



BRITISHROWING

HRSA Monthly Report

July 2022

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Incidents in July

Take Care when cycling

She was coaching a junior sculler from her bike. Her attention was taken by another crew proceeding upstream towards them. She wobbled on her bike just at the point where the towpath narrows and caught her handlebar on the wall. She was on her own bike, using cleats (to hold the soles of her cycling shoes on the pedals), she could not get her foot to the ground quickly enough and she, and the bike, ended up in the river! She was assisted out of the river by a passer-by and suffered no ill effects.

Please take care to wear appropriate footwear when cycling.

Rowing in a target rich environment

There are many different types of waterway users in and on the water. Many of them are not used to being there and do not understand how to keep themselves safe. In July, rowers have collided with:-

- A buoy and needed help from the RNLI to become disentangled
- Children swimming near the boat club landing stage
- A barge with engine failure that was across the waterway
- Several barges, at different times and in different places
- A recreational hire boat containing people who had been drinking (allegedly)
- Several stand up paddleboarders, at different times and in different places
- Rocks on the bank
- A black canoe, with the canoeist wearing black and using a black paddle.
- Several canoes and kayaks, at different times and in different places
- A large fallen tree
- A person snorkelling
- A boathouse when a trailer was being reversed

There were also many mid-waterway collisions between rowing boats. Please take extra care at this time of year and keep an especially good lookout.

Collapse due to heat stress

A rower collapsed on land at a competition due to suspected heat stress. The first aiders were concerned about her safety decided to call an ambulance but were advised it would be an hour. The First Aiders took her to A&E in their ambulance car.

Frequent reminders to keep hydrated, covered up and apply sun cream, had been given, over the public address system. The lesson learned was that there should, in future include the availability of more shade in hot weather.

Use your kill cords

There was a report that launches were being driven at a regatta with kill cords obviously not worn. In many cases umpires were being transported in these launches. Concern raised to race control before 10am; four hours later there had been no change.

Please see the Safety Alert – Launch Driving, available [here](#), for more information on the correct use of kill cords.

Incident on the French Canals

An experienced 4x+ participated in an annual three-day tour, along with about 45 other quads including a large UK contingent.

Five quads were in the lock, the water level had been lowered and they were all waiting for the downstream gates to be opened. The upstream paddles were opened and the volunteers tried to open the upstream gates - while at the same time other volunteers were starting to open the downstream ones. They managed to get an upstream gate partially open on one side which caused a rush of water at an angle to enter the lock. One boat capsized immediately.

The French system of loading boats diagonally made this worse; in a UK lock, boats would have been side by side. Ropes were not used as they had been in previous locks.

Passing through locks can be hazardous even if the locks are operated properly. Please make sure that your crew and support group know the correct procedure for operating locks. The Recreational Rowing Committee has produced extensive guidance on taking rowing boats through locks, this is available [here](#).

Care for a rower who collapsed, twice

At the end of a high intensity erg session on a Tuesday, a rower complained of severe pain, breathlessness and appeared to lose consciousness. He was seen by paramedics and admitted to the local hospital, given medication, and told to rest for a few days and take medication, and subsequently discharged.

The following Sunday he became ill again when afloat. He did a practice start and about 100m then had sudden onset severe pain again, difficulty in breathing. The pain was initially described as a chest pain, like a tight band. He drifted in and out of consciousness.

Please take care when dealing with someone who has been ill, particularly if they have become ill when exercising. Recovery from illness can be a slow process, people do not make sudden transitions from ill to well; it takes time. If someone has needed medical treatment then it would help if they ask the treating physician when they can return to exercise.

The sort of answers that could be expected (depending on the circumstances) could be:-

- not until a full medical assessment shows that it is safe to do so, or
- check with your GP in a few days and see what he or she says, or
- leave it for a few days then build up to strenuous exercise gradually, stop immediately if you feel....., or
- as soon as you feel ready to do so.

Rowers, and their coaches, should be encouraged to be more thoughtful about returning to strenuous exercise following a medical event or an injury. The treating physician would be a good first source of advice.

Capsize of a gig

In last month's report there was some information about the capsize of a pilot gig in a breaking swell at the mouth of an estuary.

The Harbour Authority has commissioned a detailed report. This provides further information, not known at the time of writing last month's report. It contains the following:-

Both British Rowing and CPGA have already published safety bulletins from this incident which refer to the use of Auto inflation Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and the use of rope strops for feet. Their recommendations are fully supported.

