

HRSA Monthly Report

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Incident Reports

Incident reports were reviewed (other than those of simple capsizes). Comments were made on a few and some were forwarded to others for information. Incident Reports that describe medical treatment beyond first aid and those that describe medical issues are routinely shared with the Honorary Medical Adviser and, where appropriate, his advice is conveyed to the people involved.

There has been some concern recently that some clubs are not reporting incidents. It is well recognised that all but the smallest and least active clubs have incidents and Rowing Safety Advisers generally are concerned about those clubs that report no or few incidents. They regard those clubs that report many incidents as being open and striving for improvement. It is only possible to identify clubs as the “Primary Rowing Club Involved”, in most cases this is the club making the report.

The data for 2017 were analysed to identify those clubs who make the greatest use of the system and those who made the least use. The names of clubs reporting were compared with a complete set of the names of registered clubs. The complete data set is included with this report.

The following clubs should be congratulated for their positive approach to safety as evidenced by the extent of their use of the Incident Reporting system.

Primary rowing club involved	number of reports
Lea RC	84
Christchurch RC	49
Avon County RC	47
Marlow RC	46
Taunton RC	33
Gravesend RC	29
Durham ARC	29
York City RC	24
Talkin Tarn ARC	24
Norwich Rowing Club	23
Tyne RC	22
Maidenhead RC	22
Latymer Upper School BC	22
Gloucester RC	22
Bewl Bridge RC	21

Club Hub

There has been some concern, expressed at the recent NRSC meeting, that the advice on safety in rowing clubs is yet to be published in Club Hub. Copies have been provided to RRSAs at their request.

Note of Thanks

A note (e-mail) has been sent to Mr Paul Eeles from Chester who recovered a young trainee launch driver from the weir on 9th August.

Conspicuity and Club Rules

There has been an extensive discussion on the need for rowers to be conspicuous so that they can be seen easily. This normally involves wearing light colours above the waist in daylight and white in darkness. This is consistent with the guidance in RowSafe and, in particular the advice to include this provision in Club Rules. This advice states that club rules should include several items, including the following *“Instructions to rowers to be conspicuous and wear high-visibility clothing at all times when afloat other when they are required to wear club kit during competitions”*. This was new in 2017.

It was also noted that there one of the rules of British Rowing relates to safety. I was quoted as saying that *“In my view, it would be perfectly reasonable and creditable for your club to make rules on conspicuity and the proposed rule you included in your previous note is appropriate. I would even say that it would be unreasonable and discreditable for it not to”*.

It has been argued that individuals should be free to ignore this advice at the risk of their own safety. This argument may have had some validity but for the fact that rowers who are not conspicuous are also putting others at risk.

(At the latest NRSC meeting, members were presented with high-visibility vests as it was felt important that they set a good example – these were presents from Goa!)

Work with the Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA)

There will be a presentation on safety at the CPGA AGM on 21st January. The presentation and associated question and answers session should last one and a half hours. It has been suggested that this will cover:-

- Introductions and Opening Remarks
- What does go wrong? What can happen to a gig and its crew?
- Introduction to Risk Management - understanding the terms "Hazards", "Barriers", "Hazardous Events", and "Controls".
- Participation in the Risk Management Card Game (in groups of 3 or 4), this is specific to Gig rowing; it reinforces the concepts and the advantage of a structured approach.
- How RowSafe can help with this.
- The importance of behaviour in relation to safety.
- An introduction to the concepts of Management and Leadership.
- Available Resources - other on-line training, RowSafe etc.
- What to do if things go wrong. How to call for help. Some general information on Lifejackets.
- Questions and Answers

Advice was provided on the use of lifejackets in Gigs. This is summarised in Appendix 1.

There was a request for information from the Isles of Scilly World Championship (IOSWC) Committee, via the CPGA, on the legal requirement to have a paramedic afloat at these championships. The response to this simple question was that there are no requirements in criminal law to have paramedics afloat at the World Gig Championships. Further detail is provided in Appendix 2. It should be noted that the IOSWC is a separate organisation and not part of the CPGA although most of the participants are members of the CPGA.

