

# SHIPLAKE VIKINGS ROWING CLUB

## SAFETY RULES 2017

British Rowing has issued a Water Safety Code, [RowSafe](#) which provides safety advice to rowers, clubs, events and anyone else who takes part in rowing. It provides guidance on the safety requirements to be met by all clubs, and is the source of most of the guidance in this document. The code prescribes the duties of care for oarsmen and oarswomen, coaches and coxswains.

SVRC accepts the British Rowing Safety Policy and confirms this in its Safety Policy which has been signed by the Chairman and circulated to all members. Members must read and understand the Policy and try to ensure that our club meets the aims given in the Policy.

This Safety Guide describes how Shiplake Vikings has implemented the code, and defines the safety rules for the Club. The Safety Advisor for SVRC is Ian Hill.

The adult section is predominantly a recreational rowing club and we want you to enjoy your rowing in as safe an environment as can be achieved. The junior section is more competitive, but junior boats are also more likely to be accompanied by coaches who provide an extra pair of eyes to help ensure safety.

Please read this guide and ask if you have any queries. Remember that safety is everybody's responsibility so make sure you do not put yourself and others unduly at risk while out on the water. If you see something that you think is unsafe do something about it; at very least tell a committee member.

The rest of this document provides guidance on what you must do to keep our rowing safe.

### ***Are you fit to row?***

- Confirm in writing to the club secretary that you can swim 100 metres in the sort of clothing that you are likely to be wearing while out rowing. You should in addition be able to tread water for at least two minutes and swim underwater for at least five metres. This swimming competence is more demanding than required by RowSafe to recognise the fact that for much of our length of the river, the banks are steep and blocked by overhanging trees making it difficult to leave the water. You are required to confirm your swimming competence each year on your membership renewal form.
- Those who cannot confirm an acceptable level of swimming competence must not use singles, doubles or pairs unless accompanied by rescue boat or coaching boat. Ideally they should only boat with experienced oarsmen / oarswomen.
- Avoid rowing if you are suffering from an injury or illness that might impair your ability to row safely, or that might be aggravated by rowing.

- Avoid injury whilst rowing by warming up and stretching before boating, and focusing on technique while on the water.
- Wear appropriate clothing, avoiding loose fitting tops with pockets and jeans or other clothes that will restrict your movement. Ensure that your clothes are appropriate for the conditions so that you are not too cold or too hot, and remember that you might have to swim in them so avoid anything that will soak up too much water. Multiple layers are better than a single thick layer as they will allow you more flexibility. Wear a hat in cold weather – especially if you do not have a full head of hair to provide insulation.

### ***Is the river safe?***

- Know the rules of navigation on the river, and the hazards and safe limits for our stretch of river. A map of the river between Sonning and Shiplake locks is displayed on the noticeboard at the boathouse. Make sure you are familiar with the limits for rowing and the recommended turning points.
- If you have any doubt about the safety of the river, check at Shiplake Lock whether the Red Board is out (indicating that the Environment Agency consider the river to be ***Not Suitable for Navigation***). Alternatively you can check on the Environment Agency website which provides a quick guide to the state of the river <http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk>, but be aware that the state of the river can change quickly and the Environment Agency website is usually only updated once daily.
- Under no circumstances may members take any boat out if the Red Board is displayed. The lock keeper's number is **0118 9403350**.
- When the river is running strongly but red boards are not displayed, turn before the final bends into the Sonning reach of the river, and immediately downstream of the island between the boathouse and Shiplake to avoid being washed onto the island or down towards the weir.
- Strong winds may also create unsafe conditions, especially in smaller boats (single and double sculls, pairs). Remember that the river at the boathouse may be sheltered – conditions beyond St Patrick's can be very different.
- Do not row in the dark or in dense mist. If you go out in the evening make sure you allow enough time to get back to the boathouse before dark.
- Use your discretion. If you are not confident that it is safe to go out, don't go out.