At the time of the gig's capsize she was lying 6th in the race. The Gig was taken up by a breaking wave as shown in the series of photographs below. The Gig was lifted up, lost steerage way, then broached (went across the wave broadside) and then tumbled over in the breaking wave.





Of the 7 crew (Cox + 6 rowers), 4 of the crew were momentarily under the upturned boat and had to swim out. One, with a now inflated PFD (as the PFDs worn auto inflated on contact with water), was for a short time, caught by the strap of their PFD on an oar pin. However, very soon, all seven were clear of the upturned Gig.

Adjacent Gigs ceased racing and stood by, and rescue craft and a passing Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) swiftly removed all persons from the water.

The shore team (based at the start line) contacted the Coastguard. Harbour Authority launches which were in the vicinity attended, the RNLI Inshore lifeboat although launched, was not required.

The crew of the gig were then returned to the start line / shore team where supporters/ families/ Gig clubs were all gathered. Although perhaps a natural response, this was as not in accordance with the competition safety plan which had placed First Aiders (as a casualty reception centre) at a Car park. As a result, there was temporary confusion between the Coastguard and competition organisers on who had been rescued, who had been accounted for, and who had been seen by medical staff.

The upturned Gig was towed back to a beach by a Harbour Authority launch. Harbour Authority staff struggled to find the gig's painter and had to attach a tow line to the Gig's bow fender.

Analysis; Actions of this Gig's Crew and other Gigs

The actions of the this Gig's Cox and crew could not have prevented this capsizing. They clearly worked well as a team to support each other in the water and the support from other Gigs who stood by is to be commended.

The swift on scene actions by the competition organisers rescue craft, and a passing RIB ensured that all the gig's crew were out of the water within minutes.

The Competition had no formal Risk Assessment. The Competition report suggests that a 'dynamic Risk Assessment' was in use which is good, but that there was no underlying formal Risk Assessment, as a result too much reliance was placed on personal judgement, not agreed parameters for weather, swell and tides. At this location, when there is a swell, then there is an additional risk of breaking waves.

Analysis: Rescue/ Safety Boats

27. The Cox of the gig that capsized reported that difficulty was encountered getting the crew from the water into the 'high sided' rescue boats. Dorys and Whalers and other high sided boats are not ideally placed for getting people out of the water, particularly if the casualty is cold, in shock, and laden down by clothing. In addition, hauling someone out headfirst, should be avoided whenever possible. RIBs are ideal for safety boats; they have low freeboard and casualties can be rolled horizontally into the RIB.

Analysis: Gig (Boat) and Crew Safety

Capsized and swamped wooden gigs do float, but just beneath the water, and they do not provide sufficient buoyancy to keep their crews afloat.

Gig rowers are naturally reluctant to wear PFDs (except for the Cox and under I 6s where CPGA rules require this). PFDs can be restrictive when rowing, create friction and in the Summer are hot to wear. Notwithstanding this, it is suggested that PFDs should be worn by all crew in certain circumstances. Where and when should be up to Gig Clubs to consider but factors to consider are; very exposed open water, in extreme cold weather conditions, or by non-swimmers/ less able crews.

The wearing of Auto inflation PFDs in Gigs is not supported. Manual inflated PFDs are safer in the Gig rowing environment (manual release gives the wearer control over the decision to deploy the lifejacket).

The Harbour Authority reported that the gig, upturned, was difficult to tow as the painter could not be located. It is understood that a painter is a mandatory piece of equipment for Gigs (through CPGA rules).

In my view the key learning points are:-

- Gigs are excellent sea boats in most conditions but there are conditions (as described and depicted above) in which they are liable to broach and capsize. Clubs and Competitions should define courses that avoid the need for gigs to be exposed to these conditions. Coaches and coxes should be made aware of these conditions and encouraged to avoid them.
- The use of a "dynamic risk assessment" is not a suitable and sufficient alternative to a full, detailed risk assessment. This is explained in detail below.
- It is very creditable that other gigs stood by to render assistance, in compliance with rule 10 of the CPGA Rules of Racing.
- Capsized and swamped wooden gigs do not provide sufficient buoyancy to keep their crews afloat.
- PFDs, or some other form of floatation device should be carried in gigs when there is any risk of capsize or swamping. Foam filled lifejackets are carried by many coastal rowing boats, these should be considered. This may need further discussion.
- Care should be taken in the selection of safety boats to ensure that they are appropriate for the task and for the conditions.
- Competition Safety Plans should be well communicated and complied with.



