

BRITISHROWING

# HRSA Monthly Report

January 2022

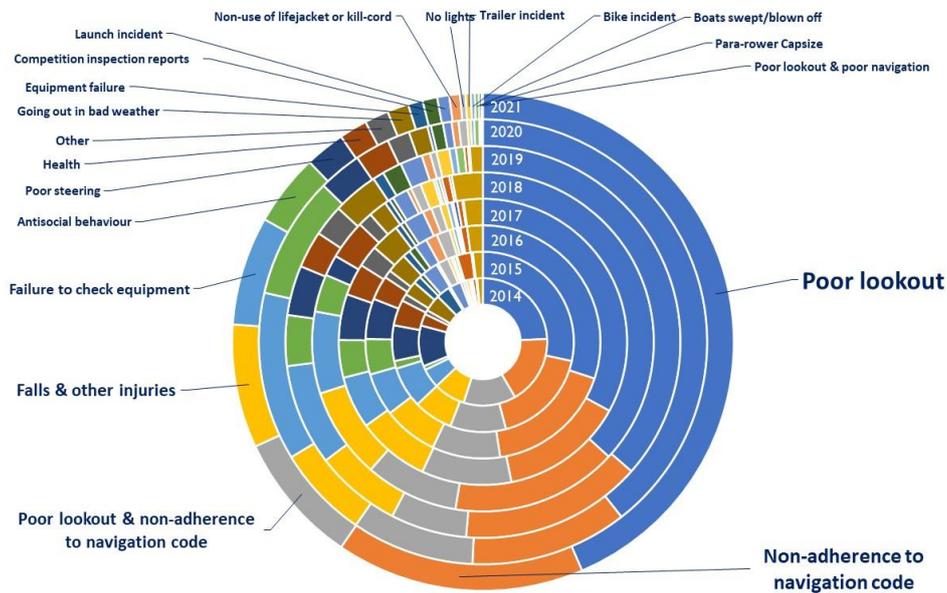
Stephen Worley

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# Analysis of Incident Reported in 2021

The annual analysis for 2021 has been completed and published [here](#). A copy is included with this report.

## Comparison with previous years

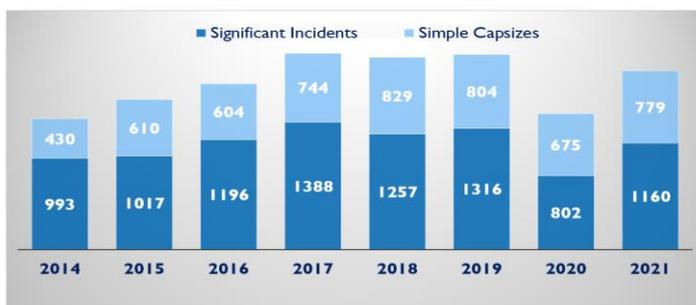


It is clear from the analysis that:-

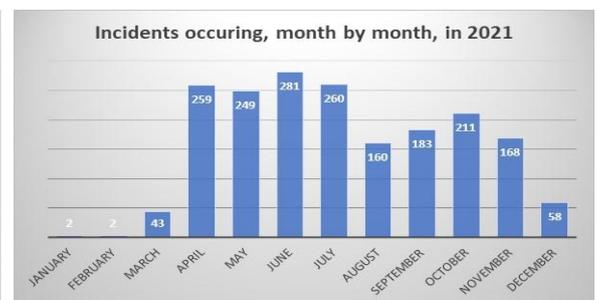
- The proportion of incidents caused by poor lookout continues to increase year by year,
- rowing safety is all about behaviour, it is about what we do,
- we would be safer if we:-
  - keep a good lookout, and
  - stay on the correct side or part of the waterway.

The number of Reported Incidents in 2021 has almost returned to the levels in previous years following the covid related reduced levels of activity in 2020. However, the reduced levels of reporting continued into the first two months of 2021.

### All Incidents



Significant incidents = all except simple capsizes (most result in collisions or near collisions)

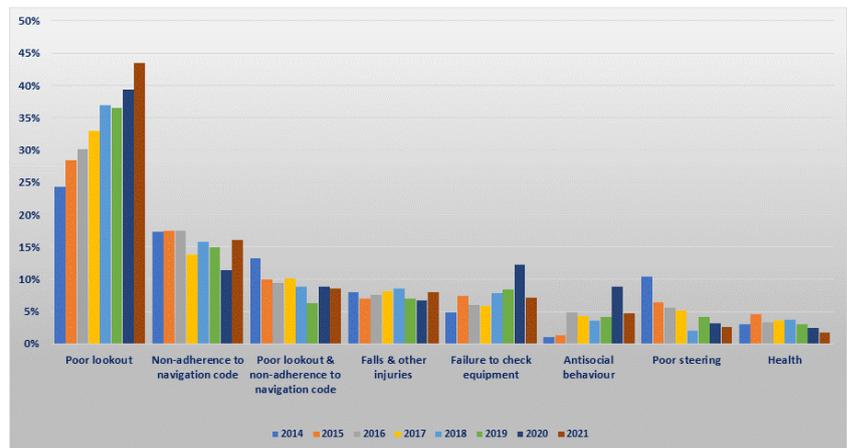


The analysis also confirms that behaviour still has the greatest influence over rowing safety. Last year 95% of incidents could have been avoided by safer behaviour.

