



BRITISHROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Incident Reports in February

Last month I explained the concern about incidents with the potential for Serious Injuries and Fatalities (SIF). In February there were two such incidents, both on indoor rowing machines. In the first a rower died in spite of being treated with CPR and an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) at the scene. In the second the rower was also treated with CPR and an AED and survived.

It is understood that a message of condolence has been sent by the Chairman to the clubs involved in the incident where the rower died. I have sent a message of thanks and congratulations to the club where the rower survived; this has been echoed by the Chairman.

There are many differences between these two incidents and particularly between the prior physical condition of the casualties. However, it should be stressed that delay in the use of an AED can be critical. In the incident where the rower survived, there was an AED at the club and members were trained to recognise circumstances where it should be used and trained in its use.

There is British Rowing guidance, produced by the Medical Panel, available [here](#). This includes the following:-

“The three key factors in the pre-hospital phase are:

- 1. Early recognition and a call for help – to prevent cardiac arrest*
- 2. Early CPR (chest compressions) – to buy time*
- 3. Early defibrillation – to restart the heart”*

Clubs are advised to review the Medical Panel guidance and consider the need for an AED to be available in the club.

Advice from the Resuscitation Council UK (available [here](#)) states that *“the victim’s chance of survival falls by around 7 - 10% with every minute that defibrillation is delayed”*. There is a similar statement from the Department for Education (available [here](#)).

There is also a statement that *“Survival rates for people who had a rhythm that could be treated by a shock from the defibrillator, were 53% following intervention by bystanders.”* from the National Institute for Health Research (available [here](#)).

Finally it is important to emphasise that it is the combination of chest compressions and AED that produces success not AED alone. So it is essential to deliver good chest compressions until an AED can be sourced.

It is recommended that people using indoor rowing machines treat this training as an exercise in mental control as well as a physical exercise. There are Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced Training Plans on the British Rowing website [here](#). These each contain eight week training schedules together with detailed explanations and advice.

A Safety Alert has been produced advising people who use indoor rowers to follow the advice in the training plans. The Safety Alert contains a link in a QR code to facilitate access to the plans; it is included with this report.

Give way when overtaking

There was an incident in which two racing 8s failed to keep clear of a 4- that they were overtaking. It is alleged that the launch based coach of one of the 8s shouted at the crew of the 4- instructing them to "get out of our way" as "we are racing".

It should be remembered that the [COLREGs](#) (Rule 13), the local Navigation Rules and the Notice to Mariners that was in force at the time all require that "any vessel overtaking any other shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken".

The management of the Region have discussed this issue and added its judgement as a comment on the Incident Report. This comment contains the following statement:-

"From the positioning of crews described in the report and comments, the two 8s were taking the racing line, and would seem to be expecting other crews to move out of their way to give them this line. Overtaking crews do not have right of way (ColRegs and the Local Navigational Code) and must follow the Local Navigational Code. Whatever the disputed language and signals used, it would seem to be clear that the 8s were forcing the 4- out of their way so they could have the racing line, rather than adhere to the Local Navigational Code.

It is clear that the crew of the 4- found the behaviour of the eights and their coaches to be aggressive, regardless of the actual words used. It is not disputed that the four was made to take evasive action. The eights according to ColRegs/Local Navigational Code, have a responsibility to avoid collision or stop. "

It is tempting to think that people coaching crews that are racing develop a sense of "entitlement" and expect that others will go out of their way. This is dangerous. It should be remembered that unless there is a river closure and in the absence of any official competition (with its own competition rules) then there is no such entitlement.

Problems with a drunken member of the public

A person was passing a rowing club when he fell off the roadway. The person slid down the embankment towards the swollen and fast flowing river and was unable to climb back up. Members of the club rescued him using a rope. He was verbally abusive throughout.

On his return to safety he continued to abuse club members and threatened violence. He indulged in some pushing and shoving. He insisted he had been pushed into the river. He smelled strongly of alcohol and was unsteady on his feet. He would not leave and continued this threatening behaviour, so police were called. On arrival, the offender began to abuse the police officers, who eventually escorted him away from the club area.

In cases like this, please do not hesitate to call the Police as the incident may easily escalate into something more violent.

Take care with trailers

An 8 was damaged when one end fell off a trailer when going over a speed bump at low speed. The club is reviewing the route to avoid speed bumps and considering using its longer trailer for transporting 8s. Trailer drivers will be advised to check boat security at regular intervals. This is good advice.

