



BRITISH ROWING

# HRSA Monthly Report

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT



## Confidentiality of Incident Reports

Last month I asked for opinions on the confidentiality of Incident Reports. There have been several similar suggestions that make the following points:-

- Why submit an Incident Report if it is confidential.
- The Airline industry and the National Health have a system whereby every incident that is reported is published for everybody to read but it is done anonymously so that the originator cannot be identified.
- Why can't BR do the same so that everybody could learn from other people's mishaps and errors.
- It would also mean that the people and clubs would be more than happy to submit their reports.

and

- The Civil Aviation Authority has the 'Mandatory Occurrence Reporting' (MOR) system. This requires the reporting of any incident which has, or could have, caused a risk to an aircraft and/or its occupants.
- The MOR system reports are submitted fully depersonalised in order to protect the identity of the reporter. Access to all reports was generally available within the industry with the originator's identity fully protected.
- It was recognised that the objective was to enhance safety, and not to seek retribution against someone who had erred.
- I can see no justification for 'hiding' rowing incident reports from general view so long as the reports are depersonalised.

My response made the following points:-

- The reason why the reports, as submitted, identify the reporter and the clubs and people involved is simply so that we can follow up and advise.
- I understand that the Mandatory Occurrence Reporting' (MOR) is similar to the UK Confidential Hazardous Incident Report Programme (CHIRP) and know that the Health Service has a similar system.
- The British Rowing Incident Reporting system is wholly voluntary. Nobody is required to report anything but many people do, I do not want to do anything to discourage them.
- We have about 200 incidents reported each month. I read all except simple capsizes and file about 5% as "to discuss" and then include the most noteworthy in the monthly report.
- Our reports, as submitted, are far from anonymous. They include information about the people reporting, the clubs involved and, often, the people involved. Personal information and information that identifies the location may appear anywhere in each report.

- Redacting confidential information from Incident Reports to produce versions that can be placed in the public domain would involve a considerable amount of work.
- This information is important to us and I do not want to do anything that would tend to discourage people from making reports.

This reply was well received and the responses were supportive. As a result, I intend to include more anonymised information from Incident Reports in each of these reports.

## Incident Reports

A cox was extremely upset when she thought that she had been sworn at by a person in another boat. Rowers should take care when addressing other rowers particularly if the circumstances are themselves stressful.

Following a head on collision the RRSA commented helpfully that “keeping a good lookout and being visible are very important when rowing in the dark. Good lights and light coloured clothing make a crew more visible, but looking around every five strokes is also important. Two boats approaching each other close 100 metres every five strokes; leaving it longer to check means that a boat can be invisible in the distance on one look, and too close to avoid a collision on the second look.” Thanks John, this is excellent advice.

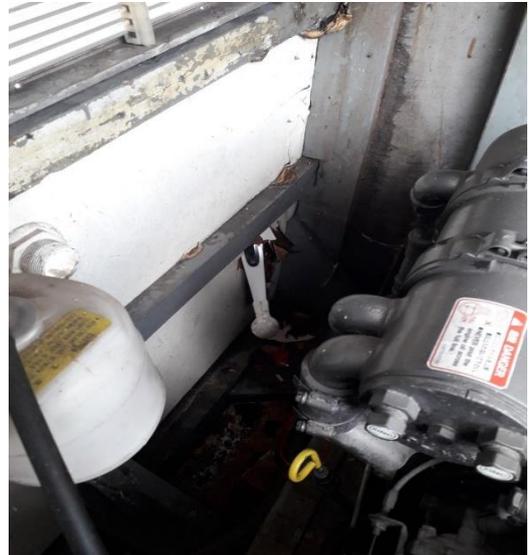
After a boat had “parked” after an outing, a rower tried to jump out to pull the boat in closer to the bank, as he did so the bows pushed away from the bank and the rower fell into the river. Please take care and await instructions from the cox.