The pattern of causes remains remarkably consistent over the years but there have been increases in the relative proportion of incidents caused by “poor lookout”, and “non-adherence to the navigation code”. There have been corresponding reductions in the proportion of other causes.

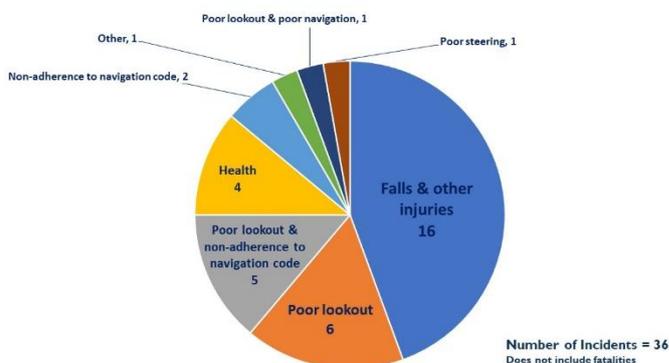
In 2021, there were two fatalities. One was due to a tragic health related incident. The other was that of a non-rower whose body was found in the river near a rowing club.

### Trends in common causes of Significant Incidents - Percentage of Total Significant Incidents



There were 36 incidents resulting in serious injuries, with a week or more off rowing. The injuries include concussion and broken bones. There is a breakdown below. The biggest proportion of these serious injuries were caused by “falls and other injuries”. The location where these occurred is shown below.

### Causes of 2021 Incidents resulting in one week or more off rowing



### “Falls and other injuries”

| Where they occurred     | Number    |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Handling boats on land  | 7         |
| Pontoon/Boating area    | 4         |
| Land training           | 2         |
| On water                | 1         |
| Launch handling on land | 1         |
| On land                 | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>16</b> |

The reporting of incidents provides everyone with the opportunity to share what they have learned. This helps others prevent a similar incident happening to their members. By reporting incidents clubs are making a significant contribution to rowing safety.

The reports also help us to understand the prevalence of each type of incident and this guides the content of our advice to clubs. By reporting incidents, you are helping all rowers to stay safe.

It is pleasing to note that so many people are keen to contribute in this way. The analysis includes this list of the 12 clubs that reported the most incidents.

## Top 12 Clubs reporting Incidents in 2021

| Position | Club                              | Incidents reported |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1        | Lea RC                            | 71                 |
| 2=       | Latymer Upper School BS           | 47                 |
| 2=       | Marlow RC                         | 47                 |
| 4        | Maidenhead RC                     | 40                 |
| 5=       | Putney Town RC                    | 38                 |
| 5=       | Reading RC                        | 38                 |
| 7        | Avon County RC                    | 36                 |
| 8        | Christchurch RC                   | 33                 |
| 9        | Minerva Bath RC                   | 29                 |
| 10       | De Montfort University (Leics) BC | 28                 |
| 11       | York University BC                | 27                 |
| 12       | York City RC                      | 25                 |



### SAFETY GOOD PRACTICE AWARD 2021

#### Lea Rowing Club

For their contribution to safety as evidenced by their extensive use of the British Rowing Incident Reporting System

*Mark Davies*

Mark Davies  
Chairman British Rowing

*Stephen Worley*

Stephen Worley  
Honorary Rowing Safety Adviser

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Safety Good Practice Awards, in the form of Certificates signed by Mark Davies, the Chair of British Rowing, and me, have been sent to each of these clubs. Copies have been sent to their Regional Chairs and their Regional Rowing Safety Advisers.

We present awards to the clubs that submit the most incidents each year because reporting incidents makes a positive contribution to rowing safety. It is assumed that the “Primary Rowing Club involved” is the one making the report. If you want your club to be seen as making this contribution to rowing safety, then please take care to record your club as the “Primary Rowing Club involved”.

A summary of the Incident Analysis has been published in a Safety Alert available [here](#) and included with this report.

## Incident Reports in January

### Check the Landing stage or pontoon

Last month there was incident that resulted in a moderately serious injury involving medical treatment and a protracted recovery when a person stepped down from a grass verge onto a wet wooden landing stage to help a junior rower to de-boat. The landing stage was so wet that they slipped onto its edge and landed heavily on their chest. There have been other incidents this month where people have slipped and fallen. A Safety Alert on [Staying on your feet](#) has been issued and is included with this report.

