members on and off the water and personal injury and damage to property or third parties. There should be included in these policies adequate cover for the Club Safety Adviser.
- 5 Visual aids on water safety, life saving and resuscitation procedures are as may be provided by Scottish Rowing or by other organisations with the approval of Scottish Rowing, to be displayed prominently.
- 6 Every Club providing rowing or sculling facilities should draw up and display a plan of the local waterway, drawing attention to the applicable navigation rules and any local interpretation required to accommodate particular hazards. Instructions should be included on any variation in normal procedures necessary to combat tidal, stream, wind or other climatic conditions which may arise locally.
- 7 An incident log should be maintained and be available for inspection at all times, giving time, place and



nature of incident, injuries/damages sustained and names and addresses of witnesses. All incidents which actually cause or are judged to have the potential to cause harm to individuals or damage to equipment must be recorded. Incidents or illnesses that require medical intervention by a doctor or dentist or at a hospital shall be notified in writing as soon as practicable to the Scottish Rowing Safety Officer using the Scottish Rowing Incident Report Form. The information contained in any reports will be handled according to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

- 8 During the months of November and December, all Member Clubs are required to carry out an annual *Audit* of their safety provisions and submit a signed and dated, written copy of it to the Scottish Rowing Administrator. Member Clubs will not be permitted to participate in any regattas, or other events run under the auspices of *Scottish Rowing*, until the current Safety Audit has been received.
- 9 The following paragraphs relate to specific aspects of the sport which for convenience have been grouped under separate headings for ease of reference.

Equipment

- 10 For the safety of all concerned, rowing equipment should be maintained in good order.
- 11 Boats constructed or delivered after 1st January 2007 shall meet the FISA Guidelines for Minimum Flotation:
 - A boat when full of water with a crew of average weight equal to the design weight stated on the boat's production plaque, seated in the rowing position, should float such that the top of the seat is a maximum of 5cm below the static waterline.
 - Clubs shall take reasonable measures to ensure all other shells shall have similar buoyancy.
12. Every boat shall carry securely affixed to the bow a solid ball of rubber or material of similar consistency, white in colour, with a diameter of not less than 4 centimetres, and incapable of being significantly deflected in any direction. This protection may also be afforded by a specially shaped bow of suitable material.
- 13 All boats must be equipped with stretchers or shoes which allow the occupants to get clear of the boat without using hands and with least possible delay. If heel restraints are used each shoe must be independently restrained and restraints should not allow the heel to lift more than 7 cm.
- 14 For evening outings, rowing after sunset, boats shall be fitted with lights as required by the "Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1996" published by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency of the D of T, or by local rules and bye laws.
- 15 Check oars and sculls to ensure that "buttons" are secure and properly set.
- 16 Buoyancy compartments, bow and stern canvasses, etc should be checked to ensure that they will function as intended.

Rowers, Scullers and Coxswains

- 17 All persons participating in rowing or sculling should be in good health and able to swim a minimum of 50 metres in light clothing and shoes.
- 18 Physically challenged athletes participating in organised rowing or sculling activities must be provided with suitable rescue facilities to cope with any accident whilst afloat.
- 19 All coxswains shall wear a lifejacket (conforming to BS EN 396:1994 standard – formerly BS 3595) or a buoyancy aid of approved design at all times when on the water. Coxswains in "front-loader" positions must wear lifejackets which allow them easy escape from their position.

Coaches

- 20 A coach is not only concerned to coach his crews. He has a reasonable responsibility for their safety at all times whilst they are in his charge.
- 21 A coach should ensure that every member of the crew of which he has charge is aware of the



appropriate safety procedures.

- 22 Coaches should ensure that the whole crew, including the coxswain are dressed suitably, adequately protected for the weather conditions they are likely to encounter.
- 23 Coaches and coaching launch drivers shall wear lifejackets (conforming to BS EN 396:3994 standard – formerly BS 3595) or buoyancy aids whilst afloat.
- 24 All coaching launches and safety boats should carry the following safety aids:
 - A baler and, for inflatable rubber dinghies, a suitable inflation pump and a spare inflation valve.
 - An audible, signalling, warning device, capable of attracting attention over a distance of at least 200 metres.
 - A grab line at least 15 metres (50 ft) long with a large knot tied in one end to assist throwing (ideally a purpose made rescue/heaving line - 'throw bag').
 - Thermal/exposure blankets.
 - Lifebuoys and lifejackets.
 - A basic first aid kit (contents recorded and checked as before).
 - A sharp knife in carrying sheath.
 - A paddle.
 - Simple hand holds fixed to the side of launch to give help to any person being rescued and provide self-help should the driver fall overboard.
 - Engine cut-out lanyard device.
 - Anchor and line.
- 25 Any activity after dark involving coaching launches requires the launches to be fitted with lights as laid down in the Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations 1996 or as prescribed by the appropriate navigation authority.

