

Water Safety Guidelines & Responsibilities

The Coach

- ? The coach is not only concerned to coach crews, but has an underlying responsibility for their safety whilst in his/her charge.
- ? Before beginning any coaching session, water or land based, the coach must go through a risk assessment process relevant to the activity proposed. The assessment must take into account the ages, abilities and limitations of the athletes involved, together with the water and weather conditions prevailing or facilities available, so that a Safety Plan can be prepared and the programme of activity adjusted to suit. The coach shall ensure that every athlete in their charge is aware of, and understands the Safety Plan for the activity being undertaken.
- ? The coach shall ensure that the whole crew, including the coxswain is suitably dressed and adequately protected for the weather conditions (*hot or cold*) that they are likely to encounter.
- ? Athletes and their coaches must be aware of their capabilities and limitations, and the limitations of their equipment, and exercise within those restraints, particularly where adverse weather and water conditions may be encountered, or when training on unfamiliar waters, both at home and abroad.
- ? Where coaching is carried out from a launch, the coach, the launch driver and any other passengers, shall wear approved lifejackets or buoyancy aids at all times.
- ? Coaching launches and safety boats shall carry equipment and safety aids as specified (see responsibility of launch drivers)
- ? Outboard motors must be fitted with "kill cords" and these must be connected during outings.
- ? In all activities, maintain a good look out for your own safety and that of those around you.
- ? The ratio of athletes to coaches in attendance is not specified as no two situations are the same.
- ? Clothing suitable for prevailing weather conditions must be worn.

Launch Drivers

- ? Launches are often used for coaching, marshalling and rescue purposes. Drivers and other occupants of the craft shall wear approved lifejackets or buoyancy aids.
- ? It is recommended that drivers undergo a course in boat handling skills such as those offered by the Royal Yachting Association. (*RYA Level II*)
- ? For whatever purpose they are employed, launches must carry in addition to a fully stocked First Aid kit, the following equipment and safety aids:-
 - a) A bailer and
 - b) A sound signalling device (*capable of attracting attention over a distance of 200 metres*).
 - c) Simple handholds fixed to the side of the launch to provide assistance to any person being rescued and provide self help should the driver fall overboard.
 - d) A sharp knife with carrying sheath.
 - e) A paddle.
 - f) An anchor and line appropriate to local conditions.
 - g) Engine cut-out lanyard device. (*kill-cord*)
 - h) A proprietary "throw line" or a "grab line" (*min 15 metres*) with a large knot tied in one end to assist throwing.
 - i) Life rings and approved lifejackets or buoyancy aids.
 - j) Thermal blankets.

Launch Driver - Guidelines for Rescue

These guidelines are intended as an aide-memoire for those launch drivers that have passed their RYA Level 2 Powerboat Handling Course and, for those who have yet to take it, as an introduction to some of the principles of safety provision using powered launches.

By accepting the role of rescue launch driver, you are taking on responsibilities towards others and for your own benefit you must ensure that you are well trained, well practised and up to date with the current rescue techniques.

As the range of different river, lake, float and canal circumstances are so varied within any region, a single set of rules would not be helpful. Therefore management principles and good practice, collected from experienced RYA launch drivers, are given and should be applied as deemed appropriate within your specific requirements.

Aims

The primary aim of all rescue launch drivers is the safety of all river users, within their area of responsibility, for the duration of the Regatta, Processional Race or other Club activity.

If the launch is being used in secondary duties, such as any umpiring, marshalling or coaching tasks, then these tasks must give way to this primary aim of safety should the need arise. Launch drivers must not forget the responsibility for their own safety whilst performing these duties.

Objectives

The objectives of all rescue launch drivers are to:-

- ? To provide rescue facilities to Regattas, Processional Races, events and other Club activities.
- ? To recover capsized athletes without worsening their condition.
- ? To quickly and safely get any injured rowers to medical attention (or vice versa)
- ? Not become a victim him/herself.