There have been several “interactions” with canoeists on the water and in some cases the conversations that followed had an unfortunate tone. In general, canoeists share our enjoyment of being afloat and our love for moving efficiently across the water. Explanations of the issues facing both groups and advice on how we can co-exist in harmony are provided in “[Guidance to rowers and canoeists on shared water](#)”. This was issued jointly by British Rowing and British Canoeing in March 2017; a copy is included with this report. Further work with colleagues at British Canoeing is planned in the new year.

On a more positive note, in another incident a 1x had a collision with a 2x in the dark. The incident report contains the following:-

*All of a sudden there was a mighty crash and I was thrown out of the boat into the river. At that point I didn't know who had hit me. When I surfaced from the water I saw that it was a ladies double that had hit me (they went past me). I was too shocked and cold to be able to swim and hung onto the boat, the canoeists came to my rescue by holding me above the water and pushing my boat to the river bank. The canoeists assisted me to bail out the boat so I could row back to the club house and accompanied me and re-assured me (as I lost one of my lights in the collision).*

In a recent incident an 8 was manoeuvring around a motor boat at anchor. The 8 made contact with the hull at the side of the boat near the stern and penetrated the hull. Please note that the bow ball did not cushion the impact sufficiently to prevent this damage.



During marshalling for the first division of a recent head race, it was noticed by the safety marshals that one member of the crew was showing signs of exposure to cold. As the boat was brought to the bank it was clear all four crew members were suffering from the cold. They were then removed from the boat to the medical standby vehicle and volunteers' cars where dry clothing was provided. Although all were cold one was showing signs of hypothermia. She was then taken back to the boathouse where she was treated by the event medical team. She made a full recovery and was able to travel home with her club mates. The event was congratulated by its RRSA. Thanks Tim

A junior single sculler capsized whilst practicing omnium skill exercises (roll ups). The sculler was rescued by the launch crew who followed the correct safety procedures. It was difficult to recover the sculler from under the boat due to lack of heel restraints. This resulted in the sculler being under water for slightly longer than "preferable". As this was a private boat heel restraints were not sufficiently checked. In future, coaches will ensure athletes check boats before boating. It may help to review Section 7.1 of [RowSafe](#), the [Safety Alerts](#) on Heel Restraints and Boat Checking and the [British Rowing boat checking video](#).

When finishing a set of squats the junior rower was putting the bar back onto the rack. The bar slipped hitting the back of her head and back. There was advice on Head Injuries with last month's report, this advice appears not to have been followed.

At another club, a junior rower dropped 7.5kg weight on their finger when getting up from sit up crunches. The weight was being held with one hand whilst leaning on the other hand to push up and weight slid. This resulted in a fracture to a bone in that finger. Clubs and their members are advised to take more care when handling weights.

During a swim test one of the juniors could not complete the swim as she felt that the water was too cold. She hesitated to get in, but with gentle encouragement from me and her friend she swam. She swam out to halfway and then saw that the other side of the pool was very far away and went into a panic. The lifeguard jumped in and swam her to the side where she said she felt sick. She made her way to the changing room along with her friend. I saw her leave the swimming pool where she said that she was feeling better. In future the club will provide closer supervision after such an event and ensure that they are seen to their parents. Clubs should take care to ensure that people are not encouraged to do things that they are clearly not comfortable doing.

A rigger became detached from a boat causing it to capsize. The following photos were included in the report:-



It would appear that this was a wing rigger and that the fixings may have been overtightened. There is information on the correct fitting of wing riggers [here](#) .

There was an incident in which a sailing club safety boat was in collision with a 1x. This resulted in discussions between the two clubs and an agreement to coordinate outing times so that the time the sailing club and the rowing club are on the water together is minimised. The rowing club will use coxed boats at times when the sailing club is active.

There was an incident in which otherwise experienced rowers who were inexperienced on the tideway failed to look around frequently enough in fast flowing water and struck the black buoy at Putney. This shows that extra care is needed on the tideway and people who do not normally row there should ensure that they are briefed on the hazards. They should also be aware of [“Rowing on the Tideway”](#) the Code of Practice for Rowing on the Tidal Thames.

