

HRSA Monthly Report

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Stephen Worley

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.

Recently there were two incidents with trailers. In one, the trailer socket moved off the tow ball (the trailer was otherwise stationary) and the jockey wheel landed on the driver's foot causing broken bones in the foot. This person is expected to be incapacitated for about six weeks.

In another incident the stern half of an eight became detached from a trailer when the trailer was being towed and fell onto the road. The narrow end of the boat was at the forward end of the trailer. It should be remembered that small longitudinal movements of tapered sections of boats can cause the retaining straps to become loose. Longitudinal straps should be used (perhaps from a stretcher to arm of the trailer) to prevent this movement.

There was a reference in one incident to the use of a "cola like drink" as a prophylactic following ingestion of potentially contaminated water. In the view of our Honorary Medical Adviser, and his colleagues, this has no value and should not be used because it provides no benefits.

Work with the Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA)

There has been a continuing involvement with a Gig club in Dorset. The club has prepared some Risk Management Plans, these have been reviewed again in detail and extensive comments provided. A meeting was held on the 9th November to review progress.

Support has been offered to Portishead Pilot Gig Club, this is a new club and it is understood that it needs support. This offer has been accepted and support will be arranged.

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.

Work with Oxford University College Rowing Clubs

A meeting was held on the 6th November with about twenty representatives of the College Boat Clubs to discuss Safety Management and Safety Leadership.

Further advice was given on an event risk assessment.

Work with Durham University College Rowing Clubs

A meeting was held on the 22th November with about thirty representatives of the University College Rowing Clubs to discuss Safety Management and Safety Leadership. There was also a request for information on a source of lights on rowing boats. See <https://sway.com/GG6lmSjnQumioSUo>

For further information on the scope of these courses, and for a copy of the synopsis please contact safety@britishrowing.org.

The legal requirement to wear lifejackets in gigs and similar boats.

There was an interesting debate following a tweet from Skerry Coastguard. This indicated that there was a legal requirement for everyone other than rowers in Olympic style boats to wear a lifejacket when afloat. The relevant regulation is the Pleasure Craft (Personal Flotation Devices and Operation) (Safety) Regulations 2005 (S.I. No. 921 of 2005), as amended by the Pleasure Craft (Personal Flotation Devices and Operation) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (S.I. No. 349 of 2012). These are requirements in the law of the Republic of Ireland and not in UK law. This is not new.

A search of the UK government legislation website for "Lifejacket", "Floatation" and "Float" in the titles of Statutory Instruments has revealed no relevant documents. The UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency has advice on the use of lifejackets at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303234/Lifejackets_save_lives.pdf. This is short and simple, there is no mention of rowing.

The Irish law does not appear to be based on an EU Directive. If it was then the UK government would be required to legislate to put something like this into effect in the UK.

Ocean Rowing

A meeting was recently 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. However, Ocean Rowing is not part of British Rowing's core market and there is no requirement on BR to implement the recommendations in the report.

The HRSA suggested that advice to rowers on Ocean Rowing safety could be incorporated into RowSafe. The next version of RowSafe, to be published in April 2018, could include an additional section in a chapter to be re-named Rowing on the Sea (currently "Coastal Rowing"). This would contain advice to rowers who are considering participating in ocean rowing, defining the safety equipment, training and procedures they should require. This would then generate pressure on the organisers to provide these. This advice could be further developed in future annual updates of RowSafe.

It was generally agreed that such a development would be very welcome.

Safety Audit

A Regional Rowing Safety Adviser wrote to ask about how to respond to the Safety Audit of a club that has stated that it will not report incidents and then stated in the Safety Audit that it does. The RRSA was advised not to approve the Safety Audit.

The behaviour of a coach on a public towpath

An e-mail was recently received that contained the following information:-

My wife and I were walking along the towpath in (location supplied) last Saturday and passed your rowing competition that was taking place just below xxxx bridge where my wife has suffered a cracked rib and severe bruising to her arm after being hit by a bicycle ridden at speed and with a total lack of care by one of the rowing coaches attending the event. At the time the towpath was extremely crowded with pedestrians, spectators, children and dogs and in my opinion these coaches/cyclists should have been stopped from riding by the organisers.

After the accident, this coach shouted at my wife, got back on his bicycle and rode off at speed, once again showing absolutely no consideration for the safety of other bystanders or pedestrians he again was riding through.

This incident was discussed with the organisers of the event who state that the incident took place on a Public Right of Way and they feel that they have no power to prevent cyclists from using this path. Their guidance to competitors states:-

The towpath is a Public Right of Way. Always take care and be courteous to spectators, dog walkers and children in particular. Cyclists should walk their bikes through the boating area.