### Crew boats can capsize too

A beginner masters 4x capsized when doing roll-ups. Please understand that being at the catch with square blades is an unstable position and that even crew boats can capsize.

In another incident a 4x+ with a crew aged 78-84 capsized alongside their pontoon. They all leaned out to open their gates at this same time and rolled in. A marshal was holding the boat but when all four men leaned over to remove their river side blades, the weight was too great, and it quickly capsized. The men aged 78-84 all swam in the cold river but were immediately rescued and cared for ashore.

### Take Care when handling indoor rowing machines

An adult suffered a heavy blow to the head when an indoor rowing machine was lowered from the vertical position. It appears that it came apart at the joint. She became dizzy, had headaches and felt sick and had a large lump on her forehead. These are all signs and symptoms of concussion. Some hours later, when she was feeling better, she drove home. She returned to work the next day but was given light duties as she was not feeling right. The following day, she was still unwell so was advised to attend A&E where she was checked over and diagnosed with a concussion. She had the following 4 days off work and is now having some more time off and returning as and when she feels fit, on a day-by-day basis.

Please take time to review the Safety Alerts on [Head Injuries](#) and [Concussion](#) so that you are able to recognise the signs and symptoms and take the appropriate action without delay. Please also check that your indoor rowing machines are correctly connected together and that they are handled with care. Unfortunately, head injuries are not unknown in rowing.

Please also check that your indoor rowing machine joints are secure.

### Take care steering round bends

An experienced masters 4x hit the bank when the steersman took too tight a line on the bend. The front 600 mm of the bows were damaged and require repair.

In another incident a J13 4x+ moving at speed and hit the bank on a corner. The bow slid between a protruding vertical pipe and the concrete wall of the riverbank. The boat became wedged between the wall and the pipe and was fractured.

In yet another incident, the current on a bend pushed an 8 into the 'outside' bank, and the bow became lodged in a protruding tree. After impact, the current swung the stern of the boat around, creasing the bow of the boat and compromising the hull in that area. The area forward of the damage remained attached to the boat.



There is information on Flow Round Bends in a Safety Alert [here](#).

There was a further collision on a bend where the stream had pushed a 1x towards the outside of the bend where it collided with a 2x going in the opposite direction. The 2x was fitted with a bow wing rigger and this helped to buffer the impact of the collision. There were no injuries.

### Keep a good lookout ahead.

A cox was badly injured when she stopped her 8 on the way to the start of a head race because the crew in front had stopped. The following 8 was some way behind her but it failed to stop even though it was being shouted at by the crew immediately in front. The bow of the following 8 came over the stern of the cox's 8 and hit the cox.

After the competition had finished the cox found that she had severe bruising to her lower rib cage and the muscular tissue in lats and under her ribs. She has had two therapy sessions with her sports physio and the damage was assessed to be severe bruising which will take 6 weeks to heal. Her ribs took most of the impact and if she had not been wearing a down jacket and other cold weather kit then it is likely that her ribs would have broken. She is still in some pain and has had to use heat pads every day. She has not been able to coach in the past week as cycling is difficult, as is bending.

There was a similar incident at another head race where an 8 was stationary, as instructed by marshals, another 8 was rowing at firm pressure through the marshalling. The other 8 was clearly and loudly instructed by Marshalls, and rowers in other boats, but it collided with the stationary 8 mounting the stern and almost seriously hurt the cox who was thrown into the stroke seat in the collision. There was also damage to the stern of the 8 and the rudder stem was significantly damaged.

Please take care to avoid injuring the people around you. If you cannot see where you are going then stop.

### Look out for logs too

There were several collisions with semi-submerged logs that caused damage to fins and rudders. However, in one incident, a 2x, travelling at steady state pressure struck a large log. This resulted in catastrophic damage to the bow section of the boat which immediately began to take on water. The crew turned the boat and returned to the boat club, approximately 400m away. By the time they arrived the whole bow section and the bow footwell were full of water.

### Collapses on Indoor Rowing machines

There were two incidents where young rowers collapsed when training on indoor rowing machines. In one the rower was kept warm, with their feet elevated and, when able to sit up, given a sugary drink. The rower was subsequently told to ensure that they had eaten correctly prior to training.

In the other incident, a rower collapsed, and her anaemia was thought to be a contributing factor. I took medical advice and, unless the anaemia is very severe, it would not have been sufficient to cause this incident and it would be prudent for the athlete to be checked by her doctor, this could be as simple as a check for heart rhythm abnormality. It was reported that the rower will be checked by her doctor before returning to training.

### Check your throw line

There was an incident in which a rower capsized. The coach correctly instructed the rower to get onto the single and get as much of their body out of the water, and then to paddle over to the bank. The Incident Report also contained the following "I went to grab my throw line but it wasn't able to come out so I couldn't use it." Please check your throwlines. There is information on how to do this in a Safety Alert [here](#).