Regattas and Processional Races

- 26 All regatta committees are strongly advised to appoint a Safety Adviser whose duty will be to advise on the observance of Scottish Rowing Code of Practice for Water Safety.
- 27 No regatta, processional race or sponsored row should take place without adequate safety measures being in force.
- 28 All regattas should appoint a suitably qualified and equipped person to be Medical Officer who will be responsible for ensuring that medical support is accessible to the regatta.
- 29 Safety boats suitable for the task of rescue manned by persons trained in boat handling and rescue techniques, and properly equipped, should be available throughout the period of the regatta and during practice. They should be sufficient in number and so placed that rapid assistance and recovery can be provided wherever the need occurs.
- 30 A plan of the course and launching area identifying hazards and traffic rules should be displayed and brought to the notice of competitors, officials and other clubs which share the venue. Telephone numbers of police, ambulance, medical and fire services should be prominently displayed together with the location of the nearest telephone.

When a regatta requires a circulation pattern which is different from the normal training arrangements at the venue, the regatta circulation pattern will come into force each day 40 minutes before the first race of the event is due to start and will remain in force until after the last race has finished. During this time, the regatta circulation pattern will be observed by all rowers, competitors and non-competitors alike.
- 31 Umpires' launches should carry a lifebuoy and line (throw bag), thermal/exposure blanket and first aid equipment (listed and recorded as before).



- 32 Umpires should wear lifejackets (conforming to BS EN 396:1994 standard – formerly BS 3595) or buoyancy aids of approved design at all times when carrying out duties on the water.



Guidance Notes

General

The role of Safety Advisers for clubs, schools and colleges and other centres where organised rowing and sculling take place will be to give guidance on, and encourage understanding and compliance with the following.

In addition to the specific requirements set out in the Code of Practice for Water Safety, those who organise rowing and sculling for others are responsible for ensuring the observance and understanding of the following requirements by all concerned.

Equipment

All equipment for rowing, sculling and coaching should be properly maintained to ensure that it is safe for its intended purpose and does not expose the user to danger. Particular attention should be given to the following:

- As far as is practical, boats and equipment should be stored in well-lit premises in such a way as to minimise the possibility of damage to persons or equipment on removal and return.
- When any boat is placed on the water and before embarkation, it should be checked to ensure that it is in a safe condition and that its moving parts are in working order, viz:
 - Check for leaks.
 - Check buoyancy compartments, seals and ventilation bungs.
 - Check outriggers, swivels, seats and stretchers for security.
 - Check that heel release mechanisms are effective, ie. Quick-release devices and heel restraints.
 - Check rudder lines, steering mechanism, rudder and fin to ensure that everything is secure and in good working order.
 - Check oars and sculls for damage and ensure that "buttons" are securely and properly set.
- **Heel Release Mechanism** - Where boats are fitted with "shoes" an effective release mechanism must be in place to ensure that the heels are released immediately a strain is put upon them. Heel restraint cords/straps should be correctly adjusted and members instructed in the technique of release in the event of capsize.
 - **Laced Shoes** - check that laces are adequate to hold foot firm but check also that shoes are not tied too tightly, immobilising and trapping the foot as a result. (It is recommended that lace-ups be replaced by "velcro" straps.)
 - **Velcro Shoes** - check for wear in the Velcro strapping and replace regularly.(Initial instruction of rowers and scullers should be given in boats without fitted shoes. Clogs or stretcher boards are recommended for beginners.)
- **Maintenance** - to maintain equipment in a sound and usable condition requires those organising rowing should establish procedures whereby damage to equipment is notified to responsible officials without delay and the damage repaired before the equipment is used again. Damaged equipment should be marked or "quarantined" to ensure that it is not used by others unaware of the damage.

Education

All participants in rowing and sculling should receive proper instruction in watermanship and in rowing and sculling technique including capsize and accident procedures under the supervision of qualified coaches or experienced members so that no person puts themselves or others at risk when on the water. Junior members and novices should be given particular attention.

The coaching of coxswains in watermanship and water safety procedures is set out in Scottish Rowing basic coaching award.



Every encouragement should be given to rowers, scullers and coaches to become fully conversant with life saving and resuscitation techniques. It is strongly recommended that Safety Advisers receive formal training. Life saving and resuscitation skill training forms part of Scottish Rowing basic coaching courses in which all participants in the sport should participate.

