



On-Water and Off-Water Safety Policies and Best Practices

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Introduction

This document hopes to provide useful safety information. It will be updated as needed.

PFD's, Cell Phones, Swimming Requirements, Buddy System

PFD's

1. From Oct 1-May 31, those rowing unsupervised by a safety launch must wear a PFD (This is the CT DEEP regulation).
2. Those rowing on Masters' or Juniors' Spring Teams shall also wear PFD's (inflatables) as the water temperature is low and even supervised shells can easily become unsupervised by varied crew speeds, a stalled coach's launch, etc.
3. Depending upon conditions (i.e high water), PFD's may be required at other times.
4. Having and wearing a PFD is the individual's responsibility. Inflatable PFD's can be purchased at West Marine, Cabelas, online, etc. (Contact Rowing Director if you need more guidance).

Cell Phones

1. Those rowing unsupervised by a safety launch must have a cell phone in their boat, regardless of the type of boat. Those rowing on Masters' teams must also have one cell phone per boat given the difference in speed between different boats, leaving some boats essentially unsupervised for large portions of time.
2. Having a cell phone is the individual's or boat's responsibility. Waterproof cases are now ubiquitous and can be purchased in many locations. (Contact Rowing Director if you need more guidance).

Swimming Requirements

1. All participants must know how to swim.
2. Those rowing unsupervised by a safety launch and on Racing Teams must take a swim test at a YMCA, local health club etc. Our swim test form resides in the News and other Info section of Riverfront's Rowing website and in this Appendix.

Buddy System

1. For the Spring Season (pre Memorial Day) and Fall Season (after the end of summer session 3) you must row with another rower if you are unsupervised by a safety launch.
2. For the three summer sessions (dates change slightly year to year) you must row with another rower if coaches are not on site. Coaches are never on site on Sundays. They are often on site Monday – Friday and Saturday mornings. Please check in if you have any questions.

Those rowing unsupervised at any time of year must also:

1. Sign in and out of the log book

2. Pay particular attention to **the High Water/Fast Current** section of this document.
3. Consult the Current Conditions board at the Riverfront Boathouse for the most current information.

I. River Traffic Patterns and River Hazards

1. Launching/Docking

In general, launching crews/scullers should use the most northern portion of dock available, leaving the southern portion open for returning crews. Docked crews/scullers should be aware of crews waiting behind them and walk boats north, or communicate otherwise, to accommodate waiting crew.

When launching and landing the bow should be pointed north (upriver)

Launching and landing crews should move quickly, and vacate the dock within a few minutes if others are waiting for space. (Novice crews and/or others being addressed by coach excepted). Foot-stretcher adjustment should take place on the water (removing feet prior to moving stretchers).

2. Rules of the Road

After launching, rowers should follow the left-hand rule, (the right-hand rule for coxswains) and angle across the river (don't cut directly across the river as there are underwater obstructions when water is low) and pointing on the beachhead and staying north of the most northern buoy (when present). Rowers/coxswains should stay clear of the beachhead, however, to avoid fishing lines and fishermen. Traveling north, use the most eastern, full railroad arch (marked). In high water other arches may be preferable. Once through the Railroad Bridge, rowers should continue to obey a left-hand traffic pattern; coxswains, a right-hand pattern, following the East Hartford shore north (staying app 20 feet off shore, however, to avoid pilings)

Across from the shooting range, approximately, and depending on water depth, rowers should move toward the middle of the river to avoid the bottom. Use the island as your new "shore" frame of reference. Remain on your left-hand side, (coxswain's right) however, as bottoming-out is preferable to ramming a south-bound rower or being struck by an inattentive power boat driver.

Returning to the boathouse and traveling south along the Hartford shore, continue to follow the rower's left-hand (coxswain's right) pattern until railroad bridge. Pass through the marked, middle railroad bridge arch so as to avoid underwater obstructions south of railroad bridge along the shore. Staying off shore (app 30 feet), row past docks before turning.

Passing a Crew

Passing should take place to the rowers' right (coxswain's left). Slower rowers should move left (coxswain's right) to allow faster crew to pass

3. River Hazards and Considerations

All bridges are difficult to navigate given current and/or eddies accompanying abutments. Row through bridges with sufficient pressure to be able to steer
Know where underwater obstructions are. Be able to identify their general location without presence of buoys. Know where sandbars are and how the tide impacts sandbar and obstructions. Understand that new obstructions may arise at any time.

