



BRITISHROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Lightning can kill

A 19 year old coach was killed and a 14 year old junior rower was injured when they were struck by lightning when sheltering under a tree in a thunderstorm. This tragedy occurred in January 2019 at Germiston, South Africa. According to Rowing South Africa:-

“The regatta had closed for the day, a group of athletes together with their coach started to walk back to their hotel which was close to Germiston Lake. While walking, a very severe storm struck the area and the group sought shelter under a tree. Tragically, lightning struck the tree, fatally injuring the coach and injuring the athlete.”

There is more information [here](#) and [here](#), and a news report video [here](#).

There were two Incident Reports in August in which rowers were reported to be on the water during a lightning storm. In both cases the clubs have procedures that restrict rowing in these conditions but these appear to have been forgotten or neglected by the rowers.

One report stated that the rowers “went out after the storm had started and remained out as the storm intensified to six seconds between thunder and lightning”. A subsequent comment stated that they hid under a bridge.

In the other report the weather was described as being thunder and lightning and the crew was pushing off from the pontoon.

A Safety Alert on Lightning has been published and is included with this report. It contains the following:-

“Rowers are particularly vulnerable as they are often in wide open spaces where they are the highest thing around.

- *If you are on water, get into shelter as quickly as possible; water will transmit strikes from further away. Proximity to water is a common factor in lightning strikes.*
- *Find shelter inside a large building or a motor vehicle. The inside of a car is safe as lightning will spread over the metal of the vehicle before earthing through the tyres.*
- *Do not shelter beneath tall or isolated trees, one in four people struck by lightning are sheltering under trees. “*

Please take care to ensure that crews understand the necessary precautions and [the 30/30 rule](#), and act to keep themselves safe.

Following the issue of the Safety Alert, somebody wrote to ask whether it would be advisable to shelter on the water under a large metal bridge during a thunderstorm. The response was that this is probably not such a good idea. Water conducts electricity so if lightning hits the water anywhere nearby then someone sheltering on the water under the bridge could still be at risk. If the lightning does impact on people in this position then, even if they are not seriously injured, they could easily find themselves in, or under, water and not fully conscious; or worse. The better option would be to take the boat out of the water, preferably at a nearby rowing club and shelter in the club, or any other convenient building.

Incident Reports

There were 208 reported incidents in August compared with 162 in August 2019. At least incident reporting has returned to something like normality. Thank-you.

A rower sustained a deep and long cut to the thigh when he walked into the fin of a sculling boat on trestles. The fin was horizontal. He was taken by ambulance to hospital where the wound was stitched.

A head on collision was avoided in an area where the river is relatively narrow by a shouted warning and an emergency stop. Please keep a good lookout and do not be afraid to shout a warning. Please review the Emergency Stop [video](#).

A rower slipped and suffered a slipped meniscus ligament when circuit training. Their knee was locked in one position. The rower was taken to hospital and the knee was reset; considerable pain relief was needed. The rower now has a knee brace and crutches. Please take care when training too.

There were two incidents where rowers were on the water during a thunder storm. These are summarised in the section on Lightning above.

In August there were 15 reported incidents involving collisions or near collisions with motor boats, barges, motor cruisers, etc. of various sizes. In most cases this involved the motor boats doing some combination of being on the wrong side of the waterway, travelling too fast, creating a large wash, not keeping an adequate lookout and their drivers being abusive and/or inebriated. In many cases these incidents were also reported to the relevant navigation authorities.

Please take particular care around motor boats and please continue to report incidents through the British Rowing Incident Reporting system and to the relevant Navigation Authority. Please include the registration number of the boat.

Annual Safety Audit

The Rowing Safety Audit will be launched again this year. The format is similar to that used in previous years although there have been some changes to streamline and simplify the process.

Each club is expected to complete the audit and have it reviewed and accepted by their Regional Rowing Safety Adviser (RRSA). These are the relevant dates:-

- The audit Opens on 28th September
- The Closing date is 29th November and
- Any clubs that have not had their audit accepted by 3rd December will be Suspended.