Adverse Weather Conditions

Rowing and sculling are by their nature outdoor activities and as such are subject to the vagaries of weather in all its forms.

- It is recommended that the Safety Adviser or senior member present appointed for the club will have and exercise the authority to advise the suspension of boating activity should s/he believe the conditions unsafe for whatever reason.
- The direction of National River or other relevant authorities with regard to the inherent dangers in the weather conditions prevailing are to be observed at all times.
- Where rough water conditions are likely to be encountered during outings, a baler or sponge should be carried within the boat.
- After all outings, "bungs" or buoyancy compartment traps should be removed to allow ventilation. (Such items should be kept with the boat.)

Night Rowing

Rowing or sculling after nightfall is dangerous and should not be encouraged. When it is undertaken, then crews and scullers must be accompanied by a coach, on the bank, or in an accompanying launch. All craft must be properly illuminated as required by the relevant water authority, or the Department of Transport.

Unescorted Outings

Every effort should be made by those organising rowing and sculling to maintain a log of those boating from their premises unescorted or "out of hours". Such a record gives an indication of craft on the water, intended length and direction of outing which may be of assistance in the event of mishap.

Community

Rowing and sculling activities should be carried out at all times with an awareness by the participants of the rights of others who share the water. Every effort should be made, by regular meetings, to coordinate activities and so minimise clashes of interests and the possibilities of accidents.

Safety for the Individual

All active rowers and scullers shall:

- Satisfy their Medical Officer that they are in good health and be able, if required, to demonstrate that they can swim a minimum distance of 50 metres in light clothing and shoes.
- Comply with Scottish Rowing Code of Practice for Water Safety.
- Acquaint themselves fully with and obey rules of navigation both local and statutory.
- Maintain their rowing equipment in good order and check that it is in a safe condition before use.
- Ensure that beginners to the sport are not allowed to use equipment without adequate and prior instruction and are not allowed to boat unsupervised.
- Be constantly aware of the rights of others to the free use of the water and extend to them at all times the courtesy they would similarly wish to receive.

It is recommended that active members should learn capsize and accident procedures. Every opportunity should be taken to learn simple first aid, life saving and resuscitation techniques.

Single scullers (apart from beginners on the water under supervision) are responsible for their own safety and actions, and must observe the requirements of Scottish Rowing Code of Practice for Water Safety.



The Responsibilities of the Steersperson/Coxswain

All persons steering a boat have a responsibility for the crew in their charge. Coxswains should comply with the following:

- Every coxswain shall be able to swim and to demonstrate that ability when called upon by the Safety Officer.
- All coxswains should wear a lifejacket (conforming to BS EN 396:1994 standard – formerly BS 3595) or buoyancy aid of approved design, when on the water both in training and in competition. Where coxswains are located in the bows of boats, care must be taken in the choice of lifejacket to ensure that the coxswain is not restricted when exiting from the boat.
- All coxswains should be able to satisfy their Safety Adviser that they are in good health with adequate vision and sound hearing. No-one who is subject to epileptic fits or blackouts will steer a boat. In cases of doubt, medical advice should be obtained.
- Dress suitable for the prevailing conditions should be worn. Particular care should be taken to ensure warmth around the head, neck and lower back, wrists and ankles and the clothing should be water and windproof. Water resistant outer gloves are recommended but bulky and heavy clothing and "Wellington" type boots are to be avoided.
- Be aware of the dangers and symptoms of hypothermia. (See advisory notes on Hypothermia.)
- Voice projection and radio communication equipment, when carried in the boat must be securely fixed to the boat, not the coxswain. Similarly, in competition, dead-weights when required must not be attached to the coxswain.

Steering a boat, in training or in a race is a highly responsible role, very often entrusted to young and inexperienced coxswains or rowers with little or no experience of steering. The steersperson is responsible for the actions of the boat being steered. Commands have to be given and discipline exerted.

The following represents the knowledge that the steersperson must develop. Steers persons must:

- Learn and use simple commands for boat control both on and off the water. Use them correctly, clearly and instinctively. Understand the basic commands and signals of other water users.
- Understand and carry out all safety procedures and regulations applicable to the water they use, especially those relating to right of way, power boats, sailing craft, etc.
- Understand and observe local navigation rules of the river or water.
- On unfamiliar water, become acquainted with local regulations and practices and of the existence, nature and location of particular hazards before going afloat.
- Be conversant with safety and rescue procedures in the case of an accident.
- Recognise and respect the rights and needs of other water users, especially anglers.
- Watch out for swimmers at all times.
- Watch out for unexpected floating objects.
- Know capsize and man overboard procedures

The Responsibilities of the Coach

A coach should ensure that every member of the crews coached follows the appropriate safety procedures at all times, and the coach shall observe them to ensure the crews' safety.