## Head-on collisions

There was a head-on collision between an experienced 2x doing a short burst and a junior 4x+ being with an experienced cox. The collision was said to have occurred due to both boats being in each steersperson's "blind-spot". The bowman of the 2x shouted but it was too late. The blind-spot excuse is simply not valid, if you cannot see where you are going then you should not be going there.

This resulted in major damage to the 2x (as shown below), A snapped rigger, damage to the bow of the 4x+ and a broken blade.

The club committee will discuss the implementation of a circulation pattern.

There was yet another report tht explained that a collision, with a 1x that was on the wrong side of the river, was averted by a watchful person in the bow of the 4x.



## **Keeping a good lookout**

Someone wrote to suggest that we “*reduce the emphasis on “keeping a good lookout” and increase the emphasis on boats being in the right place*”.

The response included the provision of the annual analysis of Incidents Reports that shows that in 2021 the proportion of incidents caused by not keeping a good lookout continued to increase and continued to be the most significant cause of all incidents, it constituted 44%. Non-adherence to the navigation code accounted for 16% and the simultaneous combination of keeping a poor lookout and non-adherence to the navigation code accounted for 9%. It would not be correct to suggest that it would be sufficient for everyone to keep to the correct place on the waterway (adhere to the navigation code) in order for there to be no collisions.

It may help to understand that not all collisions are with other rowing boats. Last year rowing boats also collided with powered craft, trees, bushes & reeds, submerged objects, moored boats, unpowered craft, buoys, the bank, bridges, barrages, weeds, floating debris, pontoons, posts, swans, geese, dogs, and fishing lines. Some also ran aground. It is not enough to keep to your own side of the waterway; you also have to look where you are going.

Keeping a good lookout is fundamental to good navigation and safety. You would not drive your car if you did not look where you are going so you should adopt the same approach when on the water.

## ... and the winner is...

The winner of the 2021 **National Rowing Safety Award** was Julie Hogg from City of Cambridge RC. Julie has not only helped improve safety in her club, but also at other rowing clubs in the vicinity. She identified a concern that coxes would be less experienced than normal, particularly with there being a large number of university clubs. She, and her club, took it upon themselves to organise coxing certificate courses to help support the coxes getting back on the water at the Cambridge Colleges.

I asked Julie for a little more information about her background and this activity. This is a summary of the information she provided:-

*I started coxing in 1992 at Homerton College, Cambridge, got 'the bug' and haven't really stopped! Covid has been the longest break I have had from coxing and coaching. Whilst still at Homerton, I joined Bewl Bridge RC, near my parents, so I could cox in the University holidays, and I started winning races and getting lots of coaching. I also got to cox a variety of different boats and learned to scull. My first 'proper' coach, at Bewl taught me all about steering. He'd captained oil tankers and knew about steering and so steering became my 'thing' and I know I am one of the few coaches, certainly on the Cam, that actually teaches steering and boat behaviour as a deliberate skill. I coxed the first Empacher on the Cam at King's College and my coach, and I used the opportunity to work out the steerage point and how best to get it around the corners on the Cam – everyone was teasing us that it wouldn't, and we proved them wrong. I was completely hooked by this point, and I started doing some coaching and learning to scull. I coxed very seriously at London RC and Tideway Scullers, representing Scotland at the Home International Regatta in 1996, steering at the Head of the Charles Regatta, several Tideway Heads and coxing the Tideway Scullers women's eight to the final of the Remenham Challenge in 2002. I also got to cox two Veteran Boat Races (Cambridge) with Crabtree RC and win Gold with the W8+ at Home International Regatta in 2010.*

*I started coaching seriously in 2004 and got my Level 2. I set up a weekly rowing session at the special needs boarding school that I taught at, and the kids loved it. In the summers, I took them to Tideway Scullers where they participated in the summer sculling courses. I also coached at Homerton and King's, as well as a few other Colleges, starting to focus on developing coxes so they became confident and skilled. When I moved back to Cambridge in 2011, I started coxing at City RC and have been there 10 years now, coxing across the Club and occasionally helping coach the Juniors, as well as sitting on the Committee as the Club Safety Officer for the past 18 months. I coach at Christ's, Lady Margaret Boat Club and Caius and focus on bringing crews on and helping coxes gain confidence and boatmanship skills.*

*Last year, I pitched the idea of running a coxing course at City, as it worried me that with Covid, there was going to be the most tremendous gap in coxing skill and experience amongst the Colleges. With Bumps racing being the predominant set of races on the Cam for College crews, I was extremely concerned that the lack of experience amongst coxes had the potential to make Bumps even more dangerous than they already can be and something needed to be done. I was also deeply worried about the general state of coxing on the Cam and the number of accidents that were resulting from poor coxing and steering on what is a small and overcrowded river, and I wanted to help make things better.*

*We decided that we would run a course over a couple of weekends, utilising the need for coxes for the upcoming Town Bumps, and using the British Rowing coxing course and certificate as a basis for delivering the training. We advertised and asked coxes to apply and we took on eight coxes from a variety of colleges.*