Take extra care in fast flowing water

In one incident a 2x was swept by the powerful cross-current and wind into a bridge pillar and then swept stern-first through the bridge arch. The 2x then capsized and broke in two. The rowers were able to hang onto the fore and aft sections of the boat, as it capsized. They were rescued by a passing coach in a launch.

In another incident, an 8 was going upstream through a bridge when a combination of wind, slight power imbalance in the crew, and an inexperienced steersperson threw the crew off line and it started to drift into a bridge pillar. The 8 hit the bridge pillar causing a fracture just aft of the bow ball.

It is important to take extra care when rowing in fast flowing water and windy conditions. It may help to plan the outing so as to avoid hazards such as bridges.

Wash from a Motor Vessel

A Motor Vessel was navigating on a large river in such a way as to produce a large wash when close to two 8s, even though its speed was not excessive. This caused the two 8s to stop as the wash caused them to be partially swamped. It is understood that one of the rowers immediately phoned the local navigation authority to report the incident. The rower later saw the motor vessel being spoken to by several of the navigation authority's officials.

Please remember, an immediate report that clearly identifies the culprit, can be very effective.

Trailer Towing in high winds

I was asked whether British Rowing had any guidelines on what wind and gust speeds are safe for driving a trailer. Some guidance on what wind and gust speeds constitute Minimal Risk", "Moderate risk", "Substantial Risk" or "Severe Risk" would be useful.

The response was that defining risk levels when towing boat trailers in windy conditions is beyond anything I can do and is not something that I think you can expect British Rowing to do. It depends on the strength and direction of the winds and on the details of the route. For example, towing in headwinds and tailwinds may be same but towing in cross winds of the same strength may not.

Towing on roads where there are transitions between cuttings and exposed areas, and where there are bridges to pass under, and where there are high sided vehicles, may also be problematic in cross winds.

I did a quick check on the internet and found some advice on caravan towing in high winds [here](#) and [here](#). I found no advice on towing boat trailers. Some time ago I wrote a Safety Alert on one aspect of trailer towing, this can be found [here](#).

Safety when indoor rowing

There are relatively few reported incidents due to the use of rowing machines but a significant proportion (many times more than the proportion associated with other rowing activities) have SIF potential. In the last six months there have been 783 reported incidents; only 12 (1.5%) of these are associated with indoor rowing. They are summarised as follows and there is further information in Appendix I.

- 3 Cardiac arrests (1 fatal)
- 2 collapses thought to be due to an unknown medical condition (the same person on consecutive Mondays)
- Hair caught in machine
- Exacerbation of previous knee injury
- Machine failure (handle came off)
- Cut hand on sharp edge
- Panic attack
- Back injury

Assistance has been provided to a member of the British Rowing Indoor Rowing team in the development of a Risk Assessment for Indoor Rowing and indoor rowing events, this is focussed on schools but has general applicability.

It is also planned to include a section on Indoor Rowing Risk Management Plans in Chapter 9 of RowSafe in the 2020 update.

Discussions with members of the Indoor Rowing Team

Discussions on Indoor Rowing Safety were held with three members of the Indoor Rowing Team. The team has developed indoor rowing training for Master Trainers at gyms. It has also published extensive technical guidance and advice to support indoor rowers. This is high quality material that is freely available and should be communicated widely.

I am concerned that these messages may not be communicated to the individuals who use rowing machines. I think that there is an opportunity to engage with these people through their smartphones, or similar devices, and was pleased to learn that British Rowing have a LiveRowing Smartphone Holder for Concept2 in the shop ([here](#)).

The team already provides stickers for indoor rowing machines in gyms and the suggestion of including a QR code on the stickers was something that had been considered some time ago but not acted upon as, at that time, it was difficult. Those difficulties have disappeared now and it is much easier to do this.

The idea of accessing short video clips directly when sitting on a rowing machine seems very attractive. We already have a great deal of video material and we would simply need to produce snippets from existing videos.

My other concern is that indoor rowing should be presented as both a physical exercise and an exercise in mental control. This is covered, to a significant extent, in the Indoor Rowing Training Plans ([here](#)). However, there remains a doubt on the extent to which these are communicated to people who use Indoor Rowing machines.