“Suspension” in this context means that they will not be able to enter British Rowing Affiliated competitions.

If your club has any problems completing the audit in time, or needs help to do so, then please contact your RRSA. There is contact information [here](#).

Coastal Rowing Safety in Western Australia

A experienced and well qualified coach wrote to request information on coastal rowing safety. She was provided with links to RowSafe, Safety Alerts and Monthly Reports. It was explained that nearly all of RowSafe will be relevant to Coastal Rowing but Section 10.1 deals specifically with this style of rowing. Her reply contained the following:-

“What you are providing is crucial. It will get us started on the right path. Thank you so much. Let me know what an appropriate relationship (and fee) would be with British Rowing. And you clearly are the “go to” organisation for our sport.”

I also explained that we generally take a risk based approach to safety and this requires clubs to have a reasonable understanding of Risk Assessment. Assistance on this will be available when you need it; we have training available. The training is at two levels "Basic" and "Advanced" and takes the form of e-learning packages. The Advanced training is currently being re-written, it is nearly finished. The Basic training (known as Safety Basics) has been rewritten and is available now.

Completion of the Safety Basics module prepares users to complete a "Risk Management Plan". There are extensive examples of these in Chapter 9 of RowSafe.

Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia is a real concern for rowers in the UK, particularly in the winter. We have a training module for this too.

Her response contained the following:-

Thank you again. What you have - we do not have here. At all. Your information is wonderful and exciting stuff. As you can imagine, it is also going to take us some time to get our heads around it. I have put the word out in our organisation to see who might be willing to work on this very important issue.

My initial reaction is – if you have high quality resources and courses (which you do) – it would make sense for us to use them. I don't know how that will emerge yet. It may take us some time to sort out. As for Cold Water Immersion and Hypothermia, the cultural belief is that it is not a problem here which could not be further from the truth. Aside from cold water (which we do have) and lengthy immersion, there is a total lack of understanding as to how crucial this issue is for kids.

Looking forward to working with you and British Rowing in the future. We will sort out how the membership relationship needs to work. We actually have at least one person here who is already a member because of the quality of information available through you and the webinars being presented. I suspect there will be more!

Other Rowing National Governing Bodies (NGBs) Safety Guidance

This is a brief review of the safety advice provided by rowing NGBs in some other countries. This is restricted to the publicly available information on the websites of the NGBs of English speaking nations. However, the German Rowing Federation does have a 41 page safety guideline [here](#). It is interesting to note that Welsh Rowing and the Cornish Pilot Gig Association have adopted RowSafe but Scottish Rowing has its own Safety Guidelines [here](#).

Australia

There is Rowing Safety information on the [On Water Safety Code and Guidelines](#) page of the [Rowing Australia](#) (RA) website. (These links will not work because the website requires evidence that it is being accessed by a person. The relevant information can be accessed by Googling "Rowing Australia" and "Rowing Australia safety".) This contains links to the

- RA On Water Safety Guidelines.
- RA On Water Safety Checklist.
- RA On Code of Conduct.

The Safety Guidelines is a twelve page document that covers many subjects.

It specifies standards to be achieved rather than advice on how they can be achieved. There is information on "Risk Management" that deals principally with insurance. There is also a Safety Checklist that is a reflection of the Guidelines.

Each of the States and the Australian Capital Territory Rowing have their own website and there is further information there. For example the Rowing New South Wales website has information on Risk Assessment [here](#). This deals with all types of risk including Financial, Child Protection, Buildings, Health and Hygiene.

[Rowing Western Australia](#) takes a different approach to Risk Management [here](#).

There is some safety advice on the Rowing Queensland website [here](#).

The Rowing South Australia Safety advice is [here](#). This is longer than that of other states. It contains details of circulation plans at several venues and venue specific information including levels of fines for breach of rules.

