

VICTORIA ROWING SOCIETY

SAFETY HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook outlines the safety policies and procedures to be followed by participants in programs of the Member Clubs of the Victoria Rowing Society (VRS). Member clubs are responsible for safety training and enforcement within their own memberships.

1.0 SAFETY FACTORS

1.1 Swimming / Medical Requirements

1.1.1 All participants in VRS programs will pass a 100m swimming competence test plus 15 minutes treading water test plus demonstrate that they can don a life jacket while in the water prior to participating in programs. The following are considered acceptable equivalents:

- ✓ Bronze Cross/Bronze Medallion
- ✓ A signed waiver affirming swim standard ability for adults of age of majority

1.1.2 All athletes, coxswains and coaches are required to meet the medical requirements of their club in order to participate in on-water activities.

1.2 Pleasure Craft Operator Card

Any coach, rower or volunteer operating a powercraft on behalf of the Victoria Rowing Society or one of its member clubs must have a valid Canadian Coast Guard Pleasure Craft Operator Card.

1.3 Water Training

1.3.1 All athletes and coaches in VRS rowing programs will receive comprehensive instruction in safety procedures prior to involvement in rowing. In addition, all athletes and coaches will attend a review session of rules and safety procedures at the commencement of their season/program.

1.3.2 All new athletes training at the Victoria Rowing Society site will be informed and made aware of the lake's features including safe beaching locations, danger spots, obstructions and other safety hazards, prior to their involvement in rowing.

1.3.3 Each athlete and coach will sign their club's Safety Handbook Receipt Log acknowledging that they have received and read the VRS Safety handbook and that they will abide by the rules outlined in the VRS Safety Handbook prior to participating in rowing. Each club shall maintain an up-to-date record of the Log.

1.3.4 All athletes and coaches will respect the rights of other users of the lake and obey the rowing course rules established by the VRS as well as all Transport Canada rules and regulations.

1.3.5 In non-coxed shells, the bow person (or designate) is responsible for safe and courteous steering and shall always maintain an adequate forward lookout, normally accomplished by frequent shoulder checks to both sides.

1.4 Hours of Operation:

1.4.1 Sunrise Clause: No rowing activities shall commence prior to daylight or 5:45 am (which ever comes first). Exception; December 1st through to January 31st no on-water rowing activity prior to 7:00 am. All boats leaving the dock in the dark must be equipped with operating lights, as per section 1.7.

1.4.2 Sunset Clause: All boats must be off the water by sunset.

1.4.3 Definition: Sunrise and Sunset are the times posted on the boathouse notice board.

1.5 Supervision:

1.5.1 All crews must log on/off the water before/after workouts. This log should include time on and off the water, type of shell, and names and number of crew members. Each club must ensure that a permanent club logbook will be available for this purpose.

1.5.2 Minors (under 19) must not proceed on the water without the supervision of a coach (or an approved substitute) in a launch. The first launch out for each workout will be a safety boat.

1.5.3 All Juniors and Novice (1 year of rowing or less) crews shall have a maximum launch/athlete ratio of 1/9, if three or more launches out then 1/12. This includes passengers in the coach boat.

1.5.4 During the period from December 1 through January 31 small boat rowing (2x, 2-, 1x) will be restricted to crews under strict group supervision, other than experienced adult (over 19) rowers.

1.5.5 The maximum allowable launch/athlete ratio is 1/18 for experienced crews in a structured program. This includes passengers in the coach boat.

1.5.6 All crews must stay in proximity to the launch responsible for their supervision.

1.5.7 During organized rowing at least one launch will remain on the water or ready at the dock until all crews are off the water. In the case of Junior and Novice crews, the number of launches shall be in accordance with Section 1.5.3.

1.5.8 Experienced adult (over 19) athletes and crews rowing in small shells (2x, 2-, 1x) are encouraged to row in groups, particularly during potentially adverse conditions (early mornings, winter, crowded waterways).

1.6 Coaching Requirements:

1.6.1 All coaches will have a minimum of Level I Technical Coaching Certification or the minimum coaching requirement of their club. VRS strongly encourages clubs to adopt a minimum of Level 1 as their standard.

1.6.2 Club head coaches are required to have current certification in CPR, First Aid with hypothermia and heat injury instruction, small craft safety and water rescue. The club head coach will be designated by each club.

1.6.3 As per section 1.3.1, all club coaches must attend a safety review session at the beginning of their program/season each year.

1.7 Equipment Requirements:

NOTE: All vessels must adhere to the appropriate Transport Canada regulations which are paraphrased below. For further details please refer to the Safe Boating Guide, and Transport Canada boating regulations.

1.7.1 All shells on the water must be deemed to be rowable, seaworthy and will contain the following: navigation light(s) (as per 1.7.2) in dark conditions, a sound signaling device, and an inflatable personal flotation device (PFD) or lifejacket at each seat. Alternatively, a PFD or lifejacket for each rower may be stowed in the supervising safety boat(s), as per Transport Canada Regulations (as outlined in the Safe Boating Guide).

