

Safety Notes for NRC AGM 2009

Introduction

The region's safety record has been spoilt by several collisions, one of which was serious. With the increasing numbers taking up our sport, we must concentrate harder on avoiding each other. Otherwise, our safety record has been good.

Safety Audits and Club Incident Report Summaries

Once again, we achieved 100% completion of the audits within the deadline. Audits for 2010 are due by the end of next month; please try to get them to me early in December. Schools and Colleges, please send them to me before you break up for Christmas. Clubs that do not submit their audit form with their annual ARA affiliation documents will not be affiliated. Incident reporting is now on-line through the British Rowing website, so Summary Reports should be generated automatically.

Club Water Safety Advisors

All clubs (especially universities and colleges) who have changed their safety advisors; please let me and Ken Hastie know so that we can update our records. Every club must have an advisor, but he or she can hold another position in the club, and does not have to be a member of the club committee.

Club Development Conference

The Club Development Conference on 17th January will include some safety instruction. If you want a particular aspect covered, please let me know a.s.a.p.

Watermanship

All novice rowers of any age should be taught the basics of watermanship as early as possible. They should be taught to steer and stop as well as to go. They should be taught the effects of wind, stream and tide on their boat. They are unlikely to be safe if they do not know where to go or how to get there. Also, they will not enjoy racing if they are disqualified for being unable to get onto a stake boat in the required time before a race.

Perennial Problems

All of the points listed below were in last year's report and are still relevant.

Condition of Boats

Many of the boats presented to Control Commission at regattas and heads are poorly maintained to the point of being a danger to their crews and to other river users. It is the crew's responsibility to ensure that their boat is fit for purpose; it should be checked before every outing. It is the Club's responsibility to ensure that its members know how to check and maintain a boat to a safe standard. Control Commission Umpires may record names of erring clubs on Incident Reports to allow failing clubs to be identified.

Bow Balls

Bow balls must be firmly fitted, not be perished and not be split. The use of tape to

reinforce them leads to suspicion on the part of Control Commission that they are bodged. The bow itself must be sound; the ball is useless if several inches of the bow come off on impact leaving a jagged edge to fillet the approaching sculler.

Heel Restraints

Heel restraints must be strong and not too long; the heel should not rise more than 50mm (certainly no higher than the fixed mounting of the shoe) and the restraint must be able to resist a firm tug (which you will give it if you capsizes). A new lace from a hiking boot would be acceptable as a temporary repair, but it may rot over time, especially in salt water e.g. the Tyne. The best material is 3mm – 4mm braided nylon cord. The two heels must be independently restrained; not looped around the central bar of the stretcher.

Hatch Covers

Hatch covers must be present and have seals around them to make them watertight.

Other fittings

The hull and decks must not have damage which could let water in. There should be no exposed sharp edges (metal, carbon-fibre or glass-fibre) on the hull, the fin or the riggers.

Lights

All boats must be adequately lit at night. On tidal waters, rowing boats must show a white light visible from all directions. Coaching launches are subject to the normal lighting rules for boats at night. The River Wear at Durham has separate rules. Be aware that rechargeable batteries go from bright to dim very quickly as they run out (alkaline batteries dim more slowly).

Clothing

Wear appropriate clothing for the outing. Umpires will not allow you to boat for the Rutherford Head if you do not have appropriate clothing for sitting around for an hour or so in the prevailing weather (usually cold and wet!).

Safety Equipment

Safety equipment is not much use if it is not in good condition and available when needed. In the audit you tell me what safety equipment, e.g. life jackets and throw lines, you have; while you are counting it, please take a few minutes to check that it is all serviceable and ensure that people are trained to use it properly.

Conclusion

Rowing safely is just a matter of learning the basics and putting them into practice every time you go out.

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