Propeller Guards

There has been some discussion on the usefulness of prop guards and the utility of fitting them to outboards. These were recommended in the 2008 version of RowSafe but not mentioned (intentionally) in the current versions. Propeller strikes can cause very serious injuries and many graphic images can be found by searching “boat prop strike injuries” and “boat prop strike deaths” (take care some of these images are very disturbing). However, prop guards reduce the speed and acceleration of launches, this can be critical in a rescue situation. There is also an issue of weed being trapped in the prop guard.

There are two basic types of prop guard, one type is constructed like a cage around the propeller and looks like this:-



The other type forms a cylindrical cover for the propeller blade tips such that the propeller will act as a ducted fan, it looks like this:-



It is unlikely that this type will provide significant protection to people in the water.

The RYA guidance on prop guards was considered, this is available at <http://www.propellersafety.com/7134/propeller-guard-news/rya-propeller-guard-position-statement/> . This provides some advice but leaves the decision on the fitting of prop guards to the user.

This issue was discussed with the RNLI who advised that they use prop guards on small rescue boats used by lifeguards and boats used by flood rescue teams. The decision to use them is based on the risk to people in the water and the risk to the propeller from debris in the water. They are not used on any other Lifeboats as they reduce prop thrust.

The main cause of prop strike injury is to people who get thrown overboard at speed, rather to people who were already in the water. The people most likely to be injured in this way are those who sit or stand in the front of a launch (UMPIRES BEWARE) particularly if it is moving at speed or over rough water.

On balance, the use of prop guards is not recommended unless there are particular issues at a specific venue or under specified conditions. Risk Assessment should be used to qualify these concerns.

Work with London University College Rowing Clubs

Support for University of London clubs is being discussed. This is expected to be similar to the support recently provided to Oxford and Durham University College Rowing clubs.

Almanack Update

Information has been provided to update the safety section of the 2018 almanack.

Rower Development Guide

The first version of the new rower development guide quotes RowSafe incorrectly. It referred to “Minimum Standards” and actions that must be taken particularly in the section on swimming competence and capsizing training. These terms are no longer used in RowSafe and there is no requirement in RowSafe relating to any of these issues. This has been corrected.

RowSafe

RowSafe 2017 Some broken links in RowSafe 2017 have been identified and it has been requested that they should be repaired.

RowSafe 2018 The 2018 update should be issued in April. The following opportunities for improvement have been identified:-

- Add a section on Ocean Rowing
- Add references to the Safety Alerts published in 2017 and any published in early 2018.
- Add a link to the RNLI advice on Lifejackets (as included with this report)
- Add a note on the importance of back stays
- Add a note on algal blooms
- Review the Health Chapter with the HMA with particular reference to diabetes.
- Extend the guidance in Radio Procedure to include an example of urgency working
- Check all links and repair or remove
- Add a note on blades for young junior scullers

If you have any suggestions for further improvements then please send them to safety@britishrowing.org.

Ocean Rowing

A meeting was held between British Rowing and representatives of Ocean Rowing to discuss the safety of Ocean Rowing following a fatal incident in January 2016, it having been recommended by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch that British Rowing facilitate this development. It was generally agreed that such a development would be very welcome.

The most significant risk is probably that of a person being lost overboard in mid-ocean. The approach to safety should have robust means of keeping people safely on board and of retrieving or rescuing them if they fall overboard or are separated from their boat.

It should be understood that in anything but the calmest seas and lightest winds the boat will be blown downwind faster than it can be rowed upwind. It will also be difficult to turn into wind. Anyone lost overboard, unless they are recovered immediately, will tend not to be able to move through the water at any significant speed whilst the boat is being blown away. The distance between the person and the boat will continue to increase.

The first layer of safety is to keep people on board, this will require the use of solid or webbing guard rails around the deck. It will also require crews to act sensibly and take care when moving about on deck, they will have to seek refuge in their cabins whenever the conditions dictate.

