

Safety Alert 4

What Lies Beneath

You have worked hard for months, you have won and you have earned your celebration, but do not let it change someone's life. There can be dangers under the water.

If you dive into shallow water then your head and neck are very vulnerable. Most serious involve injuries the neck. It does not take much to cause serious spinal injuries especially when the neck is not in a neutral position.

In 2013 within the UK, 18 people died as a result of diving or jumping into shallow water and this does not include fatalities from the practice of "Tombstoning".

What about the cox? He or she will have no real control over what angle or where they enter the water. A hidden underwater object can cause a life changing injury. The majority of waters around pontoons and river or canal banks are relatively shallow and can contain objects ranging from hypodermic needles to fence posts or shopping trolleys.

In a recent incident a rower sustained significant and debilitating injury as can be seen from these images of their face and stomach. They also sustained significant injury to one of their hands, these are too graphic to display. The person concerned was fortunate in that their spine was not injured.



The injuries were sustained as a result of the person diving into shallow water at a rowing venue and hitting hidden submerged rocks. If a cox had landed on their back or head in the same location then the injuries could be much more serious.

Even in familiar open waters unless the water is totally clear, it is usually difficult to see what lies beneath the surface or how deep the water is. Diving or throwing people into such water is unsafe.

The message is very simple, do not throw your cox into the water and do not dive in yourself.

September 2014