Rowing Tasmania has a document entitled "[Making Rowing Safer for all in Tasmania](#)". This also contains a mix of venue specific information and general information. There is a set of very interesting Rowing Safety Videos at the Coach's Café [here](#). The capsized drill video emphasises the "climb back into the boat technique" and shows a way in which one sculler can support another sculler who has lost or broken a scull. Scull loss or breakage is a feature of a surprisingly large number of Incidents Reports. Near the end of the Capsized Drill video there are some useful examples showing how to recover a rower into an aluminium launch and how to right the launch if it capsizes.

The Rowing New South Wales [website](#) contains a link to a "Row Safe" [video](#). This emphasises the need to keep a proper look-out and comply with the rules of the road. It also includes the proper use of lights.

The Rowing Victoria [website](#) contains a link to a [Safety Management Plan Template](#) on the Ballarat Rowing Club website.

New Zealand

The New Zealand Rowing Water Safety Code can be found on the Rowing NZ webpage [here](#). It consists of three pages on:

- Club Requirements
- Preparation for Rowing and
- Equipment for safety

Hong Kong China

The Hong Kong, China Rowing Association website has a Code of Practice for Water Safety [here](#). This is a set of instructions and requirements rather than guidance and advice. This was issued in 2007 with a special acknowledgement to the Amateur Rowing Association of Great Britain. There are separate documents on lights on boats and the safety of coastal rowing.

Canada

Rowing Canada Aviron has safety guidelines on its website [here](#). There is a Safety video [here](#). Much of the detail in these guidelines is identical to the Rowing Australia guidelines. The Safety guidelines consist of four pages.

United States

The Safety Resources page on the [US Rowing](#) website is [here](#). This includes a link to a detailed (40+ minutes) [Safety Video](#). There is also a link to the RowSafeUSA [page](#). This contains links including those to information on [COVID-19](#), [Cold Water Facts](#), [Health and Fitness](#), [Rowing Accidents](#), [Rowing Deaths](#), [Rowing PFDs](#), and [Rowing Safety Handbook](#) (mostly First Aid).

There is a link to [Safety Expectations](#). This is about seven pages of general advice for launch drivers and for rowers, about launch operations, weather and first aid and emergency conditions.

Risk based safety and rule based safety

There was a time when life was simple; safety was achieved because by everyone obeyed the rules. There was no need to think or understand, all one had to do was follow the instructions. For example section 14 of the Factories Act 1961 required that “every *dangerous part of any machinery ... shall be securely fenced*”. It was not necessary to assess the risk of injury, all one had to do was follow the rules.

To some extent this approach is continued, for example in road traffic legislation. It is no use trying to explain to a Police officer that the speed limit is not relevant because the road and weather conditions are perfect. Speed limits are simple rules that everyone can understand.

The modern, risk based, approach requires that there is some assessment and understanding of risk. We assess of the probability of a hazardous event occurring and the severity of harm that would result and use these two factors to define a level of risk. If the level of risk is low then we are happy to proceed; if it is not then we need to act to reduce it. This is not so easy as the rule based approach but it is much more effective and efficient.

However, we need simplicity, we sometimes need rules, but the rules have to be justified. Modern safety uses a risk based approach to define rules. In a Rowing Club, for example, the risk assessment should be used to define rules. For example, the club may specify that rowers must wear white tops at night.

The 30:30 rule with respect to Lightning states:-

If the flash to bang is 30 seconds in length or less seek shelter. Stay inside this shelter until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder.

This is easy to understand and will help to reduce the risk.

Our annual analyses of reported incidents show that most hazardous events result from at-risk behaviours. We can use rules to influence behaviour.

It helps if people understand the logical basis for rules but it is more important that they comply with them. Compliance is relatively straightforward.

Safety of Junior Rowers

In the July report, I explained that I had no concerns about the safety of 17 year olds sculling with a group of competent adults. I did not mention safeguarding issues and this may have been interpreted as meaning that there are no safeguarding concerns. This is not the case. For safeguarding issues I would refer you to BR guidance and also suggest you contact your CWO for specific issues.