The second layer of safety will come into effect if the first fails. This is to keep people connected to the boat and safe should they fall overboard. This will require them to wear a lifejacket incorporating a harness and for this harness to be connected to a jack stay at all times when anyone is on deck. This will require crew members to attach their harness to the lifeline before leaving the cabin and keeping it attached until they have safely returned to the cabin. It may be possible to relax this rule slightly, in daylight only, if conditions are very calm.

The third layer of safety will come into effect if the first two fail. This requires there to be throw lines readily available on deck, and the crew trained to use them, just in case a lifeline parts. It may also be prudent to trail a rescue line behind the boat.

The fourth layer of safety will come into effect if the first three fail. This requires the use of distress messages and the launching of an auto-inflation danbuoy, together with the use of a PLB or an EPIRB. This will make rescue by another vessel slightly more likely.

Safe behaviour will also be important and there will be guidance on the circumstances when it will be necessary for crew members to take refuge in their cabins and when they will need to wear helmets. Different "rules" may apply in daylight and in darkness.

These ideas will be developed into a draft for RowSafe and made available for comment in the next few weeks.

Various documents have been provided by Ocean Rowing companies and these have proved useful. The documents on medical and dental fitness to participate, first aid training and first aid equipment have been sent to the HMA for his comment or that of a colleague.

It should be noted that two boats were abandoned and their crews safely rescued in the recent Atlantic Challenge race. This is thought to be largely due to severe adverse weather.

Other Advice

The following requests for information were received.

- *Does British Rowing have any guidance or rules on towing a boat trailer with a mini bus with students in?* The answer was that British Rowing does not have rules on trailers, just advice and guidance. If you comply with the law then it should all be OK. There is guidance in RowSafe section 7.2, please use the links in the text, there is an extensive list of links at the end of the section. There is a training course on trailer driving in RowHow at <http://www.rowhow.org/course/view.php?id=108> . If you are in doubt about your licensing you can telephone Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's Customer Enquiries on 0870 240 0009.
- *Is it safe to have only one person in our safety boat on a lake, is this safe as the driver may fall from the boat and the boat would drift away?* If this happens then be concerned about the person and have no concern for the boat. You are on a lake, it is not going anywhere. I assume that you teach all your members how to do Buddy Rescue so this technique should be available to rescue the coach. Rowers may have to move their boat to him rather than expect him to swim to the rowing boat. He may not be able to climb onto the boat but he should be able to hold on to it. Consider having a second person in the launch and make sure that the kill cord is used correctly. Ensure that the second person in the launch carries a spare kill cord.
- *Can you help with safety documentation for a new rowing club on the Isle of Man?* The request was referred to the RRSA of the Wessex Region as he has extensive experience in Coastal Rowing safety.
- *What size of personal floatation device should I use as a safety boat driver when I am wearing PVC chest waders and multiple layers of fleece to keep warm?* It was recommended that a 150 N lifejacket should be used but a bigger one could be considered if you are concerned. It was also suggested that conventional waterproof trousers, as worn by yachtsman and others, are considered.
- *How do I get back into a boat with a reverse wing rigger?* When we teach the capsize drill we follow the mantra of:
 - get free from the boat
 - get out of the water and
 - get off the waterand stay with the boat.

We encourage people to climb on top of their inverted boat, or right the boat and then climb on top. They then paddle the boat, by hand, to the nearest place of safety or wait to be rescued by another boat or launch, if available. We do not encourage people to try to climb back into their boat because this takes considerable energy. If people fail a couple of times then they will be in a worse position than if they had not tried.

The reverse wing rigger has the advantage, in a head-on collision of tending to push the other rower away whereas conventional wing riggers, in these circumstances, tend to draw the boats together. This is why we encourage the use of back-stays on boats with conventional wing riggers.