How to use a “Dynamic Risk Assessment”

The term “Dynamic Risk Assessment” is often used although it is not, in itself, a risk assessment at all. It is simply a supplement to a full, detailed risk assessment compiled by a club or competition. The dynamic part assesses any particular hazards of the day and identifies anything that should be done to address those hazards. For example, if wind was such that there were sheltered areas and exposed areas then a club could advise less capable rowers to keep to the sheltered areas.

The full, detailed risk assessment should be used to define club or competition safety rules, procedures and practices.

Please do not assume that if the particular hazards of the day are addressed then that is all that is needed. The everyday hazards should also be addressed. Remember that the “Dynamic Risk Assessment” is a supplement and not an alternative.

Inflation tests for Lifejackets

There was a discussion about the method of inflating a lifejacket in order to check the integrity of its bladder. It was recognised that simply blowing (by mouth) into the oral inflation tube introduces moisture that may be harmful over time. The correspondent had cannibalised an old bike inner tube with one end sealed to a bike pump and the other end cable-tied temporarily to the lifejacket’s oral inflation tube.

A lifejacket supplier commented that care should be taken not to damage the oral valve, either by passing too much pressure through it or by releasing the pressure using your finger. Within an approved service centre for your lifejacket they have controlled dry air supplies and the right connection to ensure this valve cannot get damaged. The best option to inflate the bladder is to use a manual low pressure pump. The tube must go over the outside of the oral tube and not inside. Powered pumps are not recommended. The “only” way to let it down is to turn the cap upside down and apply it to the valve.

I commented that moisture from breath will not be a good thing in the lifejacket bladder. The bike pump idea is neat and could be emulated by anyone. I normally use the foot pump from my inflatable. This delivers large volumes at low, but sufficient, pressure. The inside diameter of the tube fits neatly over the outside of the oral inflation tube. Inflating one lifejacket using a bike pump may be OK but it will be a tiring process if there are many to check. It may be acceptable, from a moisture point of view, to inflate by mouth once but if this is repeated each year then the accumulation of moisture in the bladder could be harmful, particularly if the lifejacket is not protected from frost in the winter.

Please be careful about leaks in the lifejacket bladder. They may not be serious in themselves but they are indicators of weak areas of the bladder. Inflation, in service with the CO₂ cylinder, can be quite an explosive process and the bladder can rupture starting at the stress concentrations provided by weak areas.

Product Recall of Lifejackets and Buoyancy aids

The UK Government Office for Product Safety and Standards has issued a Product Recall notice that can be found [here](#). It relates to eleven models of life jackets sold via Amazon with brand names NILIPEI, FLOATTOP, LIXONG, ROSOAMY, GRELANT, AJING, ZENING, STECTO, OMOUBOI, WELLPATH and Rrtizan.

The products do not meet the requirements of the relevant regulations and show no demonstration of having been conformity assessed. The products have been recalled from end users and the listings removed by the online marketplace (Amazon). If you have any of these products then please stop using them and contact the distributor you purchased them from to request redress.

Support for Rowing Ireland

The Irish Department of Transport has issued Marine Notice No. 42 of 2022, This is a Notice to all Masters, Owners and Users of Pleasure and Recreational Craft, Boating Clubs and Training Providers. It contains "Important Safety Advice for those involved in Rowing". It can be found [here](#) and highlights regulations already in place. I provided the following comments to Rowing Ireland:-

Almost all of the requirements in this document are sensible and proportionate. However, I have a problem with a couple of points as I will explain. I would be happy if most of this was common practice in this country and most of it is consistent with our recommendations.

One of the items that I think is wrong is the requirement that rowers should be able to swim 100 metres. We have concluded a long debate on this because it is socially divisive and not necessary; it is more important that rowers can float than swim. People from deprived backgrounds often cannot swim because their parents do not have the time or money to teach them. We want rowing to be a sport for all and do not want to exclude anyone.

Swimming ability is not very relevant as it is better to float rather than swim. This is explained [here](#) and [here](#). There is information on how to float [here](#).