The launch drivers should be:-

- ? Relevantly trained in boat handling, resuscitation and First Aid
- ? Up to date in knowledge and skill - The launch driver should ideally hold RYA Level 2 Powerboat Handling Certificate, and boat handling skills and rescue techniques should be practised regularly.
- ? In addition, as the rescue boat may well be the first craft on the scene of an accident, the driver should hold a recognised First Aid Certificate
- ? The driver, and all crew members, must wear a lifejacket or buoyancy aid while afloat.

Launches- The launches should be:-

- ? Stable.
- ? Quick and manoeuvrable.
- ? Designed so as not to create an excess wash.
- ? Have adequate capacity to be capable of carrying injured athletes back to the boathouse quickly and safely.
- ? Properly equipped.
- ? Well maintained.

Launches powered by outboard engines, must be fitted with a "kill-cord" so that the engine is disabled if driver and boat part company unexpectedly.

General Points

Due to wind and engine noises, trying to shout from a moving powerboat is not very successful. Get in close, stop and speak clearly.

Choose the right clothing for the prevailing weather conditions and bear in mind the length of time afloat the possible need for one crew member to enter the water, inactivity for long periods in cold weather and the need for agility when moving about the boat.

Hot drinks on cold days, and vice versa, will maintain the efficiency of the crew.

Boat handling skills should be second nature so that you can concentrate on the task of rescue without having to think about how you are going to get the boat into the right position.

When manoeuvring outboard powered boats in close quarters make sure that the correct helm is applied before engaging forward and reverse gear.

Look in the direction of travel and check the way is clear.

Recovering from the water

When a rower needs to be recovered from the water, the following precautions must be observed:-

? The only time high-speed manoeuvres should be used is when making the approach to the scene of trouble or when taking injured rowers back to the landing stage.

? Any high-speed approach to the scene must make allowance for the safety of other river users.

Use the klaxon or audible warning device to alert other craft. Give way if need be.

? The final approach to the rower in the water must be made carefully and at low speed, in order to weigh up the situation and to avoid alarming the person in the water.

? On approach provide buoyancy aid (*life-ring or similar*) to person in the water.

? Talk to the person in the water. Make sure they understand what you intend to do and what you want them to do.

? Approach from downstream/downwind, as appropriate, in order to maintain control over speed and steering.

? When bringing the rower aboard, the engine must be turned off so that no injury can be inflicted by the propeller blades. Leaving the gear lever in neutral is not enough as it is easy to knock it whilst attempting to get the rower on board. If the speed of the current or other hazards make this precaution dangerous, then use the anchor to hold the launch in position.

? Should the rower require urgent First Aid treatment this should be applied before moving off.

Where there are several rowers in the water, priority should be give to any injured or younger rowers.

Checklist - Before going afloat check:-

- ? Personal and boat buoyancy
- ? Alternative means of propulsion
- ? Anchor, chain and warp
- ? Bucket, bailer and bilge pump
- ? Fuel, including reserve tank
- ? First Aid kit
- ? Engine emergency spares
- ? Fire extinguisher
- ? Car and trailer are properly parked

When afloat:-

- ? Keep a good look out at all times
- ? Don't overload your boat
- ? Obey speed limits
- ? Keep to the right in rivers/narrow channels
- ? When crossing a channel, cross quickly at right angles
- ? Keep clear of swimmers, fishermen, canoeists, dinghy sailors and windsurfers
- ? Think how your wash will affect others
- ? Look out for deteriorating weather conditions

Coxwains

Any person steering a boat is responsible for the crew in their charge. Steering a boat is a highly responsible role. **Steersmen must:-**

- ? Maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.
- ? Learn and use simple and concise commands for boat control both off and on the water. Be able to use them correctly, clearly and instructively.
- ? Understand and observe local navigation rules, and audible and visual signals given by others with whom the water is shared. (see basic sound signals below)
- ? When visiting unfamiliar water, take particular care to learn of local hazards, weather peculiarities, and local rules of navigation.
- ? Be conversant with safety and rescue arrangements available in the case of accident.
- ? Recognise and respect the rights and needs of other water users, especially anglers.
- ? Watch out for swimmers at all times and be alert to unexpected floating objects.
- ? Know and have practised accident and man-overboard drills.
- ? Coxswains shall wear an approved lifejacket or buoyancy aid when on the water, both in training and in competition. Inflatable lifejackets must not be worn under other garments. In "front-loader" boats, the lifejacket/buoyancy aid must allow easy and unrestricted escape from the boat. Coxswains must fully understand and be practised in the operation of their lifejacket/buoyancy aid.
- ? Coxswains shall be able to satisfy their Safety Adviser and coach that they are in good health with adequate vision and sound hearing. Where prior evidence of epileptic fits or blackouts exists, coaches and crews must seek medical advice and be made fully aware of actions to be taken should an incident arise.
- ? Coxswains should wear clothing suitable for the weather conditions. Particular care should be taken to ensure warmth around the head, neck and lower back, wrists and ankles. Water resistant outer gloves are recommended but bulky and heavy clothing and "Wellington" type boots which hinder movement, are to be avoided.
- ? Be aware of the dangers and symptoms of 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, deadweight must not be attached to or carried in the clothing of the coxswain.

Basic Sound Signals for Navigation

The International Regulations for Preventing Accidents at Sea lay down a series of sound signals to be used by the Masters of craft when about to change direction, there are also light and other signs used to indicate temporary or other hazards in the navigation channels.

Set out below, with their meanings, is a selection of those signs and signals most likely to be encountered by rowers and scullers

Sound Signals

One short blast - I am altering my course to **Starboard**

Two short blasts - I am altering my course to **Port**

Three short blasts - My engines are going **Astern**

Five short blasts - **I am doubtful if you are taking sufficient avoiding action**

There are other signals and for more information, reference should be made to more extensive literature on the subject.

Bridge signals

1. When an arch or span of a bridge is closed to navigation the following signals will be suspended from the centre of the arch.

By night - 3 red lights in an equilateral triangular configuration.

By day - 3 red discs in place of the lights, each 0.6 metres in diameter.

2. When the headroom of an arch or span is reduced, but still open to traffic, the following signals shall be suspended from the centre of that arch.

By night - 1 white light

By day - a bundle of straw large enough to be easily visible

The Athlete/Participant

Individuals participating in any activity on the water must accept responsibility for their own actions.

- ? All persons participating in rowing or sculling, including coxswains, must be able to swim. A standard is referred to in para. 2.5.2.2.
- ? An ability to swim 50 metres in light clothing and to demonstrate within that test competence underwater, in treading water, and in swimming on front and back, is considered a minimum requirement. If a person cannot meet the requirements of the swimming test for physical or other reasons, an approved lifejacket or buoyancy aid must be worn when in a boat. In case of accident, stay with your boat rather than attempt to swim to safety. Your boat, unless seriously damaged, is your liferaft.
- ? Possession of good health before undertaking strenuous exercise is essential and the Safety Adviser and coaches must satisfy themselves in this respect. Where any concerns exist, medical advice must be sought.
- ? Physically challenged athletes participating in rowing and sculling activities must be accompanied. Suitable rescue and first aid facilities to cope with any accident must be provided.
- ? Coaches should be aware of and take full account of the athletes' capabilities and limitations, and of the limitations of their equipment, particularly where adverse weather and water conditions may be encountered or when training on unfamiliar water, both at home and abroad.
- ? In all activities, maintain a good look out for your own safety and that of those around you.
- ? Rowing or sculling in the dark, or in poor light, is dangerous and not to be encouraged
- ? It is recommended that all active members, particularly junior members should learn and practice capsize and accident drills.

Trailer drivers

The Club Safety Adviser is to ensure that all members who transport boats either on cars 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 using the points listed below as a guide.

- ? Check that adequate insurance cover is 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 available copies of the ARA publication 'THE TOWING OF BOAT TRAILERS' as a reference document and that all drivers are issued with a copy, together with the 'ARA TRAILER DRIVERS HANDBOOK'. (See ARA web-site and Coaching Award scheme).
- ? Ensure that a photocopy of the diagram on Load Projection is displayed in the boathouse.
- ? Check that the trailer has been lubricated and serviced in accordance with manufacturers recommendation regularly and that the tyres are in good condition, including the spare.
- ? Ensure there are adequate ties and rear projection markers available.
- ? Check that drivers are aware of the maximum load to be carried on the trailer together with the maximum load to be towed by their towing vehicle.
- ? Check that in the event of a rear projection in excess of 1.00m there is an extra rear light available for use during the hours of darkness.
- ? Check availability of nose weight measuring facility.

