



MAYFLOWER OFFSHORE ROWING CLUB

SEA SAFETY AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

Offshore rowing is an enjoyable and exciting sport. These guidelines are intended to make the sport as safe as possible – that there are risks associated with any water sport particularly on the open sea. Membership of the club provides a framework and support to reduce these risks to a reasonable level

HEALTH CHECK

Whether training or competing individuals should be free of:-

- a) Injury or medical condition such that a medical professional would not support your taking part.
- b) Any viral infection
- c) The influence of alcohol medication or other performance inhibiting substances legal or otherwise.

Or under advisement

New medical conditions: Club captain to be informed and 'Personal Information Sheet' to be updated and countersigned.

BEFORE GOING AFLOAT

All members must be signed on/off before going on the water. Signing in book kept in changing area (all members to sign in). If not registered a rowers need to complete a **Guest Member Form** under the instruction of the Club Captain, membership Secretary or other committee member

BOAT/EQUIPMENT CHECK

Rowing outside club session.

A minimum of two rowers to go afloat. Named individual to be informed before going on the water and on return.

Safety brief to be delivered by officer of the day re: Wind, sea state, visibility, tide times and known traffic movements.

Coxswain or rower (doubles / singles) to collect radio.

One member of the crew **of all boats** to wear a fluorescent jacket

Check bungs and hatch covers. All moveable parts, particularly the rudder must be in good working order. Blades must also be in good order.

If in doubt, don't set out.



Experience and Competence of crews

Four person rowing + Cox, crews must have at least 2 competent and experienced rowers on board.

Doubles – one.

Inexperienced or novice rowers should not go afloat in the single scull unless: under close supervision by another crew, rowing in a suitable area or under the direct supervision of a safety craft.

Novice Coxes should be supervised by an experienced Cox. More experience should not Cox a Rushworth until suitable experience has been attained in other boats.

Use of 'Personal Floatation Device' (PFD)

The following must wear life jackets

- **Individuals who have not completed a capsized/ swim test. (Capsized test to be completed every 3 years)**
- **Where there is a known medical condition that may cause unconscious a 'self inflating' PFD must be worn**
- All coxswains and juniors (under 16).
- Safety crews

All boats will carry life jackets re the number of crew.

The Club strongly recommends the wearing of Personal Floatation Devices at all times

WEATHER AND SEA STATE

Check weather conditions, especially wind strength and direction, 'Longroom' will advise on conditions in the Sound. **Constant weather assessments must be made whilst afloat.** Coastal double and single sculls should not be launched in wind conditions over force 4 (20 mph) except at the discretion of the WSA or Club Captain. Participants should wear appropriate clothing for the conditions

Contact Port of Plymouth Control (Long Room) either on VHF **Channel 14**, or (01752) 663225 informing of planned exercise and location – remember to call back when all crews are ashore.

The Queen's Harbour Master is the ultimate authority for all activity within Plymouth Sound and the Naval Base area. A website www.qhmplymouth.org.uk will provide a wealth of information such as incidents, vessel traffic, Port of Plymouth notification to mariners, regulations, navigational information & tides.

One member of the crew must be competent in using VHF radio. Check batteries and carry a spare in a waterproof container. Maintain a good radio



watch while at sea (CH 16, CH 14 in Sound, club preferred channel is Ch 71). Mobile telephone is a good secondary option.

CALLING FOR HELP

Do not delay if you require professional help. Call Port of Plymouth Control (VHF Ch. 14) and give situation report. If other boats are near to hand... use whistle or stretch out your arms to either side and raise steadily up and down....

As a back up use mobile phone to dial 999 and ask for Coastguard giving exact position

ON THE WATER

Crews should operate within the limitations of their boat. Always allow a margin of safety to deal with difficult conditions.

Never row in poor visibility or risk being caught on the water after nightfall. Allow plenty of time to get back to shore before light and temperature conditions drop.

Beware of 'wind over tide' which can cause locally choppy or very rough water during the peak rate of the flow.

Be aware of your position at all times and practice being able to describe it over the radio should the need ever arise.

HAZARDS

Plymouth is a naval base, commercial and fishing port. There are numerous shipping movements including cross channel ferries. These large craft do not stop and have to remain in restricted channels. Obey the rules of the sea/river and pass on the right. Remember rowing craft give way to all other vessels. Keep a good lookout, especially in congested areas.

See the chart on display in the changing room for exclusion areas and those where caution is advised. (See attached chart)

WHAT TO WEAR

Crews should wear or carry functional clothing to protect against hypothermia particularly in winter months. Spray tops will provide a barrier against rain, wind or spray in adverse weather conditions Sun screen. Florescent jackets assist in rescues in poor conditions.

Polaroid sunglasses filter out bright and reflected light and make all round observation easier in bright conditions.

OTHER SAFETY EQUIPMENT

- Throw line to be carried in each boat (10 metres)



- Thermal space blankets – one per crew member
- Whistle (attached to lifejacket) one per crew member

MAN OVERBOARD (MOB)

Remember the impact of sudden cold water immersion when the water is cold and the session is nearing its end it can kill rapidly.

If you see a Capsize

- Stop rowing.
- Watch the person in the water continuously. If you cannot see the MOB or recovery seems doubtful, **send distress alert immediately.**
- Manoeuvre the boat alongside allowing for tide or wind drift.
- Use throw line or end of rowing blade for MOB to grab.
- Get person back on board as soon as possible and deal with possible effects of hypothermia.
- Re-entry into a double or single skull should be over the stern if the MOB has sufficient strength to do so unaided. Do not enter the water unless all other efforts have failed.
- If you have been in the water, let someone know especially if you have breathed in or swallowed water. Do not hesitate to summon emergency assistance even after reaching shore.

CAPSIZE

If a boat capsizes and you are unable to continue rowing.

- Stay with the boat.
- Remain as calm as possible and let gasping and hyperventilation decrease.
- Try to get your upper body out of the water by lying across the boat as heat loss from the torso will be a lot more than from the legs,
- If in any doubt call 'Long Room' on radio (CH 14) and await instructions

Other information

HYPOTHERMIA

Be aware of hypothermia following MOB or capsizes. Hypothermia occurs when core body temperature drops below 35 degrees C.

Hypothermia can occur rapidly or result from a sustained period of exposure to the cold. The effects are more debilitating towards the end of a strenuous session.

DEHYDRATION



It is easy to ignore effects of 'drying out' whilst rowing. Symptoms include dry mouth and a muzzy tired headachy feeling. Take liquid (not alcohol) before rowing and during any activity on the water is best done once demand is established and always soon after the session or race ends.

EATING

It is essential to eat before rowing any considerable distance. The body requires energy for strenuous activities and failure to do so can put yourself at risk or other members of the crew.

**B. Headlam
Safety Officer**