*We started the training by exploring the responsibilities of a cox and the safety aspect, including the legal responsibilities of the cox. We wanted them to feel confident in their authority and be able to call out any concerns or challenge anything they felt was dangerous or reckless. They had coached outings during the week and received feedback and assessment. They were all awarded their coxing certificate at the end of the course. They also had the most amazing time doing Bumps and it was lovely to see them all bonding with their crews and seeing their confidence develop. We have a WhatsApp group where they can continue to ask for support and we also use it to support each other as well as subbing into crews if one of us can't cox an outing. In addition, as a result of the course, we now have a group who all support and talk to each other on the river and it makes the Cam a much better place to be. I can safely say that 'our' coxes are the most competent and vocal coxes on the Cam, especially when it comes to safety! We are going to run another course this term, before Lent Bumps and keep the momentum going. Our 'graduates' are starting to develop as mentors and coaches themselves and are helping to make training for coxes something that is properly addressed in the Colleges. I also taught a number of them to scull over the summer which has further enhanced their skills.*

*As a coach, I have invested in the cox-coach link from Active Tools which I use with my cox-orb, and I have been using it to train novice coxes at Christ's and Caius for the past few months. It's been fantastic, as it means I can effectively coach and cox – by modelling calls- from the bank whilst the novice cox can concentrate on just learning to steer. I tell them how to steer and when and they feedback via the link and we work together so that they gain confidence and boatmanship, as well as building authority in the crew and ensuring that we build a crew that appreciates and values the cox as an integral part of the crew. As they get the hang of steering, I 'cox' less and less, only taking over if they are struggling or are in a situation where they 'go blank' and the five coxes I have been training, are becoming very confident as well as being calm and considered. It's also prevented accidents and enabled the crews to develop far quicker than usual as the link has meant, I'm not competing with the wind and the distance from boat to bank, as well as with other boats and coaches. I also run mentoring sessions with them and the other coxes at Christ's and Caius. Caius have asked me to do the coxing course with them and a number of the student coaches want to participate as they feel, their coaching will improve as a result.*

*I'm really inspired and pleased with the response my idea has had and is having and I could not have run the course without the support and help others. It's great to see coxes happy and feeling valued and gaining skill and authority. To win a national award for safety from British Rowing is just the icing on the cake and I am honoured and humbled.*

There is more information on the British Rowing awards [here](#).

## **Flashing Navigation Lights**

This was summarised last month, but the concern continues. A local river users' group would like rowing boats to display flashing lights. It was explained that this would be illegal in the area where they row. There are Bylaws that apply over a wide area and specify the use of fixed white lights on manually propelled boats, but they also prohibit the use of flashing lights on any boats other than those few specified (e.g., emergency services). Where flashing lights are used, they have to be in addition to standard navigation lights.

## Safety at Competitions

I was asked for ideas that could help to improve safety at large rowing competitions. The following were suggested:-

- Have clearly defined criteria for the postponement, cancellation, abandonment (in whole or in part) of the competition. Define these in such a way that there are objective measures (wind speed, wave height and steepness, temperature (high and low), etc.) so that if conditions do deteriorate then there is no debate whether to stop the competition or not. The conditions should reflect the "exposure" of the venue and the capacity of the competitors.
- Appoint someone whose only responsibility is to monitor the progress of the competition. They must have no role in coordinating rescue or anything else. During the competition they will be able to report concerns to the organiser (Chair of the Organising Committee) who can ensure that action is taken. After the competition they can provide a more complete assessment of the effectiveness of the arrangements.
- Ensure that everyone with any responsibility (marshalls, umpires, rescue personnel, etc.,) is well briefed and well supported but do not overload them. One laminated A4 sheet with large print and diagrams should suffice. They should also have a designated person to ask (by radio) if they need advice.
- Ensure that all competitors are able to complete the course safely and are properly equipped (e.g., appropriate kit, carry water, etc.,). Some competitors will be more competitive than others, which is OK, but some may find the course or the conditions too much of a challenge. Competitions should work with competing clubs and competitors to "discourage" them from allowing people to row in conditions, etc. that they cannot handle. This may mean returning entry fees for crews that withdraw. Competitions should be required to do this if the withdrawal is based on conditions not being as expected at the time of entry.
- Ensure that events run on time. Be prepared to start races on time even if some of the competitors are not present. Word soon gets around the boat park and the competitors for later events will be at the start on time. Ensure that competitors do not spend a protracted time afloat.
- Have a defibrillator (maybe several at a big competition) ready for use at the competition. It will probably not be needed but if it is used then you will look good. If you do not have one and one is needed, then you will look bad. Make sure that the First Aid provision is more than adequate.
- Do not worry about money. Your main aim should be to run a safe, fair and enjoyable competition. This will enhance the reputation of rowing and British Rowing and make more people want to take part in future years. It usually follows that well organised events make money but if money becomes your primary concern, then it may fail to be a well organised competition and could "come apart at the seams" if things start to go wrong.