Is it always necessary for rowers to be escorted by a safety boat? I think that this depends on the conditions at the venue, the capabilities of the crew and the presence of other boats in the vicinity (we teach "Buddy Rescue" = climbing onto the back of someone else's boat to be rescued). I would prefer that clubs complete a risk assessment to determine the level of support that they need to provide for their rowers. What may be appropriate for new, young rowers may not be necessary for experienced, established rowers.

The lifejacket requirement applies to boats with an overall length of less than 7 metres. Even a single sculling boat is about 7 metres long.

The need for a communication device (other than a mobile phone) presupposes that there is someone to receive the message. In this country it is unlikely that a Coastguard will be able to receive a message on VHF Marine Mobile Band CH16 from a boat on an inland river.

Other than that I think that this is excellent advice.

Support for the CPGA

Appointment of a CPGA HRSA

The CPGA is implementing a new 5 year strategy. As part of a changing structure, they are keen to appoint a CPGA Honorary Safety Adviser. I have been asked to meet with a CPGA Trustee and another CPGA representative to discuss this. The new CPGA structure will have an enhanced safety component and they have already been approached by potential volunteers from across the sport to help deliver this. The CPGA is keen to secure professional oversight to help them to develop the safety element. They have very much appreciated my support to date and would welcome the opportunity to work with me.

My response was that as the Honorary Rowing Safety Adviser of British Rowing, I am flattered that the CPGA has decided that it needs to appoint a Honorary Safety Adviser.

I think that the CPGA needs a Rowing Safety adviser rather than someone to advise on safety in general. From time to time I do advise on other issues that are nothing to do with rowing (e.g. petrol storage, asbestos in buildings, etc.) but this is outside of my remit. If you need help with issues like this then you only have to ask.

Being HRSA is not an easy role to fill as whoever does the job has to understand what the word "adviser" means. They provide guidance and advice; they do not tell people what they must, or must not, do. They have to be aware that they have influence but no authority, this will be a problem for some people.

They also have to understand that the challenge is to find a way that people can enjoy the sport safely. It is to find a safe way that people can do things and not to tell them "you can't do that" (although sometimes we have to say that but doing so is an admission of our failure).

Flexibility is also important, and the understanding that one size does not fit all. An activity that may be safe at Caradon or in Carrick Roads, may not be safe in the open sea off St Ives. The concept of Risk Assessment is important.

They also have to control their work to ensure that it is sustainable in the long term. What nobody needs is someone with a flash of enthusiasm that burns out over a few months. You need someone who can take a calmer approach.

It would be nice to have someone who can work with me so that we can collaborate for the benefit of rowers in general. In the real world people are successful if they work as a team and collaborate with others.

I have developed a support network to help me in this work. This includes our Honorary Medical Adviser, the Regional Rowing Safety Advisers, members of the British Rowing staff, my wife, experts from the RNLI, and others. It would help your HRSA to develop a similar network or work with me and rely on mine.

The sort of person you may choose to avoid is the retired mariner who thinks he knows everything; someone who is used to giving orders and expecting to be obeyed. In my view you need someone who understands gig rowing, gig rowers and gig clubs. It helps if they have some understanding of coaching as this develops the ability to work collaboratively with others to improve standards.

They also need someone with plenty of time and few other commitments. My job with British Rowing takes about half of my working time. I attached my Job Description but this was written in 2013 and the role has developed since then.

Review of a Gig Championship Risk Assessment

I was asked to review the risk assessment for a Gig Championship Regatta and to comment on the proposed use of a catamaran launch for rescue. The following comments were provided:-

A risk assessment for an event should only include those risks that the organisers can influence or control. The hazards associated with towing boats to the event are not under the control of the race organisers. They should be in the clubs' risk assessments but not in that of the race organisers.

I do not like the format but it is acceptable. What the organisers appear to be trying to do is show what the level of risk would be in the absence of the controls later specified.

Providing all the residual risks are low or medium then it does not matter that the Initial Risks are high.

Where a risk is assessed as Medium then I do not think it is acceptable to say "No further Controls Required". The further controls could involve rescue, first aid, or something else.

Now some details.

Towing and Driving This should be in the clubs' risk assessments but not in that of the race organisers. There could be a problem in the race organisers saying what the clubs **must** do because the organisers are not able to enforce this requirement. They are implicitly taking responsibility for this risk.