Liability for the safety of children

There was a question about the accountability, responsibilities, etc. of coaches, particularly those working with junior athletes as the person requesting this information has been trying to communicate the idea that all coaches, particularly those working with juniors, should take a keen interest in risk assessment, following safety policies, submitting incident reports, etc. The specific questions were:-

- If an incident happens and the coach's risk assessment is deemed insufficient, would that make them legally accountable?
- What are the legal responsibilities of junior coaches with regards to rowing safety?
- Who is *accountable* for safety within a club?

The answers were:

- The answer to the first question is the same as that for all questions in civil law. It all depends whether the coach took reasonable care in producing the risk assessment.
- Adults can be held responsible for their own safety. Children must be supervised but the test of what is reasonable still applies. It may help if you make provision for this in your club rules.
- Everyone is responsible their own safety and that of others.

The Capsize Drill

There was a question about including getting back into the boat in the capsize drill. This is mentioned in the Capsize Drill video.

The response was that do not expect rowers who have capsized to try to get back into their boat but we do expect them to be able to climb on top of their inverted boat, straddle it and paddle it to safety. We also expect them to know about Buddy Rescue and be able to rescue a colleague.

The reasons why we do not recommend climbing back into the boat is as doing so usually results in the rower failing and re-entering the water. This results in them soon becoming colder and more exhausted than they otherwise would be. In the education of learner coaches, occasionally (rarely) someone will want to try this in the pool and we usually let them at the end of the pool session. They quickly learn how difficult it is.

Getting back into the boat may be an option in very shallow water where the rower can stand alongside the boat or at the edge of the waterway once the rower has straddled and paddled the boat back to safety. There is a problem with warm summer afternoons because although the air is much warmer, the water is not. Cold water shock is still a danger.

The necessity for members to complete capsized drills

The question was whether it is policy that all members of a rowing club should have performed a capsized drill, or whether instructing members as to what to do in such an event is sufficient ?

The response was, let's confine ourselves first to those who go afloat in rowing or sculling boats. Unless they have a good reason not to (and I cannot think of any) then I believe that everyone who rows in a 1x, 2x or a 2- should complete the capsized drill. I know of bigger boats that have capsized so think it advisable that everyone who rows or coxes should also complete the drill.

There was a further question on the extent to which this is a "requirement". The response was just about everything we write is "merely" advice but the advice of a National Governing Body (NGB) carries a bit more weight. When I talk to our brokers I am told that, in general, insurers expect their insured to follow the advice of their NGB and if they do so then there are no problems in dealing with a claim. In our case, British Rowing is the NGB and RowSafe contains the bulk of the safety advice. Please do not assume that the converse is, or is not true. Insurance is never that simple.

Does the school head of rowing have to be present during outings

A school head of rowing wrote to ask whether it is necessary for him to be present during outings or whether other coaches, with public liability insurance, can supervise outings.

The response was that the Coach membership of British Rowing does include insurance for the coaches but this level of membership is only available to qualified coaches (Session Coach and above). However there is member to member insurance for all members of British Rowing. Please check the coverage on the British Rowing insurance microsite [here](#).

We teach Coaches how to undertake risk assessment and this gives them a structure in which to decide, in the particular circumstances present at the time, whether it is safe for a particular crew undertake the planned activities afloat. However, we will always be dependent on the common sense of the individual coach. You may wish to define guidelines for your coaches. If you need local knowledge then I suggest that you contact your Regional Rowing Safety Adviser or the Club Rowing Safety Adviser at your host club.

It has since been suggested that the head of rowing refer to the school policies.

Wearing of wellington boots when afloat

I was asked whether wellington boots can be used afloat by coaches and coxes and whether this was covered in RowSafe.

It is in RowSafe Section 10.2 on Fixed Seat Sea Rowing where it says:-

Everyone is expected to:

- *Not wear boots (such as wellington boots) when afloat as they make it very difficult to tread water.*

This advice will be copied into the Equipment section of RowSafe during the 2020 update.

When treading water the leg section of the boot "expands" as the foot is raised and collapses against the leg as the foot is pushed it down. The drag is much greater on the up stroke than on the down stroke. This is why yachting boots have drawstrings at the top.

RowSafe 2020 Updates

The 2020 version of RowSafe will be issued in April and information about the suggested updates has been included on previous reports. If you have any suggestions for updates then please write to safety@britishrowing.org.