In particular, coaches should:

- Be aware of the local Code of Practice.
- Ensure that crews are using safe rowing equipment.
- Be aware of weather and water conditions and arrange the outing to avoid any danger.



- Watch out for any hazards the crews may meet. It is often easier for the coach, who is higher above the water than the members of the crew, to see swimmers or similar hazards ahead. Draw the attention of the coxswain or steersperson to such hazards and not merely attempt to influence any steering decision that has to be made.
- Showing consideration for other water users is very much the responsibility of the coach, both in regard to the coaching launch and to the boats being coached.

Coaches of young children should ensure that the whole crew, and not just the coxswain, are dressed suitably. Youngsters are unlikely to be able to generate a high level of body warmth during their first outings and need more protection.

When crews are rowing away from their home water, the coach should ascertain the local code of practice and, at regattas, any special traffic rules to be observed, and ensure crews fully understand them.

Coaches should pay particular attention to the coaching of coxswains. Not only is a competent coxswain important to the crews' success, competence is essential for their safety on the water.

Every coach should know capsize and accident procedures and be prepared to assist or rescue any member who is in difficulties, is injured, or appears to be suffering from hypothermia or exhaustion. Every time the coach goes out in a coaching launch check that it is fully equipped with safety equipment and know how to use it.

When coaching from a launch, the coach and driver must wear lifejackets or buoyancy aids of approved design.

Every coach should learn life saving and resuscitation procedures as set out in Scottish Rowing basic coaching award.

Coaches of beginners and especially of crews of young children should be extra careful. Those who are new to the sport are likely to be concentrating on their own rowing to the exclusion of all else, and are thus less likely to be aware of approaching danger. Coaches of school crews, when dealing with several crews of young novices on the water together, should be especially concerned with their safety. It is very easy for the first crew that gets boated to get into difficulties whilst the coach is supervising further crews getting onto the water. Beginners, whether in crews or sculling boats, should never be allowed on the water unsupervised.

Coaching Launches

Coaching from a launch or inflatable craft has now become commonplace. The presence of a coaching launch gives far better safety protection to a crew than a coach on a bicycle, on the bank, but raises the need to ensure competent driving, the safety of those on board the coaching craft, and the effect upon other water users of the coaching craft's activities.

Training Drivers - To take out an engine-powered boat without previous tuition is to put the driver, any passengers and other water users at risk. The Royal Yachting Association holds courses in handling powered boats and issues certificates of competence. It is strongly recommended that no-one should drive a launch without first having taken a course of instruction. At the very least the club shall ensure that an experienced driver goes out with a new driver until he has shown that he is fully in control of the launch.

The manner in which launches are **manoeuvred** and generally handled may create unnecessary problems for other water users. Excessive washes create impossible conditions for other water users and can cause accidents to smaller boats. Thoughtless driving often causes damage to moored boats and to river banks. To use launches for coaching, rescue and other purposes, all on the same water, requires drivers to be fully aware of the effect of the wash they cause and the risk that the very sport they are seeking to assist cannot take place because their manner of driving their boat has made the water unusable.

Buoyancy aids or lifejackets should be worn at all times and are essential for launches going out to sea or on very wide stretches of water. Lifejackets which depend on oral inflation should be worn



partly inflated; those which have auto inflation must be checked at intervals suggested by the manufacturers.

Maintenance of the boat and its engine is vital, since the possible consequences of failure are too great. The driver and his passengers are dependent upon the efficient working of the engine and the good condition of the launch for the proper execution of their duties. Drivers and coaches should know how the engine works, and a box with basic tools and spare parts (in particular sparkplugs and sparkplug spanner) should always be carried to enable running repairs to be done and simple replacements to be made. The tool/spare parts box should be kept dry and checked regularly (an extra can of pre-mixed fuel is also a vital spare). It is a wise precaution to check that the engine is securely fixed to the hull and that the secondary safety fixing is properly attached every time the boat is used.

Choice of a launch, its hull size and its shape, must be matched to an engine suitable for the work it is to undertake and the load to be carried. In particular, launches to be used for coaching on rivers or enclosed waters must be of a design which will enable a launch to accompany a crew rowing at speed without causing a wash that makes the water unusable for everyone else.

Beginners

By virtue of their undeveloped technique, newcomers to our sport are particularly vulnerable in the following respects. They are

- unable to work hard enough in Scottish weather conditions to keep warm,
- prone to capsize from smaller boats,
- disorientation and tension,
- wayward steering.

For these reasons the following practices with newcomers are encouraged.