Under "Loading and unloading of gigs, carrying, lifting and manual handling" it says "Marshalls to unload and load". Really? I think that it could say "Marshalls to supervise the unloading and loading". Personally, I think that this should be the responsibility of the clubs.

Under "Man Overboard", saying that "All life jackets must have been serviced within the last 12 months by a qualified agent." presupposes that the rowers will be wearing lifejackets. Again the servicing of lifejackets is something that the race organisers cannot be responsible for. Are the race organisers going to check the service certificate for each lifejacket?

"Any crews witnessing an incident to stop rowing, raise oars and radio - stating the gig you are in, heat and position on course." They should do more than this to help. They should move closer to the casualty so that people in the water have something buoyant to hang on to or climb into.

Under "Communications" it says that "Mobile phones to be used as a backup." If so they should be in waterproof pouches and be buoyant so that they float. Each should be tied to a member of the crew (cox) and not to the boat.

Under "Weather, Sea Conditions, Waves, Wind, Tide, all unexpected changes in rowing conditions". In view of the recent capsizes (noted above), I think that more care is needed here. In particular ground seas, swells and breaking waves should be considered.

I think that the remainder is OK but not wonderful. There are always opportunities for improvement. There is no mention of calling for outside assistance and I think there should be (999 for Ambulance; 999 or MMB VHF Ch 16 for Coastguard). Are the RNLI on standby?

Now the catamaran launch. Something like this is used on rivers. They are acceptable for coaching but not suitable for rescue. They are not stable and once one sponson is immersed then it is bound to capsize. I agree that Ribs are the preferred option on the sea.

Converting Lifejackets for use in Gigs from Automatic to Manual inflation

In last month's report and the Safety Alert that accompanied it, I explained that there are circumstances where manual inflation lifejackets are preferred to automatic inflation ones and explained the process for converting from automatic to manual. There was a response to say that safety features should not be disabled.

My response was that there are conditions in which having an auto- rather than manual-inflation lifejacket introduces risk. In these circumstances, converting a lifejacket from auto- to manual- inflation using the manufacturers' recommended procedure and their recommended proprietary devices, will reduce risk. Many clubs would not be able to buy a whole new set of lifejackets and would wish to convert the ones that they do have.

It is absolutely wrong to characterise this as "*disabling a safety feature, without testing being carried out to ensure there will be no issues*". If a person was below decks in a sinking boat wearing an inflated auto-inflation lifejacket then they would be pinned against the ceiling and not able to swim down and through a hatch. Real life is nuanced, we have to understand what could happen.

I came to the conclusion that, in gigs, it would be safer to have a manual inflation lifejacket. I checked this with colleagues in the RNLI and CPGA and they agreed.

Request for advice from a new CRSA at a Gig rowing club

There was a request from someone who had recently volunteered to be the Health and Safety officer at a Gig club asking for general information on Rowing Safety.

The response was that there is quite a lot of information to absorb but please try not to deal with it all at once.

Our basic guidance is contained in RowSafe, this can be downloaded by following the link [here](#). RowSafe contains safety advice on all types of rowing so you will find items of relevance to fixed seat rowing on the sea throughout the document. However, section 10.2 relates specifically to "Fixed Seat Rowing on the Sea". Section 8.1 deals with hypothermia.

RowHow contains further information and training materials on Hypothermia and Risk Assessment. This is normally available to members of British Rowing and can be accessed [here](#). If you are not a member then there is a work around solution. Please let me know if you need more information on this.

This sounds like a very short answer but I think that when you look at RowSafe you will find the answers to many of your questions.

Gig rowers wearing lifejackets

There was a statement in the Safety Alert - Manual Lifejackets in Gigs issued in June that:-

"It is recommended that rowers, particularly if in traditional wooden gigs, should wear lifejackets because these boats have little inherent buoyancy when swamped. They are not able to support the weight of the crew in the water."

There was some concern that the use of the word "should" was open to interpretation.

The response was that if I had a magic wand or absolute power to command then gig rowers would wear lifejackets when at sea. However, in the real world, I can only provide guidance and advice. That is why it says "should" and not "must".