It has been suggested to the event organisers that they strengthen their advice to competitors and consider applying to the Local Authority for a temporary order making it illegal to cycle through specific areas that are likely to be congested on the day of future events.

Events where similar incidents could occur are recommended include this risk in their risk assessment. They should consider taking steps to prevent a reoccurrence as events of this type can cause harm to people and to the reputation of rowing.

A sympathetic reply was sent to the person who complained, this expressed concern for the welfare of his wife and expressed my view that this coach's behaviour fell a long way below the standard that we normally expect of rowing coaches. It should be noted that "Causing bodily harm by wanton or furious driving" is an offence under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and does apply to cyclists on public footpaths. Cyclists can also be held liable, in civil law, for any harm that they cause.

Dealing with a person with Diabetes

There has been some discussion, following an enquiry about a risk assessment, about how to deal with a person with diabetes. The following is based on guidance provided by the Honorary Medical Adviser.

Diabetes is a relatively common disease nowadays and the emphasis from Diabetes UK and similar bodies is on patient self-management. Hypoglycaemia is a risk but those with diabetes are taught to recognise the early signs and symptoms and to manage them - each patient is different but the vast majority seem to do this with little effect on their daily life.

For those who do not recognise the symptoms or frequently ignore them - the advice is that they should be referred back to their Diabetic supervisor (doctor or nurse) for careful review, monitoring, education and possible change in their life style and treatment. Although I am concerned about an individual's ability to row or control a launch, there are much wider social considerations around regular life style, driving and the operation of heavy or dangerous machinery.

The procedure described in the document (supplied by a club) is not practical and the club would frighten people away from rowing. I also believe that if we implemented this policy across BR we would be challenged as to our right to discriminate against individuals with diabetes, especially when they were pronounced fit to drive and carry out normal daily activities by their doctor or diabetic clinician. We certainly cannot lay down levels of blood sugar (would we even know if the glucometer used was calibrated properly) and we have no right to dictate upper levels - blood sugar levels may peak after a recent meal. Furthermore a single blood sugar reading is only a window on the current level and sugar levels can change rapidly (in minutes).

I therefore maintain that, despite the risk, individuals must be responsible for their own diabetic management and be honest about their hypoglycaemia symptoms and signs. They should be carefully and sympathetically made aware of the risks to themselves and others and should self-declare if they are having difficulty managing their sugar levels, especially if they are having frequent hypo incidents. In the case of the latter they should voluntarily withdraw from rowing activities until they have sorted themselves out.

In the case of the coach recently who had two hypo episodes - he should be withdrawn from his role, referred for medical advice and should not be allowed to take a position of responsibility until he has demonstrated that he has regulated his sugar control and can recognise his hypoglycaemic symptoms.

I will raise this at the Medical Advisory Panel meeting in a few week time but I am reluctant to present them with this document as I believe that it will not serve a useful purpose.

Finally, the First Aid Task Force of the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (I am the Co-Chair) is about to undertake a formal scientific review of the First Aid management of hypoglycaemia - methods of glucose administration which will be published as a scientific document and an international treatment recommendation next summer. It may be advisable to defer this question until then.

Other Advice

The following requests for information were received.

- *My son has a bad blister, what sort of gloves are recommended?* The answer was most rowers do not wear gloves to protect their hands. Gloves may cushion the hands, and reduce the compression forces on the skin by spreading the pressure over a wider area. These are the forces perpendicular to the surface of the skin. However, gloves can increase the frictional forces on the skin (in the plane of the skin). Some rowers wear fairly close fitting cycling gloves and these may help. Try googling "gloves for rowers", there are all sorts of products available. The skin tends to harden on parts of rowers' palms and fingers and this problem often becomes less acute with time.
- *Please can you define "sufficient first aiders".* The answer appears in Appendix I.
- *An Umpire told one of my coxes in a bow loaded 4+ that he cannot use a buoyancy aid, was he correct to do so?* The answer is that the Umpire is correct. There are two ways of looking at this, the easiest is to review the rules of racing, these can be found at https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Rules-of-Racing_Final-7.3.17.pdf . Rule 7-2-7a states that "Coxes must wear a life jacket or buoyancy aid in the correct manner and be familiar with the method of operation. In "front-

loader” boats coxes must wear manually operated gas inflation life jackets”. It is clear from this that coxes in "bow loaded" 4+s are not allowed to wear either auto-inflation lifejackets or buoyancy aids but must wear a manual inflation lifejacket.