Be aware of power boats exiting from power boat launch.
Be aware of Lunch/Dinner Boat; it travels north to the Railroad Bridge, where it turns and heads back and must remain in the channel in both directions.
Be aware of Dragon Boats

Rowing Before Sunrise or After Sunset:

When rowing before sunrise or after sunset, when visibility is poor and light levels are low, law, and common sense, requires lighting for all boats. Each shell is required to have its own light. Lights must be visible when viewed from the bow or stern. Ideally, independent rowers and coxswains would carry a whistle or other noisemaker for use in an emergency.

II. Cold Weather Rowing

Hypothermia is a swift and incapacitating problem that strikes when the combination of cold weather and moisture work to decrease body temperature. Remember that you don't have to fall into the water to get hypothermia! See below for hypothermia (and heat-related) attachments.

1. Rowing when the water temperature is below 50 degrees, or when the combined water and air temperature is below 90 degrees, should be done with great care by those accompanied by a safety launch.
2. Singles and pairs should not row below this 90 degree threshold, and/or when the water temperature is 50 degrees or less.

AVERAGE CT River temperatures, degrees Fahrenheit:

- April: 45 degrees (with a range of 40 – 50)
- May: 59 degrees (with a range from 53.6 – 67)
- June: 69 degrees
- July: 77 degrees
- August: 76 degrees
- September: 69 degrees
- October: 56 degrees (with a range from 50- 59)
- November: 45 degrees

III. Inclement Weather

Rowers must exercise extreme in the face of inclement weather. High winds, high waves, heavy amounts of debris, fast currents, extreme temperatures, lightning storms

and heavy fog are all reasons for not practicing. The WTIC 1080AM weather report, NOAA weather channel, and weather.com are all important resources for athletes to use. Coaches will cancel rowing if they feel the conditions merit it.

Wind: Waves or swells generated by strong winds can quickly swamp a crew. If severe winds come up while you are on the water, return to the boathouse immediately. Be cautious when heading upriver with strong northern wind, returning will be more difficult.

Lightning Storms: Crews are mandated to return immediately to the dock, or proceed immediately to shore if the boathouse is too distant. Do not rely upon the presence of rain or thunder as the sole indicators for the possible presence of lightning. Boats may not return to the water until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike and/or thunder clap.

Fog: Obviously limits visibility, but also mutes sound. If caught in fog, proceed slowly and with caution toward boathouse. Be sure to make some noise so that others can be alerted to your presence. Fog is often thicker in some areas than others. Do not assume fog that appears to be thinning will continue to do so. Do not go out if you can't see the far shore or the railroad bridge.

High Water/Fast Current:

Do not row if water is too high and current is too fast. All independent rowers are directed to visit the online graph, linked directly on our Safety and Best Practices page.

1. At approximately 8' singles (approximately 9' big boats) should follow Hartford shore, use most western RR bridge arch going north, and then angle back to normal traffic pattern.
2. When water reaches approximately 9' scullers are directed to consider all hazardous conditions, including but not limited to floating debris and the potential for further rise in river levels.
3. After rising water breaches ramp (approximately 10' on graph) beginner and other less experienced small boats (singles, pairs) are not allowed to row. Experienced singles or pairs are only permitted to row if accompanied directly by a safety launch. (Note: If river isn't rising and is flat for an extended period it may be appropriate up to approximately 11'). A faster, rising river is more dangerous than a slower, static river even if the latter number is higher).
4. Once rising water reaches approximately 11" on graph, there will be approximately a foot of water to wade through and no rowing will take place without a safety launch. Depending on conditions, up to 13.5" may be rowable for coxed boats with appropriate coxswains and safety launch. Above this level (in addition to the condition of the water), it would be difficult for medical personnel to access the permanent docks in case of emergency

V. Capsize Procedures and Person Overboard

Capsize Procedures:

If a crew swamps, flips, or capsizes, the crew will make every effort to stay with the shell.

If the shell swamps, the shell will float (make sure bow and stern caps are closed prior to launching). If the shell partially flips, the shell can be completely rolled (if necessary, take oars out of oarlocks from one side only, roll, reinsert oars) so that the bottom is facing the sky. This traps air underneath the shell and increases buoyancy.

At no time should any crew member leave the boat to swim to shore. A short swim can be far longer than it appears due to currents, wind, water temperature, or personal fatigue.

If capsized, angle the boat to allow current to push boat toward shore.