I agree that this should be a matter for each club based on its risk assessment. There are many factors that each club should take into account, these include:-

- the condition of the water on which they row (inland estuary or open sea)
- the weather and sea/water state on the day, including forecast conditions during the outing
- whether they are using a traditional wooden gig or a fibreglass gig with large buoyancy compartments
- the strength and maturity of the crew
- the age of the crew (older people often cannot swim as well as they think they can)
- the water temperature
- the prevalence of wash, etc. that could swamp their boat
- the presence or absence of other boats in the vicinity that could rescue rowers in the water (e.g. at competitions)
- the distance from land/shore
- the tide direction if this could sweep people in the water into danger or out to sea
- the availability of radios, etc. to call for help but only if help is very close nearby

This should be a decision by the club and not left to individual rowers. Each club should define its rules based on its assessment of risk at the place where it rows.

Swimming ability is not very relevant as it is better to float rather than swim. This is explained [here](#) and [here](#). There is information on how to float [here](#).

I recognise that the CPGA has rules requiring children to wear lifejackets and think that this is entirely right and proper.

A rower who has non-epileptic seizures

There was a question about whether a rower who has non-epileptic seizures should be treated in the same way as a person who has epileptic seizures. The response was that if a disorder has the same effects as epilepsy and causes the same or similar symptoms as epilepsy then, as far as safety provisions are concerned, it should be managed in the same way that a person with epilepsy should be managed.

The medical aspects of the condition may be different and the medical management of the person may also be different to that of a person with epilepsy but the precautions that clubs, etc. need to take will be the same.

Clubs cannot, and should not, be expected to have the ability to diagnose and treat people who are ill. They should rely on guidance from medical professionals who understand the condition and know the individual. We simply need guidance from the medical professional so that we know what we need to do to keep this person, and others, safe.

Please refer again to the guidance on the British Rowing website [here](#)

Points easily missed from risk assessments

The problem with all risk assessments is that hazards may be missed. If the hazard is not identified then the risk will not be assessed.

- In the summer, ensure that hazards associated with hot weather are included (see below).
- Phones in waterproof cases should float and should be attached to the body of the person rather than to their boat.
- In the event of lightning, it is necessary but not sufficient to get the crews off the water. It is also necessary to get all the people into the shelter of a building or vehicle.
- Make sure that the risk assessment is consistent with the safety plan.
- Ensure that rescue launches have sufficient casualty carrying capacity. Launch drivers can instruct people to climb on top of their boats and wait to be rescued.
- Do not assume that "slight physical injury" will result if pedestrians are hit by boats on land.
- It is possible to have barriers to reduce the probability of a pre-existing health condition causing harm. These could include asking clubs to ensure that their competitors are healthy and fit enough to complete the course.

In general, whenever you are producing a Club or Competition Risk Assessment, please be careful to include these points.

Inclusion of the Effects of Heat in Risk Assessments

Recent experience has shown that high temperatures can cause problems for rowers. Please ensure that this is included in your club and competition risk assessments. There is more information in the following sections of [RowSafe](#):-

- 8.2 Sunburn, Heat Illness and exhaustion
- 9.1 Weather (examples to include in risk assessments)

Also see the Safety Alert - Avoiding and Treating Heat Exhaustion that accompanies this report.

Safety Alert - Avoiding and Treating Heat Exhaustion

This Safety Alert was issued and distributed in July, a copy accompanies this report. It is intended to address prevention and first aid treatment of heat exhaustion and not deal with the more difficult but less common issues relating to Heat Stroke. The treatment of Heat Stroke is more problematic and requires medical intervention.

Postponement of the oldest rowing race in the world

This race has been held every year since 1715 and takes place over a 7,000 metre course on an inland tidal river. It is currently rowed in single sculling boats (1xs). This year's race was planned to start at 2:00 pm on Tuesday 19th July. The start time is tide dependant. I was asked for advice on the advisability of having the race at this time. The organisers would ensure that all competitors were advised to keep well hydrated, carry water and be well protected from the sun. Each competitor would have their own support launch. At the time of this request the Met Office Amber Extreme Heat Warning expired at 23:59 on Monday 18th July.

My response was that, on balance, it was probably safe to hold the race taking into account the provisions outlined above.

The Met Office subsequently amended its Amber Extreme Heat Warning so that it expired at 23:59 on Tuesday 19th July. I then advised that, on balance, it was probably not safe to hold the competition. The competition was postponed.

The Met Office subsequently amended its warning to become a Red Extreme Heat Warning.



Respect the Water and National Drowning Prevention Day

National Drowning Prevention day was on Monday 26th July. It included adverts on national television and articles in news programmes.

