



Safety Alert - Check your Heel Restraints

There continue to be incidents where rowers' feet become trapped in their shoes when they capsize. These could be prevented if the heel restraints are checked and, where necessary, improvements are made.

RowSafe says a thorough boat check should include:

- Heel restraints are strong, secure and durable and the correct length (laces and cable ties are not appropriate).
- Shoes shall be in good condition so that they do not break or become partially detached from the boat in the event of a rower trying to remove their feet during a capsize.
- Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will remain in the boat, each shoe or device shall be independently restrained such that when the heel reaches the horizontal position the foot will be released from the shoe.

Heel restraint failure modes include:-

- Absence of a cord,
- Failure or breakage of the cord under load, perhaps due to:
 - Cord uses an inappropriate material,
 - Cord chafed on sharp edge,
 - Cord weak due to age, rot, UV degradation, etc.,
- Breakage so that the shoe is no longer attached to the heel restraint cord,
- Failure of the attachment point where the cord connects to the shoe,
- Failure or slippage of the of the knot or fastening connecting the cord to the shoe,
- Cord excessively long,
- Failure or slippage of the knot or fastening connecting the cord to the stretcher,
- Failure or breakage of the stretcher,
- Foot trapped under the part of the wing rigger that is above the stretcher, and
- The shoe is not firmly fixed to the stretcher and becomes detached.

Please remember that in the event of a capsize, the heel restraint system can come under considerable load and structural failures can occur.

Please also ensure that the shoes are not too small and are not fastened too tightly.

Think of your heel restraint as if it was your parachute, you may need it.

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