Stay calm. The first thing that should be done in a team boat is for the coxswain or bow person to get a head count to make sure all rowers are accounted for. The crew, while remaining in or on the shell, should attempt to get the attention of other crews or coaches on the water. Use your cell phone to call a coach, other listed contact, or in an emergency 911. At most locations on the river, the crew should be able to guide the shell to shore or a sandbar to get out of the water.

If the crew can't guide the shell to shore, and if the water and air temperatures are low, then the crew members should move along the shell and huddle together in pairs near the middle of the shell. Effort should be made to keep as much of the body out of the water as possible. This can include draping one's body over the top of the rolled hull. A minimum of movement is key to retaining body heat. Constantly check on crew mates and keep one-on-one communication.

To recap:

1. Stay calm
2. Stay with the shell
3. Take a head count
4. Try to get to shore or a sandbar
5. Call a contact for help, or 911 in an emergency
6. Pair up and keep communicating

Person Overboard in Team Boat

A violent grab by an oarsman can throw him out of the boat. In this situation, it is up to the ejected rower to stay below the surface of the water until the shell has passed to avoid getting hit in the head by a fast moving rigger. The crew will stop rowing and hold water immediately so they can lend assistance and signal the coach while the rower treads water. The crew can back up to the rower so the rower can use the shell as a flotation device. Once removed from the water, the rower should be evaluated to determine if he is fit to continue or if a medical emergency is present.

Flipped Single

An experienced sculler may be able to re-enter the boat by:

1. Righting the boat (if boat hull up, remove one oar, roll boat toward oarless rigger, reinsert oar)
2. Grabbing both oar handles with one hand and immobilizing oar handles/oars and thereby steadying the boat

3. Placing free hand on deck behind the seat
 4. Kick legs, pull upper body up, flop chest/stomach onto boat, pull leg farthest from oar handle up, spin, straddle boat, regain seat
- This is easier said than done and kicking the single to shore or a sand-bar and re-entering the single from firm ground may be preferable. Remember, if drifting, angle shell to enable current to help push you toward shore.

VI Appendix: Weather Related Health Emergencies

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a condition that occurs when the temperature of the human body is lowered to a dangerous point due to exposure to cold or wet conditions. Cold temperatures and wet conditions work together to pull heat away from the body, lowering the body's core temperature. Even in mild conditions, the addition of rain or submersion in cold water can sufficiently reduce body warmth to trigger hypothermic conditions in the body. A person's condition can degrade rapidly, impairing breathing and coordination, making it impossible to swim or keep one's head above water. Emergency action needs to be taken no matter what level of hypothermia.

Symptoms: rapid shivering, numbness, loss of strength and coordination, semi-consciousness.

Action: Maintain open airway. Transfer to a warm environment as soon as possible. Remove wet clothing. Use blankets to help warm individual or if available a warm shower. Warm torso area first. Seek medical attention.

Profound Hypothermia:

Symptoms: Person will be pale, stiff, and cold, unresponsive to stimuli, and possibly unconscious. Little or no cardiac or respiratory activity will be present.

Action: Move or manipulate as gently as possible. Prevent further heat loss, but DO NOT attempt to rewarm. Maintain open airway, and activate EMS procedures. Call for emergency help immediately.

Heat Related Emergencies

Higher temperatures and high humidity can lead to heat related illnesses that coaches and rowers need to keep in mind. As humidity rises the body's ability to cool off through sweating is diminished since evaporation is limited. The best way to avoid heat related injuries is to practice at cooler times of the day: early morning or late afternoon. The body needs time to acclimate to increased temperatures. Intake of fluids is also key and should be encouraged. Dehydration further impairs the body's ability to cool off. There are two major related heat illnesses to be aware of; heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Heat Exhaustion

Early Symptoms: heavy sweating, cramps, tiredness, weakness, malaise, mild decrease in performance

Action: rest and fluid replacement

Advanced Symptoms: profuse sweating, lack of muscle coordination, impaired judgment, emotional changes

Action: If there is a mild temperature elevation, an ice pack may be used to help cool the body to normal temperatures. Several days rest may be necessary and dehydration is priority.

Heat stroke:

Symptoms: confusion, nausea, vomiting, seizures. The victim loses consciousness. Body temperature rises as high as 106 degrees. Skin is dry and clammy.

Action: Get medical help immediately. Lower body temperature by immersing in water, maintain horizontal position of victim. Stop treatment when victim is conscious.