The Respect the Water campaign is being re-energised. The emphasis is on calling for help rather than entering the water to effect a rescue. Many people have become casualties by entering the water themselves when trying to effect a rescue.

WHAT TO DO

If you see someone in trouble in the water, the best way you can help is by staying calm, staying on land, and following the 3-step rescue guide – Call, Reach and Throw.

		
CALL 999 and ask for the right service	TELL them to float on their back	THROW them something that floats

There is more information [here](#). Please remember that a throw line can be used to effect a rescue. A poster accompanies this report.

Towing Rowing Boats afloat

There was a request for advice on the safest and most effective way to tow a rowing boat; from 1x to 8+, given the fact that any rescue of a rowing boat would likely have the additional issue of rowers, blades and riggers making it difficult to tow alongside/behind.

The response was, once the crew is safe and out of their rowing boat then the boat can be recovered.

I would remove the oars and sculls and carry them in the rescue boat or in the boat that will be towed if there is space to do so. I would then recommend a tow astern of the safety boat. An alongside tow works best if the stern of the towing boat is astern of the boat being towed. Having an alongside tow with the stern of the towed boat astern of the towing boat makes steering difficult.

Be gentle with the steering. Change course slowly. Have someone keep an eye on the towing line and the towed boat.

Strong winds, particularly crosswinds, can make towing difficult. In a cross wind it may help to position the towing boat on the upwind side of the waterway. If towing astern and the wind is strong then shorten the tow to bring the towed boat closer to the towing boat. Please remember that a vessel towing has precedence over almost all other types of boats and keep well clear and be prepared to give way. If towing becomes difficult or dangerous then moor the towed boat in a safe position (e.g. tie it to a tree) and come back for it later when the conditions have improved.

Tow at a speed that ensures that the towed boat is stable. If it starts to veer from side to side then slow down.

Do not forget that when the towing boat stops then the towed boat will keep going. Steer to one side when slowing down so that it does not hit you. Shorten the tow to control the position of the rowing boat.

Attach the tow rope to something structural (e.g. a rigger) then hitch it along the canvas (a bit like tying a long parcel). Use a hitch to tie the rope onto the bow ball but do not rely on this alone. It is not that difficult to pull a bow ball off.

Some 1xs are prone to capsize when towed. If this is a concern then either pull it out of the water bows first (to avoid the fin) and lie it in a transverse position across the rescue boat. Alternatively tow it alongside by pulling a rigger onto the towing boat.

There are probably lots of other ways to recover a boat but please remember that the safety of the crew is paramount. If you have any experience of towing rowing boats and would like to make any suggestions then please write to me at safety@britishrowing.org.

Review of Safety Documentation at Championship Regattas

The Safety documentation for the British Rowing Junior Championships (BRJC) and the Home International Regatta were reviewed.

The BRJC documentation was excellent. The risk assessment did include high temperatures. Some opportunities for improvement were identified and communicated. It is understood that the programme was subsequently amended to start earlier and avoid having races in the warmer parts of the day.

The documents for the Home International Regatta were excellent and some minor, detailed opportunities for improvement were identified, these have been addressed and improvements were made.

Rowers with Diabetes

I was asked about the safety of people with diabetes when they are rowing. This is what [RowSafe](#) has on Diabetes.

Diabetes

There is an article based on an interview with Sir Steve Redgrave. There is more information on the Diabetes UK website and the National Health Service website.

See also the Safety Alert - Diabetes and launch driving.

This is in Section 8.6.2, on page 112. In RowSafe there are hyperlinks to the items mentioned. There is also information in sections 9.8 and 9.11.

Most people with diabetes, and other chronic conditions, become experts on those conditions and learn to manage the condition for themselves. If they are not sure then they should be advised to consult their doctor.

There is extensive guidance on Diabetes in Sport on the Diabetes UK website [here](#). This includes information on the issues in several specific sports. It is clear from this that sport is beneficial to people with diabetes.

These were the specific questions:-

We are concerned about letting scullers in singles who are diabetic and the potential hazards of a capsized in the case of a hypo or something similar. In our case we are referring to an adult rower in otherwise good health. If they have not rowed before then I would suggest that they start rowing in crew boats with at least three other people and, when they and you are confident, they should progress into smaller boats. If they are experienced rowers and they are sure that they can manage a 1x safely then I would let them but I would want there to be a launch close by, at least for the first few outings.