British Rowing is keen to ensure that we can keep track of all the safeguarding information and advice that we provide. We want to speak with one voice. I therefore do not provide specific advice on safeguarding."

Welcoming newcomers

There has recently been an explosion in the popularity of Stand Up Paddleboards. It is reported that during the lockdown, they were being sold at the rate of 10,000 per week. At one time they were available, at a low cost (£125 for the package), from a well-known supermarket as part of its centenary celebrations.

A competition to design a safe means of having fun afloat would probably result in something like a Stand Up Paddleboard. It has all the desired attributes for safety.

- the boat is largely inflatable and “unsinkable”.
- the construction of most boards is “soft”, there are no sharp or hard components
- the combination of boat and paddle is relatively narrow, it does not take up much space
- it can be paddled through very shallow water
- most of them travel relatively slowly although they can be raced
- the occupant is facing the direction of travel, and has a good view ahead
- the occupant is standing so has a good view in all directions from an elevated position
- the standing occupant is conspicuous and clearly visible to others

None of these qualities apply to sculling boats or stern loaded coxed boats.

There have been four reported incidents in August involving collisions and near collisions with SUPs but none of them has resulted in injury. The problem currently is that many SUP users need help to understand the navigation rules. It is to be hoped that this is just a matter of time before they do.

Both British Canoeing and the British Stand Up Paddleboarding Association provide training to Paddleboarders. I have written to both these associations to ask whether the “rules of the road” are included in the training that they provide. Both have replied and indicated that this is included in their training, however, many SUP users are not trained. I will write again and ask them to mention this topic in their newsletters.

Please help SUP users to understand the navigation rules on the waterway where you row.

Capsize Drill Video

There was a comment on the video (available [here](#)) to say that this is one of the best which has been made. This comment came from someone who is often asked why British Rowing doesn't teach self-recovery into the boat but he explains that most of our rowing in UK is done on rivers where straddle and paddle is faster and safer.

The reason why we prefer “straddle and paddle” and “buddy rescue” is that these techniques allow rowers to get as much of their bodies as possible out of the water as quickly as possible. This reduces the extent of their heat loss and tends to reduce the probability of hypothermia.

The reason why we do not recommend getting back into the boat away from the bank is that it often takes many attempts and may not succeed at all. This can leave the rower exhausted and still immersed in cold water.

Capsize Drill online learning modules

It is planned to have two modules one for rowers and another for coaches. The “Rowers” module has been reviewed and comments have been made. The “Coaches” module is about to be reviewed.

Legionella

Advice was provided on the thermal disinfection of taps and showers. Please remember that at this stage of the Return to Rowing, showers should not be used except in an emergency. However, it is good practice to thermally disinfect hot water systems. This is completed, as follows:-

There is guidance on [Safety in Club Premises](#), in [Club Hub](#), this includes a guideline on [Legionnaires Disease](#).

The simple process is to start your boiler and set it to its highest output temperature. Then turn one hot water tap on at a low flow rate. It is the temperature that kills the bacteria and not the flow rate. Monitor the temperature at the tap and, when it has reached 60° C, continue to run it at low flow and check to see if the temperature has increased above 60° C. If it continues to increase then that is good,

Take care (wear washing up gloves) because water at this temperature can scald.

Once it has run at 60° C or more for five minutes then switch on the next tap at low flow and switch off the first . Wait till the temperature of the water coming out of the second tap is high then let it run for a further five minutes. Repeat this process for all the taps.

When you have finished with the taps you can start on the shower heads. Simply repeat the process with each shower head in turn. Leave the room during each of these periods as it is best not to inhale the water droplets. The route of entry for the Legionella bacteria into the body is via the inhalation of respirable droplets. This is not a concern when running water through taps but there is no point in not being careful when running the shower.

If you want to measure the concentration of colony forming units then please take a sample of water from a shower and do so.