1.7.2 Rowing Shell Navigation Lights:

All vessels leaving the dock in dark conditions must have appropriate lighting as per Transport Canada regulations. In addition, all rowing shells shall have, at a minimum, a 360degree white light fixed to the bow of the boat. A flashing red light fixed to the stern is recommended, but not required.

1.7.3 Safety launches must carry (*required under section 16.02 of the Small Vessel regulations to the Canada Shipping Act*):

- PFD's of the appropriate size for each crew member on board
- PFD's of appropriate size for each member of the crew of the largest shell being attended
- a bailer or pump;
- a buoyant heaving line not less than 15 m (49'3") in length
- a sound-signaling device or a sound-signaling appliance

- a watertight flashlight or three Canadian-approved flares of Type A, B or C
- a manual propelling device or anchor
- a class 5BC fire extinguisher if the launch has an inboard engine or a fixed fuel tank
- navigation lights if operated before sunrise, after sunset or in periods of restricted visibility

RCA Safety Guidelines also recommend:

- *carrying a medical kit and blankets or thermal blanket packs*
- *considering the possible need for emergency communication from the water whether by two-way radio or by cellular 'phone.*

1.7.3 All athletes and coaches shall be appropriately instructed in the operation of safety launches by their respective clubs.

1.8 Weather restrictions:

WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T GO OUT!

1.8.1 All coaches and athletes will be made aware of the potential danger from darkness, fog, high winds (from the southeast in particular), ice, cold water, storms or any combination of the above.

1.8.2 Coaches are be responsible for determining if conditions are too dangerous to row due to any of the above circumstances. No athlete will be required to row against his/her better judgment should conditions be questionable.

1.8.3 The weather report radio/alarm must be turned on before water training sessions.

1.8.4 Weather forecasts will be checked prior to any launching of shells. On-water activity will not commence if the weather report forecasts gale force winds or stronger from the SE on the Strait of Georgia during the period of the workout. * The parking lot will be windy and car doors will swing open or slam shut.

1.8.5 Rowing will not take place in foggy conditions if visibility falls below 1000 meters. **STAY ON THE SHORE IF THE SHORELINE AT HAMSTERLY BEACH IS NOT VISIBLE.** Check with motorboat if unsure.

2.0 FLOW PATTERNS

TO BE UPDATED

3.0 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

3.1 Emergency Agencies

3.1.1 For any emergency requiring external assistance **TELEPHONE 911** and state:

- Which agency is required (Police, Ambulance, Fire)
- Your name and location:

ELK LAKE BOATHOUSE

5100 Pat Bay Highway at Eagle Beach

- A concise description of the event
- Any need for water rescue

3.1.2 If the incident involves UVic athletes or coaches, then Campus Security shall be contacted immediately after contacting the medical/fire emergency agencies and/or police. UVic Campus Security Services can be contacted at 721-7599.

3.2 On Site Authority:

3.2.1 The senior coach present will assume command in the event of an emergency and will direct and control operations until the arrival of appropriate authorities. At that time, this coach will identify him/her self to the authorities and continue to liaise with authorities and direct VRS personnel accordingly.

3.3 Extreme Water Conditions:

3.3.1 Should unsafe conditions occur during training, athletes will immediately proceed to the most accessible and safest of four safe spots around Elk Lake; or to any available shoreline if necessary. **PERSONAL SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT AND SUPERSEDES THE SAFETY OF EQUIPMENT.** Should it not be possible to reach a safe spot (see 3.3.2) and the safety of the athlete is at stake, athletes should row to the nearest accessible shoreline and get off the lake.

3.3.2 Safe beaches/spots are:

- VRS Boathouse
- Eagle Beach
- Hamsterly Beach
- Northwest Beach or boat launch
- Beaver Lake Beach

3.3.3 The shell(s) should be removed from the water and placed upside down on the riggers and out of the wind if possible while the athletes await rescue. If safe to do so, crew should stand on windward side of shell when lifting, facilitating lifting process by preventing further swamping of shell.

3.4 SIGNALS

3.4.1 **EMERGENCY: INTERNATIONAL DISTRESS SIGNAL** – Raise and lower outstretched arms repeatedly. Use only for serious trouble.

- Daylight: Sound signaling device.
- Darkness: Sound signaling device and wave light over head.

3.4.2 **NON-EMERGENCY**

- **LAUNCH - HELP REQUIRED:** Wave one arm over your head
- **GO ON BY:** Wave one arm in a throwing fashion.

3.5 BOAT MISHAPS/SURVIVAL PROCEDURES

3.5.1 All athletes must remain as calm as possible and the coxswain/bow person should assume command and check every athlete continually until rescued. All athletes should immediately put on any available clothing, then put on and inflate the PFD's if stowed under the seats. The coxswain/bow person must immediately utilize the light and/or whistle to signal the safety boat(s) for help or to assist them to find the shell. If the PFD's are carried in the safety boat(s) they must be distributed, put on and inflated immediately.