Appendix I – The use of Lifejackets in Gigs

The request for information related to the use of auto inflation or manual inflation lifejackets in Cornish Pilot Gigs. The correspondent observed that the advice in RowSafe that suggests that where there is danger of accidental inversion coxes should wear manual inflation lifejackets. but that all other rowers should wear auto inflation lifejackets. It was thought that in a gig, there is greater risk of being trapped beneath the boat and manual inflation lifejackets may be the safer option

The response was that the guidance for coxes in "river" boats is aimed to ensure that coxes are not trapped in inverted boats. In some boats, known as bow loaded boats, the cox lies on his or her back in bows and is almost encased by the boat. If an automatic lifejacket actuated in this position it would press against the top and sides of this enclosure and trap the cox.

The choice of manual vs automatic lifejacket should not be difficult. Auto-inflation lifejackets would be most suitable for gig rowers and coxes. They have the advantage of protecting the wearer without the wearer having to find and pull the toggle. The lack of delay in their deployment also provides some protection against cold water shock. The advantages outweigh the disadvantages particularly for rowers who row in the winter.

The risk of entrapment under a gig should be considered but this is less significant than the difficulty in finding and pulling the toggle once immersed. Gigs are large and simple structures and it should not be difficult to escape from an inverted one even when wearing an inflated lifejacket.

It would be best to use the pressure activated or hydrostatic type. These will not inflate until the lifejacket firing head is a few centimetres under the water. The water activated type could inflate if splashed by a wave, for example, during launching or recovery.

The need for other equipment should also be considered. Crotch or thigh straps should always be used. These prevent the lifejacket from coming off over the wearers head. It may be more comfortable in a gig to not have these straps too tight, they can be tightened in the water. A spray hood should be used when rowing in open water, where the wind strength is force 4 or more and there is spray being blown from the waves. It would otherwise be possible to drown in the spray.

The other important thing to remember about lifejackets is that it is best, if possible, to inflate them before entering the water. Even the automatic ones can be inflated manually.

The RNLI guidance on lifejackets is included with this report.

Appendix 2 – The need for a paramedic afloat at the World Pilot Gig Championships

There is government guidance on the organisation of events but these relate mostly to crowds at big events like pop concerts and Premier League football matches. This can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg154.pdf> and it is believed that it is under review. There is further guidance in section 4 of [RowSafe](#) and on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/index.htm> and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/incidents-and-emergencies.htm>.

However the following advice was also provided. Even if the event has insurance cover and that has a disclaimer on its entry forms, participants will reasonably expect the organisers to provide some support to them. In other words the organisers have a duty to care for the participants, this could be thought of this as a moral duty but there also could be reputational implications if the organisers were later shown not to have taken appropriate care.

It would be prudent to complete an Event Risk Assessment and this should help with deciding on the level of first aid provision that is needed. There is guidance on this in section 4.1 of RowSafe and three online learning modules on risk management and risk assessment on the British Rowing website. These are free to all (you do not have to be a member) and there are links at <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/>.

When considering first aid provision then consideration should be given to what can go wrong that could cause first aid to be needed. The original question related to having a paramedic afloat so the response was confined to incidents that could have life threatening or life changing effects. These include both events afloat that could cause harm and "medical" events involving people afloat.

This event has been running for many years so it should not be difficult to identify those incidents in previous years that have required a response and to plan accordingly. However, please do not get fixated by what has happened in the past, we all want standards of care to improve. (It was later learned that there has been a cardiac arrest in the IOSWC.)

It was also noted that the IOSWC racing rules differ from those of the CPGA in that the CPGA rules require that racing is abandoned in the event of an accident whereas the IOSWC rules merely indicated that it may be stopped. The legal requirements to assist vessels in distress at sea were explained.

In the event of a capsize or swamping lots of people will be needed to help recover rowers from the water. The water will be cold (the event is in early May) so hypothermia is a concern as is cold water shock. It may not be essential to have a paramedic present but it would be reassuring.

In the event of someone collapsing with a medical problem (heart attack is not that uncommon and in 2016 there were 66 crews (462 people plus spectators and officials) in the Men's Veterans race. Having a properly equipped paramedic available afloat would be reassuring. You also need a good communications system (radios, correctly used) to minimise any delay in treatment.

The Honorary Medical Adviser was involved in this discussion.