Safety/Emergency Contacts

Emergency: 911

Rowing Director: Bryan Pape (cell phone: 860.985.4309)

Assistant Rowing Director/Men's Team/High School: Jonathan Near (cell phone: 860.985.2133)

Women's Team/High School: Justin Watson: (860.324.2013)

Director of Park Operations/High School coach: Chris Hayes (860.966.1504)

In the event of an emergency, please dial 911. Depending on where you call from, you will be transferred to either the East Hartford or Hartford Police (possibly Windsor Police). Please be able to give the operator relevant landmarks, i.e. the Bissell Bridge, Great River Park, Charter Oak Landing, etc. For non-emergency situations where you still need assistance, please contact the Rowing Director first, unless it is apparent that contacting someone else on the call list will provide quicker response.

VI. Appendix

River Level Online

<http://newweb.erh.noaa.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=box&gage=hfdc3&view=1,1,1,1,1,1>

Information on PFD's:

Belt Style (Stearns Type V Inflata-Belt) ~ \$65.48

<http://www.iboats.com>

Belt Style, (Mustang)

<http://landfallnavigation.com/sm3020.html> ~ \$80

Draped-towel style ~ \$125

<http://www.SOSpenders.com>

<http://www.iboats.com>

Vest Style:

<http://www.rowalden.com/store/details.asp?ProID=245> ~ \$125

All styles:

<http://www.westmarine.com>

Swimming Certificate

Participant's Name:

Participant's Address:

Note to Lifeguard or Water Safety Instructor

The above named person has applied to participate with Riverfront Recapture, a non-profit rowing club in Hartford, CT. It would be greatly appreciated if you were able to observe him/her perform the swim test and sign this certificate.

Thank you for your assistance.

I observed the above named SWIMMER swim fifty yards without the aid of any propulsion or flotation device. I also observed the SWIMMER tread water or float, without the aid of flotation devices, for two minutes.

Test performed at (name of pool):

Date test performed: _____

Lifeguard/WSI Signature _____

Lifeguard/WSI Name (print please) _____

American Red Cross Certification Number

IV. Off-water rower safety policies

Riverfront Rowing's Off-Water Safety Policies

To best support the health and safety of our rowers, paid and volunteer coaches:

- Pass **Screening** and **Background** checks (RR EE Handbook Sec 200)
- Receive **Training** and **Education** in prohibited behaviors (see below)
- Are provided avenues to **Report** suspected prohibited behaviors (see below)
- Are aware of the **Enforcement** levies should any prohibited behavior be determined (RR EE Handbook Sec 700)

A. SCREENING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

- All applicants for a paid or unpaid coaching position undergo a screening process before being hired. This includes filling out an application, receiving an employee handbook and Rowers' Off-Water Safety Policies, providing permission to have references checked and a criminal background check performed.
- All applicants are informed about our policies and procedures, including our Rowers' Off-Water Safety Policies, and sign a document acknowledging this.

B. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Coaches must report abuse, misconduct and violations of the Safety Policy. To do so, coaches should have a basic understanding of the prohibited behaviors, listed below, and of sexual abusers.

Accordingly, coaches and volunteers complete the USOC's Safesport online program (<http://training.teamusa.org/store/details/1>) and attest to understanding this policy sheet.

Coaches and rowers shall refrain from all forms of misconduct, including the following **prohibited** behaviors:

1. **Hazing:** The imposition of strenuous, often humiliating, tasks as part of a program of initiation.
2. **Harassment:** Aggressive pressure or intimidation. Synonyms include persecution, intimidation, pressure, force, and coercion.
3. **Bullying:** Use of superior strength or influence to intimidate, typically to force the victims to do what the bully wants. Synonyms include persecution, oppression, tormenting, strong-arming.
4. **Physical Misconduct** involves contact or non-contact behavior that can cause *physical* harm. It also includes any act or conduct described as *physical* abuse or *misconduct* under federal or state law (i.e. child abuse, child neglect and assault).
5. **Emotional Misconduct** is a repeated pattern of behavior that can inflict psychological or emotional harm.
6. **Sexual Misconduct** includes sexual abuse, sexual harassment and rape

Coaches should know that sexual offenders often engage in “grooming;” it is the most common strategy offenders use to seduce their victims. Using a combination of attention, affection and gifts, offenders select a child, win the child’s trust--and the trust of the child’s parent or guardian--manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing abuse)

I. TRAINING AND EDUCATION: *OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN*

a. One on One Interaction: Individual Meetings

An individual meeting may be necessary to address an athlete’s concerns, training program, or competition schedule. Under these circumstances, coaches should observe the following guidelines:

- Any individual meeting should occur when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed
- If an individual meeting is to take place in an office, the door should remain unlocked and open
- If a closed-door meeting is necessary, the coach, staff member and/or volunteer must inform another coach, staff member and/or volunteer and ensure the door remains unlocked

b. Common Criteria for Appropriate Physical Contact

Physical contact with athletes – for safety, consolation and celebration – has multiple criteria in common which make them both safe and appropriate. These include:

- the physical contact takes place in public
- there is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact
- the physical contact is for the benefit of the athlete, not to meet an emotional or other need of an adult

c. Electronic communications and social media policy

As part of Riverfront's emphasis on athlete safety, all electronic communications between a coach and current junior rower must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

As with any communication, the content of any electronic communication should be readily available to share with the athlete's family. At the request of a parent or guardian, any email, electronic text, social media or similar communication will copy or include the athlete's parents or guardians.

d. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and similar sites

Coaches should not have rowers join a personal social media page. Athletes and parents can friend the official RR Instagram or FB pages, and coaches can communicate to rowers through the site. All posts, messages, text, or media of any kind between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities or for team-oriented motivational purposes.

C. REPORTING

In the event that a coach observes inappropriate behaviors, suspected physical or sexual abuse, or misconduct, it is the personal responsibility of each person to immediately report his or her observations to Riverfront's Director of Rowing or Riverfront's CFO.

Staff members and volunteers should not attempt to evaluate the credibility or validity of child physical or sexual abuse allegations as a condition for reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities. Instead, it is the responsibility of each coach to immediately report suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse to Riverfront's Director of Rowing or the CFO.

REPORTING POLICY

Riverfront coaches must report:

- (1) violations of the Rowers' Safety Policy,
- (2) misconduct as defined in Riverfront's Rower's Safety Policy, and
- (3) suspicions or allegations of child physical or sexual abuse.

To:

- (1) Riverfront Rowing Director
- (2) Riverfront CFO
- (3) Where applicable, **appropriate law enforcement authorities.**

D. ENFORCEMENT

E. DISCIPLINARY RULES

- F.** Riverfront recognizes that there are varying levels of misconduct. For example, physical and sexual misconduct are serious violations that may result in immediate dismissal. In contrast, a youth participant who tells a single sexually risqué joke constitutes less serious misconduct and depending on the circumstances, might be dealt with more appropriately through dialogue and a verbal warning. In all cases, Riverfront's disciplinary procedures and actions will be proportionate, reasonable and applied fairly and equally.

G. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

- H.** On receipt of an allegation, Riverfront will determine in its discretion the appropriate steps to address the conduct based on several factors, including (i) the age of the complainant or victim, (ii) the age of the accused and (iii) the nature, scope, and extent of the allegations.
- I.** Riverfront will address allegations against a coach under its Employment Policies and Procedures
- J.** Riverfront's disciplinary response will depend on the nature and seriousness of the incident and in extreme cases, misconduct will result in immediate summary dismissal, provided that the accused individual shall be advised of their right to a hearing. If the accused individual is a minor, Riverfront will contact his or her parents or guardians.

K. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Sanctions for violations of the Rowers' Safety Policy will be proportionate and reasonable under the circumstances. In addition to day-to-day guidance, Riverfront may take the following disciplinary actions, without limitation:

- Inform the youth's parent or guardian
- Provide the individual with guidance, redirection and instruction
- Temporary suspension from competition
- File a formal incident report
- Issue a verbal warning
- Issue a written and/or final written warning

- Implement a limited access agreement (e.g., limiting an individual's access to certain buildings or to youth)
- Provide informed supervision, where at least one staff member is informed of the allegation and is instructed to vigilantly supervise the accused participant or stakeholder in his or her interactions with the program and/or organization
- Engage in restorative practices, i.e., creation of a respectful and safe dialogue when a misunderstanding or harm has occurred
- Suspend or terminate employment or membership

ONGOING EMPLOYMENT AND/OR PARTICIPATION

On receipt of a credible and specific allegation of child abuse or other serious misconduct (e.g., physical and sexual abuse as defined in our Rowers' Safety Policy), Riverfront may immediately suspend or terminate the accused individual to ensure participant safety.

MONITORING OUR STRATEGY

By monitoring the interactions among coaches, athletes and other individuals, Riverfront works to prevent, recognize and respond to inappropriate and harmful behaviors as set forth in our Rowers' Safety Policies, while reinforcing appropriate behaviors.
