



ROWING

CANADA

AVIRON

ROWING SAFELY

RCA SAFETY REQUIREMENTS & SAFETY GUIDELINES



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AVIRON

For their work producing these easy to follow safety guidelines for Clubs
and their ongoing commitment to rowing safety education,
Rowing Canada Aviron thanks the:

RCA Safety and Events Committee

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Special Thanks

to Carol Purcer for her work writing and editing the final document on the Committee's behalf.



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Sport Canada

ROWING SAFELY

Club Checklist for RCA SAFETY REQUIREMENTS AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

<input type="checkbox"/> Safety Advisor
Local Safety Code including:
<input type="checkbox"/> Map of local rowing circulation plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety boats
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety boat equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Rowing shell equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsibilities of rowers, scullers, coaches and coxswains
<input type="checkbox"/> Rescue procedures
<input type="checkbox"/> Adverse weather conditions protocol
<input type="checkbox"/> Cold water rules
<input type="checkbox"/> Competency requirements of safety boat operators
<input type="checkbox"/> Rules relating to rowing before sunrise and prior to sunset
<input type="checkbox"/> Boathouse rules
<input type="checkbox"/> Local regulations
<input type="checkbox"/> Any additional location specific requirements
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Emergency Communication Numbers
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Hazards
<input type="checkbox"/> Safety Equipment and First Aid
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management Plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Operations for Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Cold Weather/Water and Hypothermia
<input type="checkbox"/> Hot Weather and Hyperthermia

References: *Transport Canada Small Vessel Regulations*
Rowing Canada Policies

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Introduction

Rowing is a safe sport when conducted with due consideration for the risks inherently associated with any outdoor water sport. There is the risk of personal injury from collision and the risk of drowning when rowing participants find themselves in the water. All risks are heightened in cold water. While contending with difficult weather conditions is part of the sport, safe enjoyment of the sport is the aim. Concern for personal safety must be paramount. Each rowing club is responsible for assessing the risks in its particular environment and in establishing the appropriate safety procedures to minimize those risks. Additionally, it is an individual's responsibility for assessing his or her personal skills and for the outcome of his or her decisions and actions.

Safety Requirements

Each [registered] participant in Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) is responsible for knowing and adhering to the Transport Canada regulations that affect boating, for example, the *Collision Regulations*, the *Competency of Operators of Pleasure Craft Regulations*, and the *Small Vessel Regulations (SVR)*. This responsibility is mandated in the regulations themselves. Many of the regulations are summarized in the Safe Boating Guide available on Transport Canada's Website. This guide is helpful in determining what safety equipment is required to be carried onboard, for example, a boat the size of a coach boat.

The SVR apply to all boats associated with rowing (powered boats and rowing shells) and to the persons operating the craft, be they competitive rowers, recreational rowers, touring rowers, coastal rowers, instructors, coaches, umpires or regatta officials.

Rowing enjoys certain exceptions to the SVR regarding rowing shells. The exceptions are, nonetheless, regulations, and must be adhered to. The following are the SVR exceptions applicable to rowing shells:

Excerpts from Canada Shipping Act Small Vessel Regulations

Personal Life-Saving Appliances

10. (1) *A personal flotation device or lifejacket that is required by these Regulations, if it is of an inflatable type, shall be worn by a person in an open vessel or, if the vessel is not open, shall be worn when the person is on deck or in the cockpit.*
- (2) *Subsection (1) does not apply to a sealed-hull rowing shell engaged in training that is governed by safety guidelines and procedures established by the governing body.*

Part 2 Safety Equipment for Pleasure Craft

Sub-Part 5 Exceptions for Human Powered Pleasure Craft Rowing Shells

222. (1) *A rowing shell that is competing in a provincially, nationally or internationally sanctioned regatta or competition, or engaged in training at the venue at which the regatta or competition is taking place, is not required to carry on board the safety equipment required by this Part.*
- (2) *A rowing shell that is engaged in activities governed by safety guidelines and procedures established by the governing body is not required to carry on board the safety equipment required by this Part if it is attended by a safety craft that is carrying on board a personal flotation device or lifejacket of an appropriate size:*
 - (a) *for each person on board the rowing shell, if the safety craft is attending only one rowing shell;*
 - (b) *for each person on board the rowing shell with the most persons on board, if the safety craft is attending more than one rowing shell.*
- (3) *However, if the rowing shell is not attended by a safety craft, it is required to carry on board only the following safety equipment:*
 - (a) *a personal flotation device or lifejacket of an appropriate size for each person on board;*
 - (b) *a sound-signalling device; and*
 - (c) *a watertight flashlight, if the canoe or kayak [rowing shell] is operated after sunset or before sunrise or in periods of restricted visibility.*

