

HRSA Monthly Report

April 2018

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.

There have been several reports of incidents involving narrow boats and other similar boats on canals. It is the time of year when many users of these craft start to use their boats for the first few times after the winter. Rowers are invited to take extra care.

RowSafe

The 2018 update was issued in early April, it can be found at <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Row-Safe-April-2018.pdf> .

Backstays

There has been some discussion about the update advising on the need for backstays on the forward port and starboard rigger on all boats, other than single sculls. It was explained that this is not new advice, it was published by British Rowing on 27th June 2013 (see <https://www.britishrowing.org/2013/06/a-safety-update-for-rowers-and-coaches/>). This announcement includes the following:-

"Backstay requirements

After a collision between two boats training at speed which resulted in serious injury the Rowing Safety Committee has issued the following advice;

"The forward port and starboard rigger on all boats, other than single sculls, should be protected by a backstay."

This advice will be issued as a RowSafe guidance document by the RSC."

All that has happened recently is that this advice has, somewhat belatedly, been incorporated into RowSafe. It has not been discussed with boat builders but there has been assurance from Neaves (see <https://www.neaves-rowing.com/>) and I was told that the vast majority of rowing boats are built to take backstays and fitting them should not be a problem. Neaves can supply riggers and backstays.

It is interesting to note that the Great Britain Rowing Team fit backstays to all riggers as they tend to reduce pin deflection and make the boat go faster.

There was a question about whether boats without backstays would be allowed to race, it was explained that this was a matter for umpires.

There was also a question about why this advice does not apply to 1xs. The answer was that single sculls were omitted because their rotational inertia about the vertical axis is quite low. In other words, if you are hit by the rigger of a 1x then the boat will tend to slew round and the impact force will be limited. This logic becomes less valid as boats get bigger. The other factor is that, in general, bigger boats go faster than smaller boats so the velocity at impact would tend to be greater for bigger boats. It was concluded that 2-s and 2xs should have backstays, this was the view of the National Rowing Safety Committee in 2013.

There was also a question as to whether this relates to all outings or just racing, it was confirmed that it applies to all outings including racing.

There was further question as to whether umpires had been informed of this change and it was confirmed that the Chairman of the National Umpires Committee had been informed about this specific update.

Cox's Blind Spot

There have been several head on collisions recently where the report claimed that the other crew were in the cox's blind spot. This is clearly not acceptable and, in some cases unlawful, as there is both a duty and an expectation that a good lookout is kept at all times. As a result the following guidance was included in the recent updates:-

- Coxes and steers shall keep a good lookout at all times when afloat. Coxes who cannot see directly ahead should enlist the help of members of their crew.

Indoor Rowing Technique

Another of the updates to RowSafe concerned the technique used by people on indoor rowing machines, this stated: -

- Coaches are expected to ensure, when indoor rowing, that the rowers adopt good posture and use the correct technique.

There was a comment from a rower that he often sees people on indoor rowing machines using poor technique. He was encouraged to raise this with his club committee.

This issue was discussed with the chairman of the National Coaching Committee and it was concluded that the issue here is not about defining the correct technique and having material available, it is about coaches not seeing this information and not training indoor rowers to use the correct technique and not correcting them when they see bad technique. This issue could be addressed by clearer communication to coaches. A Safety Alert has been prepared and is included with this note. Please share this with coaches.

Work with the Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA)

An article about the World Pilot Gig Championships in Gig Rower indicated that they had introduced a new rule requiring coxes to wear lifejackets or buoyancy aids in accordance with the advice in RowSafe. The following comment was made. *It is good to see that you have incorporated a rule for coxes wearing lifejackets. However, this is not consistent with RowSafe. There is no mention of buoyancy aids in RowSafe.*

At Lyme Regis Gig Club, the proposed Level I Coxing Course material has been reviewed and some new photos have been supplied. The club has added their local information and are planning to run the course in May or June. This material needs further work before it will be ready for more general use.

Work with British Canoeing

British Canoeing is currently reviewing its safety guidance and their Safety Adviser asked for information on the British Rowing approach to serious incidents. This information was provided.

Junior Inter-Regional Regatta

The safety plans and risk assessment were reviewed and feedback was provided.

Power 8 Sprints

A visit was made to Bristol on 24th April to view the course and discuss arrangements. A full risk assessment is being prepared; this will be limited to preparatory and on-water activities over which the organisers can have influence or control.

Defibrillators

There has been a request for information, from a Regional Rowing Safety Adviser, on the selection and use of defibrillators. This was passed to the Honorary Medical Adviser who provided valuable advice.

Defective Throw Lines

There has been a discussion with an Inspector from the of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. He was concerned that there may be a recurrence of this incident (as described in the March report). Following this discussion he was provided with information on the analysis of reported incidents and the guidance to Ocean Rowers published in RowSafe.

