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## **Introduction**

This document hopes to provide useful safety information. It will be amended or up-dated as necessary.

## **I. Swimming & Life Jackets & Cell Phones**

1. From Oct 1-May 31, those rowing unsupervised by a safety launch must wear a PFD (This is the DEP regulation, and it allows one launch to supervise three "craft."). Those participating in Spring Rowing must wear a life-jacket. Depending upon conditions (i.e high water), PFD's may be required at other times. Having and wearing a PFD is an individual's responsibility. Sites for PFD's are listed in Appendix.

2. Those rowing unsupervised by a safety launch should have a cell phone in their boat. (Scullers who don't own cell phones should contact Brian). Sites for cell phone cases are listed in Appendix.

3. Those rowing unsupervised by a safety launch must take a swim test at a YMCA, local health club etc. Swim test form resides in the News and other Info section of Riverfront's Rowing website and in Appendix.

4. Outside of the three summer months (June, July, August) when coaches and others are around you should follow the buddy system and row with somebody.

5. Those rowing unsupervised any time of year must visit and understand the High Water/Fast Current section.

## **II. 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).

Oars: Crews should place the oars on the grass, not on the docks. Tips should now be up (uniformity for Vortex tips). Scullers may leave oars on the dock when necessary.

Boat Storage. All Riverfront boats should be stored bow towards river. Ideally, all private boats would also be stored bow towards river as uniformity helps with bow/stern overlap of boats in other racks, consistency in lift placement, consistency in bow going left to launch upriver, etc

### **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 (app two-plus feet) 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 possible Lunch/Dinner Boat

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 it's 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.

### **III. Cold Weather Rowing**

Rowing when the water temperature is below 50 degrees, or when the combined water and air temperature is below 75 degrees, should be done with great care by those accompanied by safety launch, and avoided by those without safety launch.

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.

If there is not a launch on the water, traveling in your direction and aware of your presence, you should follow the Buddy System when rowing prior to May 29 and after August 27.

Average CT River temperatures, degrees Fahrenheit: April 45 (with a range of 40 – 50), May 59 (with a range from 53.6 – 67), June 69, July 77, August 76, September 69, October 56 (with a range from 50- 59), Nov 45

1. See below for hypothermia and heat-related attachments

### **IV. Inclement Weather**

Rowers should use common sense 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. Rowers should listen to WTIC 1080 a.m., NOAA weather channel, and visit weather.com. Coaches will cancel rowing if they feel the conditions merit.

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 should return immediately to the dock, or proceed immediately to shore if the boathouse is too distant. There does not have to be rain or thunder to have lightning. If the sky begins to look bad, it probably is.

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 should visit the online graph, linked directly in our News and Other Info section.

River-Level online:

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

1. When water reaches approximately 9' 0" on graph, scullers should exercise caution, discuss conditions with coach, and follow the Buddy System
2. Once water touches ramp (approximately 9' 5" on graph) no singles (or pairs) should go out (doubles and coxed boats may still row but should exercise caution). This is also the policy at this water level for high-level scullers rowing out of the UMass boathouse.
3. Once water reaches approximately 10' 5," on graph, there will be approximately a foot of water to wade through, and no rowing should take place without a safety launch. (Depending on tide and conditions, approximately 10.5' - 11' may be rowable for coxed boats with safety launch.)

## **V. Capsize Procedures and Person Overboard**

Capsize Procedures:

If a crew swamps, flips, or capsizes, the crew should 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 ones 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 crab 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 should 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, semiconsciousness.

**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: Brian Wendry (cell phone: 778.7439)

Assistant Director: Chris Hayes (cell phone: 966.1504)

Ranger Director: Richard Lopa (cell phone: 930.8667)

Assistant Director: Eric Valentine (cell phone: 819.7119)

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. 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, i.e., if Chris is on the water.

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 styles appear least expensive and least obtrusive

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 (While a number of male scullers wear these, these were obtrusive when tried by some women) ~ \$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>

**For information on cell phone cases:**

Cell phone case (Cell Safe DX4 All conditions)

<http://www.performancebike.com/shop/Profile.cfm?SKU=21232&item=20-2615&slitrk=search&slisearch=true> ~ \$20

Cell phone case (Pelican line)

<http://www.landfallnavigation.com/microcase.html> ~\$20

(scroll down for swimming certificate) (this is also in PDF form in the News and Other Info section)

**Swimming Certificate**

**ROWER's Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Note to Lifeguard or Water Safety Instructor**

The above named rower has applied to participate in programs of the Riverfront Recapture, Inc. (RRI), a non-profit rowing club in Hartford, CT. Please be so kind as to assist the would-be rower by observing him/her perform the swim test and if same is performed in a satisfactory manner, please sign the certification and give it to the swimmer to return to the RRI head coach.

Thank you for your assistance.

**Certification by Lifeguard or Water Safety Instructor**

I certify that I personally observed the above named SWIMMER to swim a distance of fifty yards without the aid of any propulsion device such as fins or other aids and without the use of any floatation device and without resting on the side of the pool or any other support. I also observed the named SWIMMER to tread water or float, likewise without aid, support, or use of floatation devices, for a period of five minutes.

Test performed at (name of pool):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date test performed: \_\_\_\_\_

Lifeguard/WSI Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lifeguard/WSI Name (print please)

\_\_\_\_\_  
American Red Cross Certification Number

\_\_\_\_\_