EXPLANATORY NOTES REGARDING THE EXCEPTIONS FOR PFD'S:

- a crew training without a safety craft has to carry on board a PFD for each rower and the coxswain;
- if the PFD's being carried on board are an inflatable type, they do not have to be worn as rowing is exempt from the requirement that inflatable PFD's be worn;
- if, however, members of the crew are less than 16 years of age, the PFD's being carried must be inherently buoyant i.e., not an inflatable type (as per Regulation 202, not printed here for brevity reasons).

Regatta Safety

Safety for regattas is set out in the RCA Rules of Racing and RCA Sanction Form.

Arrangements must be made to meet those safety requirements in order to obtain sanction to hold the regatta.

Safety Guidelines

Following the Transport Canada regulations is the minimum a rowing club must do to operate within the law. The safety of rowing will be enhanced (and as a by-product, the enjoyment of rowing can be increased) when clubs set their own safety code or member expectations peculiar to their operating environment. The Safety Guidelines checklist includes the parameters that rowing clubs should work in to develop their own safety codes. They are as follows:

1. Safety Advisor

It is expected that every club appoint a member of the club as the Safety Advisor whose duty is to ensure that an appropriate safety program is drawn up and implemented at the club, in accordance with these guidelines.

2. Local Safety Code

Since conditions vary from club to club, it is necessary that each club draw up and display the local **Safety Code**. When you are drawing up your local Safety Code consider the following:

- A plan of the local water showing the traffic circulation pattern, local rules of use, hazards and safe landing sites in the event of an emergency;
- Circumstances in which there must be a safety boat attending any rowers;
- Equipment that a safety boat is required to carry;
- Equipment that a rowing shell must carry either when accompanied by a safety boat or not (if the latter is permitted) as per SVR;
- Responsibilities of rowers, scullers, coaches and coxswains. These can include checking the safe condition of equipment before taking it on the water, familiarity with the local water use rules and procedures on the water such as remaining within a certain distance of the safety boat;
- Procedures in the event of a rower ending up in the water;
- Weather conditions, under which rowers should not venture on the water such as high wind, poor visibility and ice conditions;
- Cold water rules;
- Competency requirements of safety boat operators;
- Rules relating to rowing before sunrise and prior to sunset;
- Boathouse rules;
- Local Regulations;
- Any additional location specific requirements.

3. Emergency Communication

It is recommended that a list of vital telephone numbers be displayed prominently in every clubhouse. The list would include:

- Doctor/Ambulance/Police
- Fire Department
- Local hospital casualty department
- Local, river or harbour police
- The emergency service that can provide the quickest on-water response.

If there is no telephone readily available at the clubhouse, clear directions to the nearest available telephone would also be displayed.

The possible need for emergency communication from the water is also to be considered, whether by radio or by cellular phone.

4. Local Hazards

Any hazard in your local area would be recognized in your local Safety Code. Some examples are:

- Hazards can include swift currents, spring run-offs, bridges, weirs, shoals, deadheads, rocky shores or steep walls or banks that make getting out of the water difficult or impossible in an emergency, and recreational and commercial traffic including float planes;
- Attention would also be drawn to any variation in normal procedures that may be necessary due to the state of the tide or stream, high wind, or other climatic conditions. It is intended that local codes of practice will emphasize that safety is paramount.

5. Safety Equipment and First Aid

It is recommended that safety and first aid equipment be readily available in every clubhouse. This would include:

- First aid chest (fully stocked and regularly checked);
- Thermal blankets/exposure bags;
- Life rings/buoy and line;
- A defibrillator.

6. Safe Equipment

A local Safety Code would ensure that all equipment used for rowing and coaching is safe and maintained in good order. Every rowing shell must have (as per RCA Rules of Racing):

- A white ball of not less than 4cm diameter made of rubber or material of similar consistency on its bow, unless the construction or nature of the boat is such that the bow is properly protected or its shape does not represent a hazard;
- Heel restraints to allow 'hands-free' release of feet;
- Quick release mechanisms that are in working order in all boats equipped with fitted shoes; and
- Lights, as required by the SVR when rowing in reduced light.

Coach and safety boats would be equipped with safety equipment in accordance with SVR and they would provide for easy entry from the water (e.g. with a stepladder, or handhold). Where motors are equipped with a kill switch, the kill switch would be attached to the operator.