### ***Is the boat safe for the crew?***

- Before you take a boat out, check that it is safe. Does it have:
  - A rudder and steering gear that works?
  - Heel straps fitted on all shoes?
  - A bow ball that protects the prow of the boat?
  - Hatches on all the buoyancy compartments?
  - Riggers and gates that are in good condition with all fastening nuts securely tightened?
  - Buttons on the oars that are not broken or loose?
- Consider whether you have sufficient experience to manage the boat. Capsizes are most likely in smaller boats, and cold will affect your ability to

recover from an unplanned swim. In winter (November to March) or when the river is flowing fast, novices and juniors (under 16) must not use single sculls and even experienced rowers should avoid taking out a single scull .

- Beginners and juniors should be supervised at all times, even if they are out in a training tub. This means that they must be within sight and shouting distance of the supervisor. It is the responsibility of whoever organises junior outings to make sure that adequate arrangements have been agreed with the club captain or safety adviser before they row. A Junior Member Code of Conduct and a Junior Welfare and Anti-Bullying Policy are appended to the Club Constitution and Rules. All juniors joining the Club, plus one of the respective junior's parents, are required to confirm in writing that they have read and understood both of these documents.
- Coxless boats require one crew member (usually bow) to be responsible for steering and for keeping a watch for obstructions and other boats. Make sure that you have a steersman (or woman) who has sufficient experience. If you are steering you must look ahead at least once every five strokes and more frequently near corners. (See below for guide to steersmen.)

#### ***What happens if there is an accident?***

- Your first priority is to make sure that everybody is safe and nobody is trapped under the boat or in danger of further injury.
- If the boat capsizes or you fall out of it, you should stay with the boat. ***It has buoyancy, you don't.*** Swim the boat to the nearest unobstructed bank before trying to right it or get back in. The river is deep and in some places there is very little shallow water near the bank. If possible try to get to a beach area before trying to right the boat.
- Hypothermia is a real risk – be aware of its symptoms. You must get anybody who has been in the river in cold weather into dry clothing and a warm area as quickly as possible.
- Do not hesitate to seek help or contact the emergency services in the event of injury. If the victim has lost consciousness even for a short time, medical advice must be sought.
- If you see an incident, approach the scene with care and offer assistance. Do not leave until you are sure there is no further danger to those involved.
- All accident, near misses or capsizes must be notified to British Rowing and to the Safety Adviser. See for information needed in incident reports to British Rowing.

#### ***Incident reports***

We are required by British Rowing to report any incidents that occur on or off the water. This should now be done online on the British Rowing Website (<https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org/displays/show>) and may be done by any member of the club. It is every member's responsibility to make sure that any incidents involving injury and damage equipment are recorded and also reported to the Safety Adviser. Near misses, including capsizes, should also be recorded, especially if these could have become serious accidents.

Your incident report should provide at least the following information.

- A detailed summary of the incident, including date, time, names of boats and crew members, and light, wind and stream conditions.
- A sketch, showing boats, obstructions and direction of travel. The map tool provided with the reporting tool should be used to show the location of the incident.
- Statements by those involved and by witnesses in other boats or on the bank.
- If the accident requires first aid treatment then the name of the first aider should also be recorded, and the treatment given.
- Details of hospitals, doctors or any other agency, involved.
- Damage to boats or other objects
- Reports are to be filed as soon as practical after the event, certainly within 7 days and whilst memories are fresh.

The Safety Advisor can be contacted on 01491 612059, or by e-mail at [ih@ian-hill.org.uk](mailto:ih@ian-hill.org.uk).

### ***Guide for steersmen / coxes***

Most rowing accidents result from steering and navigation errors and these often result from lack of competence or lack of attention. Coxes and steersmen must

- Check the steering equipment, including the fin, before the outing as part of the boat checking procedure. Any defects must be reported and the boat marked as unusable.
- Follow correct steering procedures and navigation rules. You should always travel on the right hand side of the river, i.e. the opposite side to that used on British roads.
- Communicate effectively with their crew.
- Know how to stop the boat quickly and safely in an emergency and practice this skill with their crews.
- Pay attention and be aware of their position at all times in relation to circulation patterns, hazards and other water users. Inform the club of any change in the location or type of hazard encountered, such as newly fallen trees or large logs in the water.
- Give way to overtaking crews. If another rowing crew wants to overtake, you should move over to the middle of the river to let them through.
- Watch out for other boats and shout a loud warning if you think that they are going to get in your way: "Look ahead!".
- Recognise and respect the rights and needs of other water users, especially anglers.
- Watch out for swimmers at all times and be alert to unexpected floating objects.
- Take particular care through the narrow channel downstream of St Patrick's as well as in the vicinity of Sonning Bridge. The current at these points can be fast and tricky.
- All steersmen and scullers must read [RowSafe](#).