What is the extent of the club's & coach's responsibility? The usual test is reasonableness (what would a reasonable person think to be reasonable?). If the club and coach take care to work with the rower to help him or her to manage his or her condition then this should be sufficient.

Is it sufficient for a disclaimer by the rower stating that they are managing it appropriately? I do not like disclaimers as they try to transfer the liability back onto the person at risk. If this is managed appropriately then there will be no need for a disclaimer.

First Aid

I was asked for advice on the contents of First Aid kits, this was the response.

This is quite difficult because "one size does not fit all". The first aid provision you need to make will depend on your location and the risks at your club.

Think about ambulance response, and transport to A&E, times where you row. Please do not expect too much of these services, they are overloaded and cannot provide the level service that they would like to be able to provide.

For example, in a remote location where the ambulance response will not be quick it would be appropriate to have an Automated External Defibrillator. It is not just in remote locations, these should be considered if you do not have immediate access to one (so that you can get it to a casualty in your club within less than two minutes).

Encourage your members to learn about basic life support. If face-to-face training is not available then encourage them to use the Resuscitation Council UK [Lifesaver](#) interactive films.

Look at the types of injuries that could occur at your club and use that to determine the provision you need. For example, if you have no cooking facilities then there may be no need for you to have treatments for burns. It all comes down to using your risk assessment.

Talk to your first aiders, they will have ideas about what provision they need. There is no point in providing them with equipment that they do not know how to use.

Often the quality of first aid treatment is more dependent on the ability of the people providing the treatment than it is on the equipment that they use. A good first aider will improvise and, if the equipment is not available then he or she will use whatever comes to hand. For example, a folded towel can be used as a pressure pad to help control bleeding. Support your First Aiders by helping them to keep their training up to date.

If you google "First Aid Kits" then there are many to choose from at reasonable prices. Please remember that the equipment in your first aid kit will be used (that is what it is there for) and your members may not report this. Check the contents from time to time and keep the kit replenished.

The answer to the specific question was, section 8.3 of [RowSafe](#), deals with First Aid. There is a diagram on page 100 showing the typical contents of a first aid kit. Safety Pins are no longer a recommended component of First Aid kits. This can form the basis of your "specification".

Where do you get your boat lights from?

Concern was expressed that one supplier of boat lights provided lights that did not appear to deliver on their promised performance. The supplier claimed that the lights provided light over a 180 degree angle and it was reported that their beam not that wide.

British Rowing does not issue specifications for boat lights but there was relevant information in the Safety Alert – Lights on rowing boats, available [here](#). This contains the following information:-

The rules on lights on boats can be different in each navigating authority so check with yours and make sure that you comply with them. The rules on the Thames in London are:-

“All rowing crews must have the following lights firmly fixed to their boat in low visibility. On the bow: a flashing white light – flashing to determine direction of travel On the stern: a constant white light The lights must be visible for 800m and also be visible through 180° – so that the boat effectively has lighting visible through 360°.” (See page 15 of the PLA Guide “Rowing on the Tideway”).

The PLA Guide also contains the following:-

Unidirectional lights are not permitted as they are not safe. At least one spare light should be carried at all times and additional lights or white LED sticks, attached to the back of the bow or cox, may be used.

If you have found a supplier or source of boat lights that you can recommend to the rowing community then please let me know. Please write to safety@britishrowing.org.

Safety on Venetian Style Rowing Boats

A club rows venetian boats and rows standing mainly on an inland river, all year round. They currently do not have a completed risk assessment, but do circulate information on the risk of cold water immersion as many of its members are over 60. They were asking for advice on Risk Assessment and whether it would be wise for them to wear lifejackets at least during the winter months. They also asked for information on the risk of cold water immersion and hypothermia .

The response was our main source of guidance on Rowing Safety is RowSafe, this is in the public domain and can be accessed [here](#). There is information on Hypothermia in section 8.2.

We have training material on the website in Row How but this is only available to members. It includes more information on Hypothermia and extensive training material on Risk Assessment. If you would like to have access to this then let me know and I will put you in touch with our membership team. It is always useful to have a risk assessment as this can be used to identify the precautions that you need to take to keep your members safe.

As far as wearing lifejackets in the winter is concerned then this depends on the probability of someone falling into the water. Your risk assessment will help you to determine this.