Umpires

There was a request from an umpire for information on the recent changes to RowSafe, this information was provided. This was followed by a request from the same umpire on any additional safety issues he could raise at his regional umpire's meeting, the following list was provided: -

- the need for coxes to wear lifejackets
- no buoyancy aids or automatic inflation lifejackets for coxes on bow loaders
- it helps if umpires scan the course ahead and look out for intruding boats, swimmers and other obstructions
- lightning and the 30:30 rule
- keep an eye on conditions and do not be afraid to suspend racing if it becomes unsafe
- report competitors not competent to compete

A copy of the Events section of RowSafe was also provided.

Kill Cords

There was a phone call from a coach who has a problem with some of his launch drivers being reluctant to wear kill cords correctly. He was sent copies of the Safety Alerts entitled "Safety Equipment can save your life" and "Launch driving" and it was suggested that he show these to his launch drivers. He replied to say that they were exactly what he needed. Copies of all Safety Alerts can be downloaded from <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/safety-alert-archive/> .

Lifejackets

Several clubs have reported problems with inflatable lifejackets failing safety checks because their bladders have been punctured by coxes' careless use of safety pins when affixing numbers. Even small punctures can act as stress concentrations and cause bladders to rupture and fail catastrophically as the pressure at inflation is high. Clubs were advised to take more care and avoid pinning numbers to lifejacket covers; it is acceptable to pin them to the straps.

It was also confirmed that the free lifejacket checks provided by the RNLI (see the Safety Alert entitled "Check your lifejacket") do not include an inflation check but that the RNLI are happy to visit inland clubs and events.

There has also been some discussion about the use of buoyancy aids rather than lifejackets, in relation to RowSafe. It was confirmed that lifejackets are preferred because, if correctly fitted, they will keep the wearers face clear of the water. Buoyancy aids are not mentioned in RowSafe but they are permitted under the Rules of Racing. This is a little confusing as the Rules of Racing also state that the guidance in RowSafe should be taken into account.

Other Advice

The following questions were received:

Q *Is there a standard to which persons should be qualified to drive a safety or coaching launch?*

A. The answer can be found in Chapter 5.2 of RowSafe (see <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Row-Safe-April-2018-Chp-5.pdf>) where it says, under Club expectations, "Ensure that everyone who is permitted to drive launches is competent and suitably qualified to do so. The level of qualification required will usually be determined by the Risk Assessment but, in most cases, RYA Level 2 Powerboat (with a Coastal Endorsement if used on coastal waters) should be sufficient." There are similar expectations in the section for Launch Drivers and Event Organisers.

Q *"Does the law impose any requirements on rowing clubs in relation to slips, trips and falls within their premises?"*

A **Yes**, the most relevant regulations are:-

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999; these require clubs to assess risks (including slip and trip risks) and, where necessary, take action to address them, and
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992; these require floors to be suitable, in good condition and free from obstructions. People should be able to move around safely.

These are referenced at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg225.pdf and this link is included in the relevant part of Club Hub.

Q Can you specify exactly what buoyancy bags are required if an eight has no built in buoyancy compartments please? We are racing in it on Saturday and we are told to fit it with buoyancy bags according to BR requirements

A This is regulated by FISA rather than by British Rowing. FISA rules require that a boat should be should provide sufficient inherent buoyancy, including that of its crew, that, when swamped, it will keep the crew afloat. Perhaps the easiest way to address this is to think of the buoyancy provided by lifejackets. A good lifejacket will provide 150 Newtons of positive buoyancy. An upward force of 150N will be obtained by holding a buoyancy bag containing 15 litres of air under water. As an 8 contains nine people, it would be appropriate if the combined volume of captive air was 1350 litres. Or, in simple terms, strap a 15 litre buoyancy bag, full of air, under each seat and ensure that the cox is wearing his lifejacket. It is important to ensure that the buoyancy bag is securely strapped to the boat. I have not included the buoyancy provided by the air contained under the bow and stern canvasses, think of this as your margin of safety.

The response was: We have installed buoyancy bags under all seats. These are large enough when inflated not to be able to come out of the hatches, as strapping them is impossible. Hope this satisfies the umpires.

Q How qualified you need to be in order to coach a session with either junior or other rowers alone. . I have my PB2 licence and first aid qualification as well as many DBS checks, would there be any British Rowing policies stopping me from coaching a club session as I do not have my level 2 coaching qualification.

A The simple answer is no, British Rowing has no requirements for coaches to be qualified. However, it is possible for clubs to require its coaches to be qualified, particularly if they are paid. I would suggest that you consider the Level 2 Club Coach or Session Coach course. Please let me know if you need more information about either of these courses, my wife, Andrea, is secretary of the National Coaching Committee and will be able to help you. (There was further correspondence about the various courses available.)