See the chart of the river on the boathouse noticeboard or attached to this document guidance on where you should go.

### Coxed Boats

- Wear a lifejacket, as a cox, at all times when afloat but not use an auto inflation lifejacket in a bow loaded boat.
- Make sure that all crew members can hear and understand your instructions. If necessary use voice projection equipment to ensure this is the case.

### Coxless Boats

Steering a sculling boat or coxless boat is difficult: because

- a) you are going backwards, and
  - b) you have to think about your rowing at the same time.
- You should look around often, usually at least every five strokes, and more often when you are going round a corner. Remember to look both directions – obstructions could be anywhere on the river.
  - Watch out for cruisers. They may not understand the difficulties of steering a rowing boat. Be ready to stop suddenly and be sure to shout a loud warning to them if they are coming too close.
  - Always be on your guard to do an emergency stop. It is a good idea to practise this often, just as people do when they are learning to drive.
  - Give way to overtaking crews. If another rowing crew wants to overtake, you should move over to the middle of the river to let them through.
  - Take particular care through the narrow channel downstream of St Patrick's as well as in the vicinity of Sonning Bridge. The current at these points can be fast and tricky.
  - All steersmen and scullers must read [RowSafe](#).

See the chart of the river on the boathouse noticeboard or attached to this document guidance on where you should go.

### Coaches

Coaches are expected to:

- Be conversant with the risk assessment for the activity that they are leading and understand the risks associated with the activities that they are leading.
- Take action, where necessary, to ensure that nobody is exposed to substantial or intolerable risk.
- Ensure that participants are aware of, and abide by, the club's rules.

### Use of launches

- Coaching and rescue launches may only be used by those approved by Shiplake College to do so, and should follow the guidance provided by the College at all times.
- Users of launches should wear a lifejacket at all times while afloat.
- The driver of the launch is responsible for ensuring that the necessary safety equipment is available in the launch and in good condition before setting out. This includes a throw line, a paddle, a kill cord cut-out for the engine, a first aid kit, sufficient fuel, a toolkit and a supply of drinking water. In cold weather foil blankets should also be carried.

## ***Hypothermia***

It is important that you can recognise the symptoms of hypothermia and know what to do about it.

Hypothermia occurs when the whole body has been chilled to a much lower than normal temperature, and can no longer maintain its heat, i.e. below 35°C.

### ***Symptoms and signs of hypothermia***

The following are the most usual symptoms and signs, but not all may be present:-

- a) Unexpected or unreasonable behaviour possibly accompanied by complaints of coldness and tiredness.
- b) Physical and mental lethargy with failure to understand a question or orders.
- c) Slurring of speech.
- d) Violent outbursts of unexpected energy and violent language, becoming uncooperative.
- e) Failure or abnormality in vision.
- f) Twitching.
- g) Lack of control of limbs, unsteadiness and complaining of numbness and cramp.
- h) General shock with pallor and blueness of lips and nails.
- i) Slow weak pulse, wheezing and coughing

### ***Treatment of hypothermia***

When hypothermia is suspected the aim must be to prevent the casualty losing more body heat and to rewarm the casualty

- a) Do not take or give alcohol in cold conditions. Alcohol accelerates heat loss as well as impairing judgement.
- b) Send for help. Hypothermia is a medical emergency whether the patient is conscious or unconscious.
- c) If conscious the victim should be actively rewarmed under careful observation.
- d) If unconscious the victim must be got to medical aid as soon as possible.

A very dangerous situation is still present when a person who has been in the water for some time is taken out. Further heat loss must be prevented. The victim must be protected against wind and rain as much as possible.

Rewarming can be carried out by:-

- a) Wrapping the victim in a thermal / exposure blanket.
- b) Others placing their warm bodies against the victim.
- c) Giving warm drinks (*if conscious*).

# Shiplake Vikings

## The Thames at Shiplake