## Take control of your recovery

A rower, who had recently recovered from the acute phase of Covid, reported in a recent Incident Report that, at the end of November, he had an early morning training session in a 1x doing practice races. At the end of the first piece, he felt very tired and had a very fast heart rate. After finishing the practice race, he decided to go ashore. He capsized on the way back while waiting at the side to let another rower pass. He did not black out completely but felt as if he had lost all of his senses and awareness of what was going on around him. This caused him to let go of the blades without realising and capsize. He did not go completely under the water and managed to drag himself out very quickly. His mother, coach and other parents helped him. He went straight back to the clubhouse to get changed into warm clothes and go home.

He decided to take total break from rowing for the month of December to help recovery.

This is a salutary story because the immediate consequences of becoming faint when sculling on cold water, and the long-term health effects of exercising during the recovery from a viral disease, could easily have been more serious.

Returning to exercise following Covid (or any other viral disease) requires a carefully planned and controlled process.

Rowers tend to be positive people who are capable of pushing hard to achieve their goals. This can be very dangerous when recovering from a viral disease. There are many dangers but the one which causes most concern is the risk of Myocarditis; this causes inflammation of the heart muscle and can result in long term or permanent damage. It can be a debilitating disorder.

Coaches should take great care to manage rowers who are making the progression back to fitness following infection. They should ensure that the rowers do not try to rush this process and that they do not allow peer pressure to encourage rowers to do so.

So how should rowers try to get back to full fitness when recovering from Covid? They should:-

- Recognise that even if they appear to have recovered from the acute stage and test negative, the effects of the disease remain and will become apparent if they put their body under physical stress.
- Ensure that their recovery is steady, controlled, and progressive. This inevitably means that it will take time. They must be patient. There are several phases, each is outlined below.
- Understand the danger that they face if they fail to control their return to fitness.
- Consult their doctor if they have any concerns. If they needed hospital treatment when they were acutely ill or if they had cardiac symptoms, severe breathlessness, or other enduring symptoms then they should consult their doctor.

There are five phases that rowers should follow in their return to fitness. These are described in an article in the British Medical Journal [here](#). This article contains a figure that is reproduced in Appendix I. These are the five phases expressed in rowing terms:-

1. Light exercise with no exertion. It could also include flexibility exercises and technique exercises in a boat.
2. Gentle, aerobic exercise. It could be as simple as walking or slow jogging or slow paddling, providing the heart rate is not elevated.

3. Moderate intensity aerobic and strength & conditioning exercises. This could be two intervals of five-minute aerobic exercise followed by rest. Add one interval each day if the rower feels that they can do it comfortably.
4. Somewhat hard intensity aerobic and strength & conditioning exercise. Only progress to the next stage when fatigue levels are normal at the end of the exercise.
5. Baseline exercise returning to the normal exercise pattern. Only attempt any degree of exertion if the rower feels comfortable doing so.

In all cases, if the rower does not recover completely in a reasonable time, then they should go back one phase.

Each phase should take about one week but rowers are people, not machines, and there is great degree of variation from one to another. Some may need more time. They should not progress from one step to another unless the earlier step has been completed with no adverse effects or discomfort.

It does not matter how fit they were before they contracted Covid, what really matters is how they ensure that they stay safe as they return to fitness. This needs great care.

The same applies to Long Covid where symptoms last for more than 12 weeks. Anyone with long covid should consult their doctor.

Please remember that if they are ill then training will not make them better, but it could make them much worse.

## Capsize Training

There was a discussion about the availability of information on what to do in the event of a capsize. It was pointed out that it has been difficult for most clubs to arrange capsize training during the pandemic due to the closure of swimming pools. However, there is on-line learning for rowers available on the British Rowing website [here](#).

Somebody questioned the statement that rowers should “*get clear of the boat, get out of the water, get off the water and stay with the boat*” as there may be circumstances where it would not be safe to stay with the boat. They suggested that if it was dark, holding on to the boat, in a river with a strong stream or tide, could result in a rower being carried downstream and that there may be other considerations on busy waterways, canals, the sea etc.

It was explained that There is a link in RowSafe to the Capsize and Recovery training in Row How; this covers the subject in much more detail. There is a caveat there about staying with the boat and it says, "stay with the boat unless doing so puts you in greater danger". It could, for example, if you are close upstream of a weir or in an area where there are many motorboats, particularly at night.

If there is a strong stream, I still think that it would be better to stay with the boat unless there are many motorboats in the area. The stream only matters if it is going to take the rower towards a fixed obstruction that could harm them (e.g., a large buoy or pier). If a rower is sitting astride their boat, then they should aim directly towards the shore and paddle it as best they can. They may drift downstream, but this only means that they will go ashore somewhere downstream. The important thing is that they get ashore. They should not try to paddle upstream or into the stream. There are issues where there are walls at the edge of the river.