In a recent head race, J18 rowers were held in a marshalling area for over 90 minutes. The weather conditions were “Wet, Northerly wind. Temperature about 11 degrees”. The rowers became very cold and wet despite “being dressed in 4 layers including splash tops”. They were taken to a nearby rowing club to shower and put on dry clothing. One of the rowers asked if the marshal needed a phone number, but the marshal declined. The rowers were then transported some distance back to their embarkment area in a safety launch and again became cold and wet. Their coach was concerned because, having seen that the crew were not racing, he was unable to discover where the girls were and because the girls were exposed to the cold and wet in the safety launch after having warmed up. Events are advised to pay more attention to the welfare of their competitors.

## Work with the CPGA

Sixty three coaches from CPGA clubs attended a Coaches Forum at Plymouth on 21<sup>st</sup> October. We provided training on “Cox Training for Fixed Seat Rowing and Outing Safety” in which many safety issues were discussed.

Members of the RLNLI were invited to attend and check the lifejackets that the coaches were asked to bring. Thirty seven lifejackets were checked; 8 had no faults, 21 had minor issues but were still functional and 8 would not function as intended.

## Backstays

There has been some discussion on the need to fit backstays on the riggers on each side of the boat, nearest to the bow in all boats larger than 1xs. The logic is as follows.

The genesis of this advice comes from concern about a head on collision between two rowing boats in which the end of the rigger of one boat impacts on the back of a rower in the other boat. This has happened and caused significant injury. The backstay can spread the effect of the impact over a wider area and will also tend to push the rowers body away from the other boat. Conventional wing riggers can have the opposite effect. The bending of the backstay can also absorb some of the energy at impact.

It is worth noting that backstays are fitted to all GBRT boats. Backstays help to make the boat go faster (as well as being safer for the reasons described) because they reduce pin deflection in the drive phase of the stroke.

The advice on the fitting of backstays does not apply to single sculls. The force of the impact depends on impact velocity and many other parameters. One of these parameters is the [rotational moment of inertia](#) about the vertical axis through the centre of gravity of each boat.

At the instant of impact both boats will have zero rotational velocity but high rotational acceleration. If this is difficult to understand then think of a pendulum, when it stops at the end of its swing, its velocity is zero but its acceleration back towards the central, neutral position is at its highest.

The rotational moment of inertia for 1x is comparatively small because most of the mass is concentrated at the centre of gravity (the scullers body). However in a 2x, the moment of inertia is proportional to the mass of each rower multiplied by the square of the distance between them. This is considerably bigger than that for a 1x and the effect is even more pronounced in larger boats.

The advice on fitting backstays is based on real risk and sound science. It should not be disregarded lightly.

## **Fitness to compete**

A rower finished a Long Distance Race and her back went in to severe muscle spasm or similar. On reaching the rowing club steps she lay back in her boat and was in great pain and could not sit up or move. The competition first aiders attended immediately, as did club volunteers and the competition coordinator. The first aiders comforted her but were unable to get her to sit up or move. They could not lift her out and rang for paramedics to attend to administer pain relief. The ambulance service attended, but before they could act the rower's parents arrived and eventually lifted/assisted her out of the boat and onto a stretcher. She was carried to the clubhouse and after some time was able to relax, sit up and then stand up. Her parents confirmed this was a (severe) recurrence of an injury earlier in the week and took her home.

There is an issue about whether her club should have entered her into this race when they knew, or should have known, that she may not be fit to compete. There is guidance in RowSafe on this matter, it states:-

### **RowSafe 9.8 - Pre-existing Health Conditions and Low Levels of Fitness**

Everyone is expected to:

- Discuss any health and fitness concerns with the coach or club.
- Refrain from rowing if they are unwell or not sufficiently fit.
- Refrain from training if they feel unwell or if to do so would be unsafe.

Club Officers are expected to:

- Support rowers who feel that they are unfit or unwell.
- Ensure that no pressure is put on rowers who are unfit or unwell.

