

Safety Report for NRC AGM November 2017

Heel Restraints

It has been decided to return to the previous measurement of heel restraints so, from 1st April 2018, heel restraints may allow the heel to lift to the horizontal. I still strongly recommend that heel restraints should be no longer than 70mm, and preferably less than 50mm. We had an incident where a Northern Region double capsized at York Regatta. Three heel restraints were less than 70mm long and those feet released with no problem, the fourth allowed the heel to be lifted to the horizontal and the sculler's foot did not release. If they hadn't been close to the bank, it might have had far more serious consequences; it certainly worried the sculler with his head under water and one of his feet trapped above him.

The change has been made because a few elite athletes with very large feet have complained about the existing rule. As far as I know, no clubs have complained. I am 64, have size 11 feet and less than perfect flexibility, but I can row comfortably with heel restraints set at 50mm. I have noticed that some boats have the stretcher set to a very steep angle, usually because the angle adjustment bolts have become loose; it is better to set the stretcher to the correct angle than to compensate by using dangerously long heel restraints.

It is also important to ensure that the shoes are in good condition. If the sole of the shoe is not properly screwed to the stretcher and comes apart, the only attachment of the shoe is the heel restraint and that is also very dangerous.

Club Audits

This year's audit had to be completed in time for me to review it by 30th November. So far, all but four clubs in this region have completed their audits. The system made it possible to enter incorrect data in a key field; those clubs have been given a link to correct their audits. I will discuss the audits with clubs at the Club Development Conference on 28th January.

Incident Reporting

Only half the region's clubs have reported any incidents. That is unlikely to reflect reality! Please report any incidents as soon as they happen. If you do not report an incident, it may affect your ability to make an insurance claim for injury or damage.

Number of incidents reported in the region; Oct 2016 – Oct 2017 = 168

Number of incidents reported in the region; Oct 2015 – Oct 2016 = 111

Number of incidents reported in the region; Oct 2014 – Oct 2015 = 131

Number of incidents reported in the region; Oct 2013 – Oct 2014 = 134

Collisions

The most commonly reported incidents, after simple capsizes (84), were collisions (37). Collisions were also the main cause of injuries and they are avoidable if crews follow the rules of the river and keep a good lookout. All crews should look around approximately every five strokes to ensure that there is nothing in their way. Also, if a crew is approaching you, shout a warning; don't just sit quietly waiting to be hit.

Regional Danger Spots

There are a few locations around the region that appear in several incident reports. The worst appears to be the shallows just downstream of Durham ARC, with several crews being hit as they go wide to avoid the shallows while other crews cut the corner opposite the shallows. Another is the River Tyne between Tyne ARC and Tyne United; the problem is usually pulling away from the steps without looking for crews coming past, and crews attempting high-speed pieces through that area without regard for novices, who are not very manoeuvrable.

Event Paperwork

Over the last year we have been trying to bring the paperwork for events up to the standard of the best. While my priority is to ensure safe racing at events, I would like to see all events producing risk assessments that address all safety issues at their events, and producing clear instructions for competitors, officials and volunteers.

Lights

I have recently found on the internet a very simple and cheap way of making effective boat lights. See: <https://sway.com/GG6lmSjnQumioSUo>

Boat Maintenance

Clubs and crews are responsible for the maintenance of their boats. Bow balls, heel restraints, hatch covers etc. should be checked before each outing, whether training or racing. Umpires at events simply ensure that boats comply with the Rules of Racing; they are not responsible for a crew's boat maintenance.

If you want further information on any of the above, please contact me.

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