There is a logical reason why all coxes are required to wear lifejackets and coxes in bow loaders are required to wear manual-inflation lifejackets. Coxes are the masters of their vessels and it is important that they can continue to manage their crews if that vessel capsizes. It is easier to do this if they are supported by a lifejacket. The concern about an auto-inflation lifejackets in bow loaders is that if they inflate then simply by increasing their volume they can trap the cox in his prone position in the boat. This could have serious consequences if the boat has capsized. The concern about buoyancy aids is that if the boat is inverted then the positive buoyancy that it provides would tend to push the cox upwards into the inverted boat and make it difficult for him or her to extract him or her self from their position in the boat. In this case it is a buoyancy issue rather than an expansion and entrapment issue.

- *Should we fit a prop guard around the propeller of a coaching launch (several advantages and disadvantages were listed)?* The answer was, In addition to the disadvantages listed there is also the problem of prop guards reducing 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 was one incident when a person's leg was trapped in the prop guard and severely damaged, probably more so than it would have been had the prop guard not been fitted.
- *Can a 17 year old drive a launch and help out with coaching?* The answer was that we have considered the issues relating to young people driving launches and coaching, the advice is summarised in the recent Safety Alert. In effect, there are no problems driving a launch if accompanied by a mature and sensible adult but it would not be appropriate to drive alone when supporting rowers. The same applies to coaching. It is OK if accompanied by an adult but it is each club's responsibility to look after its young people and not put them in a position, and not let them put themselves in a position, where the safety and care of others depends on them.
- *Please can you tell me: what is the statutory significance of a 'Safety Alert'? Is it (for example) 'recommended best practice' (which carries some weight), or 'guidance only' (which can be ignored)?* The answer is summarised in Appendix 2.
- *Is it necessary to report simple capsizes?* The answer was yes, otherwise it would appear that all the reported incidents involve damage or injury.

Appendix I - Sufficient First Aiders

It is not possible to provide definite advice as it all depends on the location, the people and the activity. In other words it depends on your risk assessment.

The following will tend to increase the number of first aiders that you are likely to need:-

- situations where it could take some time for the first aider to reach the casualty (e.g. if the first aider is on the bank then think about having them not too far apart on the bank)
- rowers with known medical conditions
- rowers whose health status is not known
- the probability of multiple casualties (many boats afloat, or many water users active)
- adverse conditions (e.g. very hot or very cold)
- rowers who cannot look after themselves or each other (e.g. very young juniors)
- places where there are specific hazards (e.g. slippery launch areas or ice)
- a large number of people are present

Unfortunately, there is no short cut, your club or activity specific risk assessment should help you to determine the number of first aiders you need for each activity.

It may help to ensure that all your members are competent to do CPR. There is more information in the Staying Alive Safety Alert. .

The Honorary Medical Adviser agreed and added the following comment.

I think that the club is taking the wording literally and need to just think the process through. In simple terms there should be someone on the premises available during regular training who can call for emergency aid (call an ambulance), provide simple basic first aid and be able to perform basic life support. On busy rowing/training days or at club run regattas the number of first aiders should be increased proportionally to be able to deal with the numbers of athletes/officials/spectators.

In many cases it is not the numbers of first aiders but being able to identify them. Therefore there should a list of designated/trained first aiders on the club noticeboard and clear instructions as to what to do (how to call an ambulance, address of the club etc) if a designated first aider cannot be found.

First aid training is relatively expensive - the club may find that some of its members already have a First Aid at Work or Basic First Aid certificate which may save them money (or they may just need an update). As far as the level goes - the basic minimum is the one day Emergency First Aid at Work and this should be assessed against the club risk assessment. If required then the next stage is the three day First Aid at Work certificate (Maybe the club should have one First Aid Lead with a 3-day certificate covered by multiple 1-day emergency first aid providers).

Appendix 2 – The significance of Safety Alerts

I have not previously been asked about the legal significance of a Safety Alert and this is not a matter that I have considered. Advice from a National Governing Body, as this is, cannot be ignored but there is no requirement to comply. However, I think it should be regarded it as recommended best practice.

It could happen that if there was an incident in the middle of a waterway and one crew was difficult to see due to the colour of its kit and the other was wearing something more conspicuous then the judgement on who should pay damages to the other could hinge on the relative levels of conspicuity.

It may help to review the Rules of British Rowing (see <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Rules-of-British-Rowing-1.10.2016.pdf>). Section M is below:-

SECTION M - SAFETY

56 All Members and Registered Individuals shall organise, manage and carry out their activities in a safe and responsible manner with due regard for any guidance, or similar advice, issued by British Rowing or other safety advisory or regulatory bodies.

This may add weight to the contents of Safety Alerts and RowSafe.