### **Section 8.6 – Coping with Illness and Diseases**

Everyone is expected to:

- If unwell then:
  - Refrain from training until they feel they have fully recovered.
  - Withdraw from competition.

Club Officers are expected to:

- Encourage members to refrain from training and competing when unwell.
- Avoid putting pressure on member to compete when unwell.

Clearly it is the responsibility of the club entering its members into an event to ensure that those members are fit and competent to compete in that event.

## Incident at the Scottish Schools Head

Information on this incident has kindly been shared and the report is included with this report. It appears that the shoes were positioned in such a way that they were immediately below a bar on the rigger (the report contains photos) and this made it difficult for the sculler to extract their feet following a capsized. This problem can be avoided by more cautious adjustment.

## Shouted Warnings

There was a request from British Canoeing on what canoeists should shout to rowers in order to help avoid collisions. The advice in the joint guidance to canoeists and rowers (that accompanies this report) is valid and the following further advice was provided.

The key words to shout to rowers is "LOOK AHEAD". Anything else may help but it is this that matters. "LOOK AHEAD" should be shouted as loudly as possible in the appropriate direction and repeated if there is no reaction. It works best if you take a breath between "LOOK" and "AHEAD".

Rowing can be quite noisy and rowers tend to be very focussed on what they are doing so it is not safe to rely on shouting and the shouts may have to be much louder and more frequent than one would expect.

When rowers look ahead they tend to do so on one side of the boat only, they should be able to see directly ahead but not much further round than that. If they are seen to look to the wrong side then you may have to shout something like "OTHER SIDE".

## Coxes with disabilities

There was a request for support for a cox who uses a wheelchair, the following advice was provided.

British Rowing does not have a specific safety policy relating to coxes with disabilities. There are expectations in section 6.2 of [RowSafe](#) on the safety of Adaptive Rowers, in this context "rowers" includes "coxes". We also have [Adaptive Rowing Safety Guidance for Adaptive Event Organisers](#) but this only relates to events.

The Rules of Racing and section 7.3 of RowSafe specify that coxes should wear lifejackets. This applies equally to coxes who use wheelchairs. Please remember that a cox in a bow loaded 4+ must wear a manual inflation lifejacket (not auto-inflation or a buoyancy aid).

There is a little information on transfer from wheelchair to boat towards the end of the [British Rowing Capsized Drill video](#) (starts at about 10:51). This contains some good general advice.

People who use wheelchairs do so for a whole range of different reasons and each needs their own specific consideration. It would be better to seek specific advice from someone with expertise in this field. This reply was copied to colleagues who may be able to provide that advice once you, or your cox, have briefed them on those specific needs.

## **Additional Buoyancy in a double**

There was a request for advice on fitting additional buoyancy under the seats of a double. The club was thinking of providing an additional 39kg of buoyance under each seat; the following advice was provided.

The physics is simple, each one litre of air in a buoyancy bag, when submerged, will give you 1kg of buoyancy. However, I think that you will struggle to secure a 40 litre buoyancy bag under each seat.

There are two ways to look at this, the first is to consider the space beneath each seat and what is the largest buoyancy bag that will fit into this space. The second is more complex and involves calculating the required additional buoyancy needed. The FISA buoyancy requirement is on page 60 of the [FISA rules](#) where it says:-

*“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 5 cm below the static waterline”*

I would suggest that you adopt the first approach, but please also ensure that the sealed volume of air at both ends of the boat is well sealed with all bungs fitted and all hatches properly in place.

## **Drone Guidance**

The following additions to the Drone guidance were reviewed feedback was provided indicating that this would be useful information for Event Organisers.

- Check the drone operator's permission level prior to their arrival on site with the CAA
- Read the drone operator's manual and ensure that you are aware of their procedures before they arrive on site
- Check that the flight plan matches that identified in the manual once the operator arrives on site
- Before giving permission to fly, check that they have set up their take off zone correctly and in accordance with their manual
- Check that they have the correct aircraft and crew in place as identified in the flight manual for the event