## Defibrillators

There was a suggestion that it may be better to carry defibrillators on launches as it was thought to be fairly unlikely that a cardiac event would happen on land and rather more likely that it would happen in the heat of exertion.

The response was that most of our recent cardiac incidents have happened on land although two did happen on the water. There is general advice on "what to do if someone collapses in a boat" in a Safety Alert [here](#). As you will see, the basic advice is to call for help, get them ashore, start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), fetch the nearest Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and use it. It also helps if the crew know how to do CPR and how to use the AED. It is not possible to do effective CPR in a rowing boat or most launches.

Most AEDs are not suitable for use or carrying afloat as they are susceptible to dampness. It is important that the pads are applied to dry skin, and this can be a problem afloat.

It also helps if you are prepared for an event afloat, in the ways described in the Safety Alert. Knowing the locations of the publicly available AEDs in the areas where you row will reduce the time it takes to fetch one, this matters. Knowing how to deliver effective CPR and how to use an AED is a life skill that everyone should be encouraged to learn.

If you are concerned that a rower may be at extra risk of collapsing, then please take action before they go afloat. Counsel them to check with their doctor and follow the advice that he or she provides.

## Boots

The Safety Alert "[Stay on your feet](#)" is included with this report and advises rowers to wear wellington boots when launching or recovering their boats as these have a better grip and tend to protect the feet and legs from lacerations. It was also pointed out that "*Coxes should not go afloat wearing boots as they can become a liability if the cox enters the water.*"

There was a question about coaches wearing wellingtons and whether their lifejacket or flotation suit would keep them afloat. The response was that many years ago there was an article in one of the yachting magazines based on a test in a swimming pool. The issue was treading water wearing boots. As the swimmer raises a foot then the top of the boot stretches away from the leg and as they push a foot down then it collapses against the leg. The result is that each boot acts like a valve and the resultant net downward force pulls the swimmer down.

A flotation suit would normally be worn outside the boots and negate this effect. We have done a test on a flotation suit, and it works well to keep the wearer afloat on the surface on flat water.

There was a further question about arms only treading water and the response was that it was further explained that there are many techniques for treading water, some are shown [here](#), that do not involve lifting and lowering the legs. Also, coaches could use their inflated lifejacket and just float, keeping their legs still. The only problem with boots occurs when they are moved up and down in an attempt to tread water. Alternatively coaches could simply wear their (preferably waterproof) trousers outside their boots.

## Trailer towing

There was a comment on trailer towing, the response was that our main concerns are:-

- trailer instability due to suboptimal weight distribution
- items (usually boats or parts of boats) falling from trailers because they were not correctly tied on and
- overhangs hitting fixed objects (lampposts, trees, etc.)

We have Safety Alerts on trailer towing, these can be found in the [Archive](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

## Risk of Lightning

There was a comment about the perception of the risk due to Lightning. It was suggested that the probability is so low that most people would not be too concerned. My response was that the concept of the level of risk that people are willing to tolerate is far more complex and encompasses more factors.

The obvious things to consider are the absolute level of risk (probability x severity). In most cases we do not know the probability of a hazardous event occurring and producing the specified level of harm. We just guess.

So, what else impacts on people's understanding? Perhaps it is:-

- the perception of risk
- the benefits that people believe they obtain from the at-risk behaviour
- the cost or difficulty or other reluctance to reduce the level of risk

If we apply this model to lightning, then we start with a relatively low level of risk (probability x severity) but even this needs care when applied to rowing. There is little benefit in anyone exposing themselves to the risk of lightning.

The RoSPA [Lightning at Leisure](#) guidance contains the following:-

*Research has also shown that proximity to water increases the risk of being struck by lightning.*

and

*If you are on water, get to the shore and off wide, open beaches as quickly as possible as water will transmit strikes from further away. Studies have shown that proximity to water is a common factor in lightning strikes.*

It is very easy to avoid these risks. Simply by getting off the water and into shelter the probability is reduced dramatically. The risks can also be avoided by listening to the weather forecasts and being reasonably aware of the weather as it develops and acting accordingly. Also, one of the reasons why so few people are impacted by lightning is that it is so easy to avoid it, so this is what people do.

## Emergency Stop videos

There is a link to an Emergency Stop video in RowSafe, but links have been provided to two additional videos. These can be found [here](#) and [here](#).. These use the reverse feather method.