Equipment

- ? All equipment used for rowing, sculling and coaching needs to be properly and regularly maintained to ensure that it is safe and adequate for its intended purpose and to ensure that it does not expose its users to danger.
- ? All new boats constructed after 1st April, 2003 must carry a plate indicating the maximum average crew weight the boat can carry and support seated in the event of being swamped. A club or individual purchasing a new boat must ask the manufacturer to supply this information.

Attention must also be paid to the following:-

- ? Boats and equipment should be stored in an orderly fashion, in well lit premises where possible, in such a way as to minimise damage to persons or equipment.
- ? Before any outing is undertaken, equipment should be checked to ensure that it is in safe condition and in working order. The following is a basic check list
 - a) Check for hull damage, leaks etc.,
 - b) Check that buoyancy compartments, seals, hatch covers and ventilation bungs are secure and watertight.
 - c) Check that the bow ball is securely fixed and fully covers the bow of the boat in order that adequate protection is given to any person or object struck by the moving boat. This check should also examine any fixing screws or bolts to ensure that they do not represent a further hazard in the event of accident.
 - d) Check that outriggers, swivels, gates, seats and stretchers are secure and operating freely. (*In difficult water conditions are "splash boards" available and fitted?*)
 - e) Check that heel restraints are secure and that restraints are adequate and effective, i.e., heels are positively restrained not to rise above the fixed point of the shoe.
 - f) Check that rudder lines, steering mechanisms, rudder and fin, are secure and in good working order.
 - g) Check oars and sculls for damage and ensure that "buttons" are secure and properly set.
 - h) Where "shoes" are fitted in the boat, check that the laces are adequate for their purpose. Check also, when tied, that they are not too tight, thereby immobilising the feet. Check also the condition of shoes and their fixing. Where "Velcro" straps are fitted, check for wear and replace regularly.
 - i) If, after risk assessment for a planned activity, it is judged that a boat, new or old, does not have sufficient inherent buoyancy, additional buoyancy should be added.

Safety at Regattas and other organised water events

It is the primary duty of every Race Official to care for the safety of competitors, officials, other water users and the public at large.

All Regattas, processional and other affiliated events held under the Rules of the ARA, shall appoint a Safety Adviser to their Organising Committee. The duties of the Safety Adviser will be to:-

- ? advise on the observance of the Code
- ? carry out such risk assessments for the event as may be necessary
- ? prepare for distribution to officials and competitors, a Safety Plan setting out the procedures to be followed by competitors and officials in the case of accident and emergency and monitor its observance
- ? be responsible for ensuring that First Aid is readily available and that medical support is accessible to the regatta unless a separate Medical Adviser has been appointed
- ? No regatta, processional race or other affiliated event shall take place without full and prior consultation between the organisers, the river or harbour authority as is appropriate, the police, ambulance services, life-saving and first aid organisations, so as to ensure that adequate safety measures are in place.
- ? Where a Medical Adviser has been appointed, he/she shall be responsible for ensuring that medical support is accessible in the manner set out below.
- ? Adequate means of rescue shall be provided. Where safety boats are employed, they must be suitable for the task, be properly equipped and be crewed by persons trained in boat handling and rescue techniques. Provision for rescue shall be available throughout the event and during periods of authorised practice.
- ? The racing course shall, wherever possible, be marked with clearly visible buoys. Any navigation channel required for other waterway users must be similarly marked, as required and agreed with local navigation or similar authority. Notices warning other water users of the event and advising the actions expected of them, should be prominently displayed.
- ? As a part of the Safety Plan, a diagram of the course and its immediate surroundings showing local hazards, traffic rules, launching and embarkation areas shall be prepared and circulated to competitors and officials. Important telephone numbers and the location of emergency, telephone, and First Aid facilities should also be prominently displayed.
- ? The Safety Adviser shall have, and exercise, the authority to advise the suspension of racing, or practice activity should he/she believe the conditions unsafe for whatever reason.+-