Coach and safety boats and their engines would be properly maintained since engine failure, particularly at a critical time, could have serious consequences.

7. Risk Management Plan

An important risk management process that applies to all aspects of rowing operations is to ask "what if..." a certain situation arises, what might the consequences be and how can such consequences be prevented or their effect mitigated? This is often described as having hindsight in advance. Where the consequences could be serious, even if the likelihood of the situation arising is considered remote, the situation should be avoided or precautions taken to be able to mitigate the consequences. See Members Services on the RCA web site for more information on risk management.

8. Local Operations for Safety

The local Safety Plan should include specific rules around rowing club operations. Some considerations are as follows:

- Motorboat drivers must have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card and be competent to control the boat so that it does not become a danger to anyone;
- Rowing before posted sunrise and after posted sunset is discouraged, particularly if there are other vessels using the waters at those times, and should not be practiced without an accompanying safety boat. An additional risk is posed by rowing after sunset as an incident such as capsizing has to be dealt with in darkening conditions;
- Coaches are responsible for those in their charge and must be informed of safety procedures and abide by them. Coaches need to be aware of the forecast weather and should evaluate the environmental conditions before deciding, in light of the rowers' capabilities and limitations, whether it is safe for rowers to go out on the water (See Members Services - Policies on the RCA web site for more information on the RCA Weather Protocol);
- Clubs need to provide adequate instruction in boatmanship and rowing technique;
- Clubs need to provide adequate supervision by coaches and experienced rowers to ensure that no person is at risk when on the water;
- It is strongly recommended that all active members learn and practice capsize and accident drills;
- It is also strongly recommended that rowers be able to swim 50m in light clothing and be sufficiently at ease in the water not to panic and be able to keep afloat. If a person cannot meet this requirement for physical or other reasons, an approved, inflatable Personal Flotation Device (PFD) should be worn when on the water;
- In case of accident, rowers should be instructed to stay with the boat rather than attempt to swim to safety. The boat, unless seriously damaged, can be used as a buoyancy aid;

- If the water is cold, rowers should be instructed to get as much of their body out of the water as possible by draping themselves over the upturned hull, if necessary turning the boat over for this purpose. Rowers should also be instructed to “buddy-up” holding on to each other until rescued to provide mutual support and to help ensure that all are accounted for;
- It is strongly recommended that clubs take active steps to encourage members to become fully conversant with lifesaving and resuscitation procedures, by attending training courses and other appropriate means. In particular it is highly desirable that the Safety Advisor and all regular club coaches be so trained;
- It is suggested that club rowing activities be coordinated with those of other local water users to minimize clashes of interest and the possibility of additional water hazards;
- A logbook can be used to log rowers out and in, particularly when they are allowed to row unsupervised.

9. Cold Weather/Water and Hypothermia

Preparation and prevention are essential in protecting against the effects of the cold-water environment. Some considerations are:

- Wearing protective clothing appropriate for the conditions and the activity. Select materials in clothing that allow the body to stay dry and insulated against heat loss but with flexibility for the rowing motion and activity;
- Creating a protocol for water temperature of 15 degrees Celsius or below, or other adverse weather conditions.

As a part of the Risk Management Plan, cold water protocols are very important. Submersion in cold water is extremely dangerous, causing a swimmer to lose heat far more rapidly than exposure to cold air. Depending on the coldness of the water loss of muscle function and mental confusion can occur within minutes.

Hypothermia: a discussion of the causes, effects, prevention and treatment of hypothermia is included in the RCA’s instructing and coaching manuals.

10. Hot Weather and Hyperthermia

As with cold weather, preparation and prevention are important in protecting against the effects of heat. Some considerations are:

- All persons need to wear protective clothing appropriate for the conditions and their activity;
- Use of sun block with a high SPF factor;
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exposure to hot weather;
- Address any symptoms of heat stress immediately.

Hyperthermia: a discussion of the causes, effects, prevention and treatment of heat injury is included in RCA’s instructing and coaching manuals.

In Case of Accident

In all cases of accident involving injury or property damage, the RCA National Office must be notified in writing immediately by an officer of the club. This is a contractual obligation under the RCA liability insurance policy covering all registered clubs and members. See Members Services on the RCA web site for more information on insurance claims and the Incident Report form.

Review of these Guidelines

The RCA Safety Guidelines shall be reviewed every four years by the RCA Safety and Events Committee. After reviewing, if necessary, the committee shall make recommendations to the RCA Board on any necessary changes to these guidelines.