- Sufficient clothes worn to keep warm.
- The use of suitable lifejackets or buoyancy aids (BS EN 396:1994 – formerly BS 3595).
- The use of high visibility outer garments, especially in the period from October to March when visibility and light conditions can be poor.
- All outings should be accompanied by a coach or instructor until deemed sufficiently competent to go without – this will vary from boat to boat.
- In single sculls, including playboats, a suitable lifejacket or buoyancy aid should be worn until a capsize drill and swim test has been passed.

Regattas and Processional Races

Where races are umpired from launches, the instructions to Umpires will clearly state that in the event of accident the Umpire's first duty is to the safety of the competitor or any person in difficulty.

Resuscitation Guidance

Up to date guidance on resuscitation procedure can be downloaded from the Resuscitation Council (UK) web site

<http://www.resus.org.uk/pages/guide.htm> .

The Introduction and Adult Basic Life Support documents are appropriate to non-professionals.



Hypothermia Guidance

1. Avoidance must be the first consideration at all times. Hypothermia occurs when the whole of the body has been chilled to a much lower than normal temperature, ie. below 35°C compared with the normal body temperature of 37°C.
2. Dress to beat the cold - Layers of clothing are more effective than one warm garment. The outer layer should be wind and waterproof.
3. Do not take or give alcohol in cold conditions. Alcohol accelerates heat loss as well as impairing judgment.
4. Be alert to the warning signs of cold both in yourself and others. Coaches of young children must be particularly aware of the risks to their charges of exposure to cold. Exposed arms, legs and head heighten the risk.
5. If a person has fallen into cold water their body will lose heat rapidly. To reduce heat loss, keep clothes on except heavy coats or boots which may drag the person down.
6. Sudden immersion in cold water can have a shock effect which can disrupt normal breathing, reducing even a proficient swimmer to incompetence. Confusion and an inability to respond to simple instructions will become evident.
7. When hypothermia is suspected your aims must be to prevent the casualty losing more body heat and to re-warm the casualty.
8. Send for help. Hypothermia is a medical emergency whether the patient is conscious or unconscious.
 - If conscious the victim should be actively re-warmed under careful observation.
 - If unconscious the victim must be got to medical aid as soon as possible. Follow instructions given under Resuscitation Guidelines.
9. Symptoms and signs of hypothermia. The following are the most usual symptoms and signs, but all may not be present
 - Unexpected and unreasonable behaviour possibly accompanied by complaints of coldness and tiredness.
 - Physical and mental lethargy with failure to understand a question of orders.
 - Slurring of speech.
 - Violent outburst of unexpected energy and violent language, becoming uncooperative.
 - Failure of, or abnormality in, vision.
 - Twitching.
 - Lack of control of limbs, unsteadiness and complaining of numbness and cramp.
 - General shock and pallor and blueness of lips and nails.
 - Slow weak pulse, wheezing and coughing.
10. A very dangerous situation is still present when a person who has been in the water for some time is taken out. Further heat loss must be prevented. The victim should be protected against wind and rain if possible.

Re-warming can be carried out by:

- wrapping the victim in a thermal/exposure blanket.
- Others placing their warm bodies against the victim.
- Giving hot drinks (if conscious).

11 Prevention is always the best policy.



Transportation Guidance

The role of the Club Safety Adviser will be to ensure that all members who transport boats either on cars (sculling boat) or tow the club trailer are conversant with the requirements for safe and legal movement of boats by road. To this end they should conduct a safety audit at regular intervals. As a guide the items listed below should be included in the audit.

- Liaise with the Secretary/Treasurer to check that there is adequate insurance cover in force. If the club owns a tow vehicle it may be useful to have a photocopy of the current insurance certificate in a protective envelope in the vehicle.
- Ensure that the club has arranged for all drivers to have a copy of the ARA/AoCPO Leaflet "**Guidance on Transport of Oar Propelled Racing Boats**" - available through Scottish Rowing.
- Check that a photocopy of the diagram on Load Projection is displayed in the boathouse.
- Check that the trailer has been lubricated and serviced regularly and that the tyres are in good condition including the spare.
- Ensure there are adequate ties and rear projection markers including a warning triangle available.
- Ensure that a functional Lighting Board including the registration number of the towing vehicle is used.
- Check that drivers are aware of the maximum load to be carried on the trailer.
- Check that in the event of a rear projection in excess of 1 metre there is an extra rear light available for use during the hours of darkness.
- Drivers must check that they carry an appropriate licence for towing boat trailers – see DVLA Leaflet "**Requirements for towing trailers in Great Britain**" – available from Scottish Rowing.

Check availability of nose weight measuring facility.