The current planned updates include:-

- The addition of Risk Management Plans for Indoor Rowing
- The addition of Risk Management Plans for Rowing in Floods
- Clarifying the conditions in which Lifejackets are needed when rowing
- Clarifying the need for additional buoyancy in boats
- Clarifying the advice on the use of wellington boots when coxing or in a launch
- Clarifying the advice on Indoor Rowing to make it less specific to clubs.
- Clarifying the need for everyone to do a capsize drill before going afloat.
- Clarifying the description of who has charge of the boat (mostly for Fixed Seat Rowing on the sea)
- Clarifying the need to report suspected waterborne diseases to medical professionals (maybe)
- Clarifying the advice on rowers with a visual impairment
- The need for crotch straps on lifejackets
- Encouraging the use of head mounted mirrors and similar devices.
- Provide advice on how to recover a person in the water into a launch
- Provide more detailed advice on Emergency Stops with links to the new video
- Revise the terminology from Events to Competitions
- Clarify the advice on buoyancy aids when rowing
- Checking the hyperlinks

Appendix I – Indoor Rowing incidents - September 2019 to February 2020

date	Outline of Incident	Response
17/10/2019	After finishing second 750 m piece on an ergo the 18 year old novice rower sat, then collapsed and was sick. This was cleared, breathing was then checked and the individual wasn't breathing.	CPR was started and an ambulance was called. The individual came round following AED shocking and was taken to hospital via air ambulance. The treatment of CPR and AED was performed by the coach and sports centre staff.
4/11/2020+ 18/11/2020	A Student collapsed off the rowing machine. On the second occasion (one week later) the student became unconscious, regained consciousness, but had signs of cyanosis.	First Aid. Recovery Position. The student was subsequently banned from the gym as there was a suspected undeclared pre-existing condition.
14/12/2019	Four teams of junior rowers were racing each other in a 3k relay on Concept 2 rowing machines. A WJ15 was holding the left foot strap while the rower was rowing. Some of her hair was caught in the chain mechanism. The rower immediately stopped.	Despite efforts to disentangle her, approximately 8cm of hair had to be cut from her head to free her. The Junior had her hair tied up in a pony tail as had been instructed by the coaches but clearly this was insufficient to prevent this incident.
18/1/2020	A previous injury to the knee had been aggravated by the erg. The club member did say at the time she should normally wear a support on the knee to prevent this injury from occurring. No strapping was used whilst on the erg	Appropriate first aid was provided. This incident resulted in reminders about looking after your own welfare and prompts for people with injuries to take protective measures.
18/1/2020	The incident happened on RP3 rowing machine. The adapter between the handle and chain snapped during a moderate intensity steady state session.	No injuries or further damages occurred. (This has been reported to the equipment supplier.)
22/1/2020	Junior 13, who has a tendency to "fiddle" with things, ran a hand somewhere on the rowing machine and cut palm of hand, near the thumb,	Adult first aider cleaned cut and put a plaster on - junior was fine and carried on with training - his parents were informed.
30/1/2020	Juniors working on Ergo (1000m rate 22 to 24 with 2 minutes rest). One Junior starting struggling with breathing. The Junior taken was off the ergo and the breathing got worse. The Junior started hyper-ventilating. This developed in to a panic attack. A second First Aider (an NHS Nurse) was called from the other room to provide support.	The NHS Nurse administered 5+ minutes of breathing exercises to bring breathing under control. Parents were called for early pick-up. It transpired that the Junior had not eaten a lot that day and was tired. Given a banana to eat and Nurse sat with Junior until pick up. Upon parent arrival incident discussed and GP appointment advised. Checked later in evening if athlete ok - still had tight chest.
2/2/2020	During the Masters squad training the rower let go of the handle and collapsed. He was a 66 year old visitor from another club.	CRP was administered, an AED was used and emergency services were called as soon as the incident took place. Paramedics arrived and continued treatment. Casualty did not survive.

6/2/2010	A Junior rower on an ergo, hurt back during pieces, an ambulance called as there was some obvious discomfort.	Back injury - ambulance called, rower checked and sent home to rest.
10/2/2020	The rower finished an ergo piece and then collapsed (The Club ran Basic Life Support and Automatic External Defibrillator courses for its members in 2014 and 2018.)	CPR delivered with 2 rescue breaths. A defibrillator (AED) was attached, and shock administered, Athlete resumed breathing. Paramedics arrived, the casualty was taken to hospital. Angiogram and stent. Aim is for discharge from hospital 14/2.

Since 1st September 2019 there were 783 reported incidents in total. In the same period there were 12 (1.5%) rowing machine incidents