

Hong Kong, China Rowing Association

COASTAL ROWING SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR ROWERS, COXSWAINS, CLUBS & COMPETITION ORGANISING COMMITTEES

INTRODUCTION

Coastal rowing can take you into waters that have currents, waves, rocks, shipping and ferry lanes, buoys, navigation aids and other boats of all sizes. For these reasons you need to know these safety guidelines and any local safety rules and guidelines applicable in the area in which you are rowing.

The responsibilities for Clubs and Rowers are detailed in the guidelines as below: -

SAFETY GUIDELINES

1. Your Responsibility

Your safety is your responsibility and you should observe safety rules and guidelines in order to enjoy being out on the water and to minimize the risk of accidents. You must not assume that your safety is the responsibility of someone else and if at any time you feel in danger you must take appropriate action. This could include aborting, or changing the plan for an outing, avoiding areas where conditions are unsafe for you, or summoning emergency help. Safety requirements also apply ashore and you must be able to handle equipment safely before and after your outing. You have a duty of care to yourself and to others and you must avoid performing any action that could be deemed negligent, or that could put you or another person (including rescuers) at risk.

2. Requirements of a Rower

- 2.1 Rower should complete the Coastal Rowing Introductory Course.
- 2.2 Rowers need to be a competent swimmer of 100m.
- 2.3 It is advisable that for a coastal single the rower should be able to recover from a capsized. A capsized is when you fall into the water. To recover from a capsized means being able to right the boat if it overturned, get back in the boat and continue rowing. Clubs should consider capsized tests for coastal single rowers.
- 2.4 It is suggested that the minimum age is 14. However, own limits based on their safety coverage and leadership.

3. Personal Flotation Devices

Requirements for carrying and/or wearing Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) by rowers and coxswains must be made clear by clubs. Clubs must specify situations where PFDs are mandatory. Examples of situations when clubs might consider the carrying and/or wearing of PFDs to be mandatory are when boats will be a long way from shore, rowing in potentially rough water, rowing without supervision, near areas of heavy traffic, strong tides, or dangerous rocks. Examples of situations when clubs might consider PFDs to be unnecessary include when rowers remain in shallow water close to shore, or under close supervision of a safety boat or quick-reaction patrols. PFDs might be seen as more likely to be mandatory, or advisory for single scullers than for the crew of a quad, for example. Club rules should specify if PFDs are to be worn by the crew, or carried in the boat.

4. Safety precautions before an outing

Before an outing make sure that your Club representative/s should be notified before outing and where you plan to row, how long you expect to be out and let that person know when you have returned. If planning an outing in an unfamiliar area, check the marine chart of the area and familiarize yourself with hazards.

5. Local safety rules and guidelines

Coastal rowing clubs must publish local safety rules and guidelines, including maps of their local area, and display them at their facility together with these HKCRA Coastal Rowing Safety Guidelines. The rower is not advise to venture beyond a patrolled area.

6. Log books

Clubs must require crews and scullers to fill in a log-book at least 24 hours before outing. This should record the name of the boat and crew-members, emergency contact number of each crew member, intended route, or destination, time of departure, expected time of return, or arrival, and the mobile number of a phone, or channel of a VHF radio that will be carried on the boat.

7. Emergency calls, Mobile phones and VHF radios

A mobile phone, or walkie talkie or or VHF radio must be taken in the boat in a waterproof cover programmed with emergency numbers. A 'speed-dial' app is recommended to facilitate emergency calls. The phone or VHF radio must be useable without removing the watertight cover. Mobile phone coverage over the sea is not 100%, so check with your phone service provider and identify the areas where you will be out of range.

In an emergency call 999. The Marine Police advise that this is the best number to call. Your call will be patched through to the Marine Police Operations Centre in Aberdeen, where the duty staff can identify the closest Marine Police launch to your location.

8. Weather conditions

8.1 Before rowing check the general weather information for water sports at <http://www.hko.gov.hk/sports/watersports.shtml> and check the regional weather in your location at <http://www.hko.gov.hk/wxinfo/ts/index.htm>. Always observe government and other weather warnings, in particular with respect to typhoons and thunderstorms. Do not go out if this would be contrary to such warnings, and observe weather-related restrictions in your club's, or organisation's, insurance policy.