## Restricted access to water due to fears about avian flu

The Parks Department of a Local Authority closed access to a reservoir due to concerns about the risk to human health from exposure to birds suffering from avian flu. It was pointed out that there is advice on the Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) website, and this states that:-

*“Transmission from an infected bird to a human is very rare with fewer than 5 cases recorded in the UK. While previous cases were confirmed as the H7 strain, January 2022 was the first time H5 has been detected in a human in the UK. The risk to the wider public from avian flu continues to be very low. However, people should not touch sick or dead birds.”*

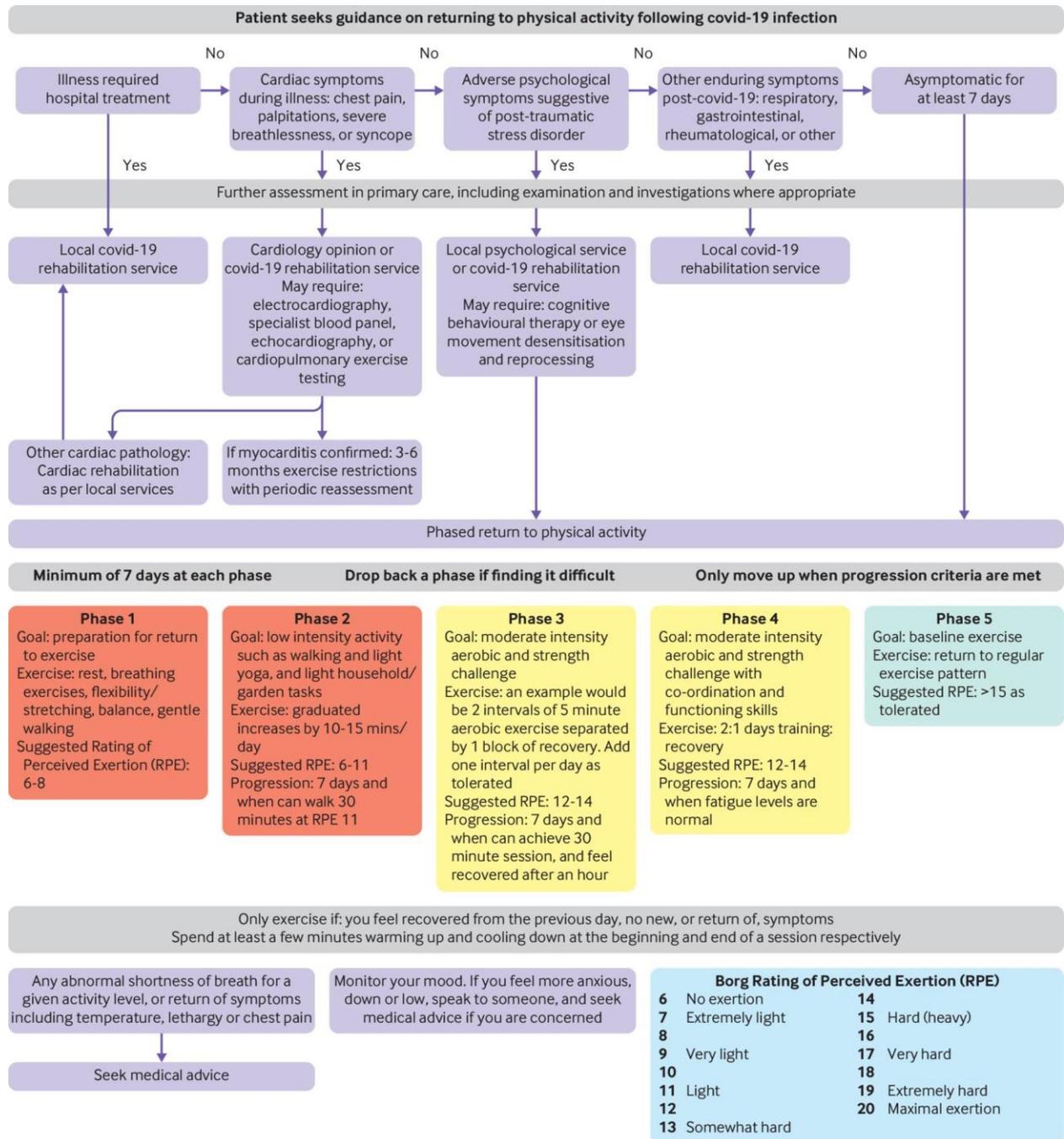
The concern for humans relates to poultry workers who are in close contact with infected birds. Providing rowers behave sensibly then the risk to their health is very, very low. There is a Safety Alert on this that can be found [here](#).

It is understood that discussions with the Local Authority are continuing.

## Water Quality

There was a question about water quality from the National Safety Officer of the Scouts. The response was that we have a comprehensive reporting system, but it is some years since we had a report of someone becoming ill due to polluted water. Rowing is a sport that takes place on the water rather than in the water and we try to minimise our contact with it. We analyse our reported incidents and publish the results on our website.

# Appendix 1 - Medical Guidance on Return to physical activity (BMJ)



Suggested return to physical activity after covid-19: risk stratification to exclude features suggestive of myocarditis or post-acute covid-19 and phased resumption of physical activity starting after 7 days without symptoms.