3.5.2 Shell swamped but floating and athletes out of water. Align shell to minimize further swamping, then remain upright and in seat awaiting rescue (assume a fetal-like position at top of slide).

3.5.3 Shell sinking deeper into water, submerged or capsized. Should a shell fill with water or submerge, and safe harbour is not possible, the following procedures are to be followed:

- The shell should be rolled upside-down to increase buoyancy by trapping as much air as possible. If wind is a factor, roll with the wind. Oars should remain in the oarlocks to increase buoyancy.
- **ATHLETES MUST STAY WITH SHELL AND NOT ATTEMPT TO SWIM ASHORE** - both the boat and oars usually float and will support the crew. The group shall "buddy up" across the boat with even distribution on either side of the

shell (1&2/3&4) and huddle towards the middle or high point of the shell. The coxswain must buddy with the seat adjacent pair. Each buddy is responsible for holding onto the other person while they are draped across the shell.

- Pairing is essential as it gives added life support to each athlete (each is holding on to the life of another). This facilitates reciprocal communication and positive support. This relationship should be continued until actual rescue, when athletes must be rescued in pairs. This will prevent a premature feeling of relief resulting from rescue contact, and letting go before the rescuers take firm hold of the athletes.

3.5.4 Cold Water Considerations

- Minimize movement to preserve body heat (no swimming or treading water). Use the HELP (Heat Escape Lessen Position) or a modified HELP position when buddying up across the overturned shell.
- Keep clothes on and put on hat/mitts, etc.
- Get body as much out of water as possible: get on top of boat.
- Assume fetal position, if possible. Protect groin/armpits/neck and head as much as possible.

3.5.5 Small Boat Considerations

- **SMALL BOATS, WHERE POSSIBLE, MUST ROW IN GROUPS.** If a partner's shell submerges or capsizes the "buddy" athlete(s) must ensure they are out of danger (back in shell or on shore) before going to get help.
- The smaller the boat the better the relative buoyancy. It is possible to reenter the shell and get ashore if conditions are not serious.
- To re-enter, make sure the oars are perpendicular to the shell and grasp with one hand. Pull yourself up so you are lying across the bow side of the cockpit. Pivot to seat yourself on the runners. Slowly maneuver your legs into position. (Go one at a time in crew boats, but all oars should be perpendicular).

3.6 Rescue Procedures

3.6.1 Launch Capacity

- The maximum legal capacity of a launch shall not be exceeded in a rescue. In extreme conditions those rescued must be taken directly to shore or to the nearest safe spot. Multiple trips may be required to remove all those involved in the accident as quickly and safely as possible.
- Each launch should be staffed by two people (if possible) to counterbalance and assist each other.

3.6.2 Approach: Any accident shall be approached from leeward, into the wind, to prevent the launch from being pushed onto the shell(s), and to ensure maximum control.

3.6.3 Assessing the situation:

- The conditions of the people involved and the severity of the circumstances must be assessed quickly.
- Verbal contact with those in the water must be established so that they can be talked through the rescue quickly: tell the people in the water what is going to happen so they know what is going on.
- Those in greatest risk (distress) must be rescued first. Rescue must occur in pairs.
- A head count will be conducted upon the launch's arrival and then repeated upon leaving.

3.7 Reporting Incidents

All incidents and accidents involving VRS members and/or other lake users will be reported to the VRS club manager, club head coach, and documented in the Incident Report Book (located by the VCRC Logbook).

4.0 Penalties for Safety Infractions:

4.1. Safety infractions will be handled by the member Clubs subject to the following conditions:

4.1.1 First infractions may result in an immediate suspension of up to 10 days plus a subsequent probationary period of 3 months at the discretion of the club head coaches and/or operations committee.

4.1.2 Suspended parties must complete an open book exam on VRS safety policies and procedures before resuming any rowing activities or use of VRS facilities. Failure to successfully fulfill this requirement will result in an indefinite extension of the suspension period until the test is successfully completed to the satisfaction of the club head coaches and/or Operations Committee.

4.1.3 Any subsequent infraction during the probationary period following any suspension will result in an immediate suspension of up to 3 months at the discretion of the club head coaches or equivalent and/or VRS Safety Committee.

4.1.4 Subsequent conditions for reinstatement will be determined solely by the club head coaches or equivalent and/or VRS Safety Committee.

4.1.5 Suspensions may be applied to individuals, groups or programs. The scope of any suspension for safety infractions will be decided by the club head coaches and/or Operations Committee.

4.1.6 Persistent or continuing infractions may result in permanent suspension of VRS privileges.

4.1.7 Any athlete or coach who has been expelled or suspended has the privilege of appealing to the VRS Safety Committee.