8.2 Ultraviolet radiation is more intense on the sea than on land due to reflection from the water so wear protective clothing and apply sun block to exposed skin. In hot weather, or if planning to row for more than an hour, take drinking water. If planning to row for more than two hours, consider taking something to eat, like an energy bar. Be aware of the risks, symptoms and treatment of heat stroke, particularly if planning to row a long distance away from a safe landing point on shore.

8.3 It is the policy of the HKCRA to stop any forms of rowing activities when Typhoon Signal No. 3 or above is hoisted or Red Rainstorm or above Warning is hoisted.

9. Equipment condition

Check equipment before an outing (oars, riggers, rigger support pads, oarlocks firmly closed, bung and access port closed, no visible damage or cracks in the boat, or oars). A broken oar or oarlock in a double scull, or quadruple scull would not normally cause an emergency since the crew should be able to return unaided, but an oar, or oarlock, failure in a single scull can make the boat unrowable, so a single sculling boat carries the highest level of risk.

10. Collision avoidance

10.1 It is your responsibility to avoid collision. Crews and scullers must keep a good lookout and be aware of other boats and obstacles. Anticipate potential danger and take action to make other boats aware of the need to avoid you, or to take your own avoiding action as appropriate.

10.2 You must be aware of other boats, that they may change their speed or position and that boats may enter the area where you are rowing. Other boats will have varying levels of awareness of their surroundings, or of the capabilities and seaworthiness of coastal rowing boats. Some may have very little awareness, or be temporarily distracted, such as fishing boats, water-ski speed boats, or boats travelling in the dark, whilst others may have specific expectations of how a coastal boat should react in the face of a potential collision, such as large commercial ships or ferries. It is your responsibility to apply reasonable judgment with respect to such boats.

10.3 If two boats are on a direct head-on course towards each other, you must follow the standard rule for collision avoidance and alter course to starboard, i.e. towards the rower's left hand side, or the coxswain's right-hand side.

11. Safety Procedure for any Accident

The rower should ensure to turn on his/her mobile phone for the whole coastal rowing activities, whatever the phone is connected by Hong Kong services or China roaming. The rower should remain calm and wait in a safe location for help. Rower should contact the Clubs representative or call the Marine Police for assistance. Accident report should be submitted to the Clubs and the HKCRA within one week.

12. Hazards

Keep away from rocks, sea walls, moored vessels, solid objects and lee shores (wind blowing on to the shore). Your safety will be at risk if the hull of your boat is punctured. Learn the location of rocks and other fixed objects in the area where you intend to row. Be aware of the state of the tide and the direction of tidal currents. Be careful when the tide is falling and at low tide when rocks that may have been underwater may now be close to the surface, or exposed. Be aware of the wind direction if you have stopped rowing, or capsized, wind and waves can quickly take you towards the shore.

13. Equipment failure

If your boat has an equipment failure that makes it unrowable, or if you are in the water and cannot get back in the boat, but the boat is floating, you should carefully consider the merits of taking advantage of the buoyancy, visibility and protection of the boat by staying with it and waiting to be rescued before taking a decision to swim away from the boat.

14. Care of equipment

After an outing the boat, oars and launching trolley should be washed with fresh water, cleaned with detergent and checked. Submit a damage report to your club if there is damage, or parts need replacing. If use of the boat would be dangerous attach a 'OUT OF ORDER' notice to the boat.

15. Safety packs

Clubs may, at their discretion, require a "Safety Pack" to be carried in the boat. This can contain items such as maps, safety items such as a whistle or flares, tools, and a simple medical kit (e.g. to deal with jellyfish stings)

16. Food and Water pack

Depends on the outing duration, clubs and Rowers are recommended to bring sufficient water and food for outing.

17. Competition safety rules

Competition organizing committees may specify such safety rules as they may consider necessary.

18. Session Leader

It is recommended that the Session Leader should possess CPR and AED certificate and the qualification of CPR and AED holder will be a mandatory for the Session Leader with effect from 1 April 2017.
