

Safety Alert - Is it safe to go afloat alone?

Many scullers enjoy the freedom of an outing alone on a lovely quiet stretch of water but there are hidden dangers that they may not be aware of.

If you have a problem when out sculling alone then there may be nobody to help you and nobody to raise the alarm.

It is up to each Club to set its own rules. Clubs should set rules that tell their members whether an outing can or cannot happen. This is not a decision that can be left to members alone.

The rules should be defined based on risk assessment. The level of risk can be estimated by considering the potential severity of a hazardous event, taking into account the controls, and the probability of that harm occurring, taking into account the barriers. (See [Safety Basics](#) on Row How for more information on risk assessment).

Factors that tend to increase the probability of a hazardous event include:-

- The presence of other water users (boats, wash, etc.)
- The extent to which the water is exposed to the wind
- Weather (e.g. wind strength, including gusts, and direction)
- Stream speed and static obstructions such as moored boats, bridges etc.
- The relative experience and competence of the rower

Factors that tend to increase the severity of a hazardous event include:-

- Absence of other water users, spectators, coaches, passers-by, water-side safety equipment
- Low water temperature and deep water (cannot wade ashore)
- Large distance to the bank
- Obstructions at the water's edge (e.g. high banks, reeds and walls).

The conclusions on risk should be used to define the Club rules and these should be clearly communicated to Club members. These rules should state under what conditions boats may go afloat alone and in company.

For example, they may say that small boats (1xs, 2xs & 2-s) may only go afloat in specified areas in groups of two or more and stay within sight of each other; Juniors may only go afloat if accompanied by a coach; and no boats may go afloat if there is ice or “white horses” on the surface of the water.

Please remember, Juniors should **always** be accompanied by a responsible adult.

November 2015