Q Thank you both (John Mulholland and me) for you clear guidance on being visible whilst on the water. Our club is trying to move towards the aim of at least one member of the crew wearing hi-vis kit. However, a quick review of British Rowing web-site and recent Rowing and Regatta magazines has no pictures of rowers in hi-vis clothing. Even the new RowSafe cover picture shows someone all in black! Could rowers wearing hi-vis be made more visible through the BR media to support Rowsafe guidance on wearing hi-vis in training on the water?

A So far, the RowSafe cover photo was chosen to show safe behaviour. I hope that we can use a new photo each year and that we can have one showing the use of hi-vis kit next year. I have copied this note to colleagues who will be interested in your suggestions and will discuss your ideas with them next time we meet.

Q I was just wondering if I could please have some advice on where I could get incident report books from for incidents to be reported internally? I am a CRSA and we are almost at the end of our current one. It is quite out of date and doesn't reflect the incident reports the information required for the BR online incident report forms, so if possible is there somewhere I could get one more similar to that form?

A Incident books are no longer available. All incidents should be reported on the British Rowing Incident Reporting System at <https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org/>. The system is open to anyone you do not have to be a BR member. As Club Rowing Safety Adviser, you will receive copies of any reports submitted that show yours as the primary club.

You can also see a list of reports from your club and access any that you choose. Simply log into the Incident Reporting System and then click on "View previously submitted reports" and they will appear. It is also possible to download data for your club. Click on "Export" at the top of the reports page then select "your club" and specify the start and end dates. Then click on "Generate CSV". This will generate a comma separated variable file in excel, you can save this as a normal excel file.

Q Yesterday, we reviewed our approach to red boards for singles and pairs/doubles. It was pointed out that on the tideway, small boats go out regularly in conditions that would be regarded as unacceptable on the non-tidal Thames. I would be interested in your thoughts on the validity of this comparison. And do you have any data on incidents with small boats on the tideway when there is fast stream?

A People who row on the Tideway become familiar with it and learn how to handle the ebb and flood tides. Tideway clubs also operate strict rules and steers have to pass a test to show that they are competent. People who row in conditions that they are not used to, and have not learned to cope with, may put themselves at risk. We analyse lots of things but have not analysed incidents for the effects of high speed flows, sorry.

Q The BR insurers for club organised races makes reference to 'BR Water Safety Guidelines'. I have been able to find 'BR Water Safety Code' which has an ARA logo. Are these the same document? And has BR RowSafe superseded this old ARA document? Or do we have to follow both?

A I think that this confusion is due of a failure of the insurers to keep up to date with our guidance or, maybe, a failure of someone to tell them that the name and content has changed. My understanding is that all the previous versions have been withdrawn and are no longer valid. They have been replaced by RowSafe 2017 and this is about to be replaced by RowSafe 2018. (This was copied to a colleague who subsequently confirmed that the interpretation was correct and that she has asked our insurers to update their documents.)

Q *Where do you see alcohol use in rowing? There is a drinking culture with some members and they go out rowing and coxing after a couple of pints.*

A British Rowing does not have a general policy on alcohol in rowing. However, it is mentioned in the Code of Conduct (see <https://www.britishrowing.org/code-of-conduct/>), as follows: -

Coaches should promote rowing and health. Coaches should:

- avoid smoking, drinking or drug use before or whilst coaching, as this portrays a negative image and could affect the safety of participants in rowing.

and

Parents/carers should be a good role model at clubs competitions and events,

Parents/carers should:

- avoid smoking or consuming alcohol whilst supporting.

There is also advice relating to alcohol and young people. (see <https://www.britishrowing.org/upload/files/Association/Welfare/BritishRowingVG3.3.pdf>)

Drinking after rowing is not unusual particularly for casual rowers but I feel that drinking before rowing is not normal and should be discouraged.

There are issues about the master of a vessel being intoxicated and this could cause legal difficulties. This is taken from the RYA website at <http://www.rya.org.uk/knowledge-advice/current-affairs/Pages/alcohol-and-boating.aspx> .

Boaters may be prosecuted under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 if their actions on the water are seen to be endangering other vessels, structures or individuals and they are under the influence of alcohol.

Locally, most harbour authorities have harbour byelaws under which they can prosecute if boaters are found to be under the influence of alcohol when in charge of a vessel. The RYA encourages harbour authorities to enforce those rules.

I feel that drinking before rowing should be discouraged on safety grounds. It has not come to my attention before and I do not have a feeling for its prevalence, however, I doubt that it is a problem in many clubs.