



CLUB SAFETY PLAN

Updated October 2023

1. Introduction

Thames Rowing Club has a zero tolerance for anyone being harmed as a result of our members' participation in the sport. We believe that harm is not an inevitable consequence of our activities and that incidents that cause harm can be avoided. We will strive to provide an environment in which the sport can be practiced safely and enjoyably by our members. We will guide and lead our members in a way that fulfils these aims.

We recognise that our members have primary responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others. The Club, through its Officers and Committee, will encourage safe practice having due regard for the guidance provided by British Rowing in [RowSafe](#). This document outlines the safety rules that it expects its members to follow. Complying with these rules will help to prevent harm.

The Club is also committed to learn from the incidents it becomes aware of and will share this information to help others in the sport to learn too. We are committed to make appropriate use of [British Rowing's Incident Reporting System](#). Members are invited to refer any questions and concerns, relating to safety, to the Club's Rowing Safety Adviser (safety@thamesrc.co.uk).

The Safety Plan is supplementary to [British Rowing's RowSafe guidelines](#) and to the Tideway Code. The requirements apply to the Tideway from Westminster up to Teddington Lock and to Club members when operating away from TRC except where local safety procedures are issued for the location visited. These instructions also apply to crews hosted by TRC and any other person boating from the premises.

1.1 Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, guidelines on how to deal with the emergency are contained in the Club Emergency Plan.

1.2 Responsibilities

All members are personally responsible for and have a duty of care to ensure that their actions, both on and off the water, are conducted in a manner that does not compromise the safety of themselves or others. All members are expected to comply with the requirements of the Row Safe Guide, the Club's Safety Plan and any other instructions issued by the Club, with respect to safety. All members must read and sign the Safety Induction document before using Club equipment, which outlines their responsibilities in greater detail.

1.3 Conditions

Thames members may row all year round, in almost all types of weather condition, in coach:boat ratios defined by our steering matrix (table 1). If you are not confident of the

conditions before you boat, do not boat. If the prevailing conditions change once you are on the water, and you are not happy with or feel you cannot cope with the conditions, you must say so. In the worst case seek refuge at the nearest rowing club. You should never boat if:

- There has been lightning in the last 30 minutes;
- Visibility is so poor you cannot see Fulham Wall; or
- It is dark and there are two other difficult conditions.

It is strongly recommended to always row with at least one other boat, or with a launch. If you do go out alone, ensure someone knows what time you are going out and are expecting to be back (in addition to the signing out book).

Conditions	Coaching		
	1 to 1	Group	None
Normal	0	1	2
Difficult	1	2	3
Dark or 2x difficult	2	3	n/a
Dark and difficult	3	n/a	n/a

Table 1: Thames Steering Matrix. This table outlines the required steering levels to go out on the water in various conditions, with different coaching ratios. Difficult conditions include going below Wandsworth, high wind, high stream, beginner rowers, and poor visibility.

2. General Water Safety Requirements

2.1 Safety Equipment

The Club provides items of safety equipment, which shall be used by its members to accord with the following:

- *Life Jackets / Buoyancy Aids:*

The wearing of a life jacket or buoyancy aid is compulsory for all coxswains and all drivers and passengers of any of the club's launches. These must be properly fitted and have crotch straps. Coxswains must have manually inflated life jackets (ie ones which do not automatically inflate when submerged) to be able to use bowloader coxed fours.

Where, due to a medical condition, members are considered to be at risk of becoming unconscious or immobile, as a result of immersion, an automatic lifejacket must be worn.

All Club life jackets are tested annually. This is monitored by the member of the safety sub-committee responsible for safety aids. The members are responsible for the day to day maintenance and checking of the life jacket allocated to them. Any members with a privately owned life jacket are responsible for maintaining and testing it themselves.

- *Launch safety kits: Throw lines, thermal exposure blankets, first aid boxes*

Any person driving a launch whilst coaching should ensure that their launch is equipped with a safety kit. The boat man will check the contents of the safety kit at least three times a year. Drivers should report if they use any of the equipment in the safety kit to the boat man. There will be an annual training for all coaches on using safety aids.

- *First Aid Kits*

There are four first aid kits kept in the Club: one in the bar, one in the gym, one in the weights rooms and one in the boat bays. The boat man will be responsible for ensuring the kits are kept stocked with the items listed in RowSafe and will check them all at least monthly. All use must be reported to that stock can be replenished. The General Manager will be responsible for maintaining the first aid kit in the bar.

- *Defibrillator*

The Club defibrillator is located on the wall in the gym, next to the coaches' office. The professional coaches and house general manager are trained to use it. If they are not available, anyone can use it as it is a simple process with instructions in the kit. It will be checked annually by the house manager. No one should use the defibrillator unless instructed to do so by the emergency services by telephone.

2.2 Signing In/Out

All outings must be recorded in the Signing Out/In Book ("log") which is an A4 book and is on a shelf in Bay 1. There are separate ones for rowing boats and launches. Damage should be noted in the book, as well as reported to the boat man, by email or by writing on the white board in the workshop. Boats currently under repair will be listed on the whiteboard in the workshop and squad co-ordinators will be informed of any that cannot be used.

The log should be filled in when going out and coming in as this ensures that the club will not be locked up when you are out on the water. The above procedures are a vital safety measure, if you go out and get into trouble and no-one knows you are gone you will be on your own! Equally, if crews are still on the water, please avoid locking up the boathouse, although bays other than the one in use should have the launches out away and shut. The bay 1 key is kept on the whiteboard inside the entrance to Bay 4 by the workshop. It should be replaced immediately after each use.

2.3 PLA Ebb Tide Warning System

The Green, Amber, Red & Black Flagged system monitors the volume of fluvial flow on the ebb tide. The PLA display the coloured flags on the home page of the web site (www.boatingonthames.co.uk) and the widget is displayed on the bottom of the Thames RC website.

- Green = The PLA advise all river users to navigate with caution and maintain a proper lookout.
- Amber = The PLA advise all river users that the fluvial flow is stronger than average and they advise schools, novices or junior crews or those that do not regularly use the tidal Thames not to go afloat.
- Red = The PLA advise all river users that the fluvial flow is far higher than usual and extreme caution is urged PLA advise man-powered vessels not to go afloat.
- Black = The PLA advise all river users that the fluvial flow is less than usual and lower than predicted tides may be expected, especially around low water.

In Amber flag situations only experienced oars people are allowed to boat in small boats and all coaches should take a dynamic risk assessment as to the safety of boating their crews. Inexperienced novice crews should not boat.

In Red flag situations, no one is allowed to boat from TRC on the ebb. Crews may row on the flood tide but should carefully consider the risks.

In Black flag situations crews should not row upstream of Kew within 2 hours of low water or boat at night within 2 hours of low water, due to the increased risk of grounding.

2.4 Thunder Storms and Lightning

All members should be aware of the local weather forecast when planning outings, particularly when thunderstorms have been predicted. If thunder is heard and/or lightning observed before the outing has commenced individuals and crews MUST remain at the club.

If thunder is heard and/or lightning observed whilst on the water, individuals and crews must seek proper shelter. If you are on the water, get to the shore and off wide, open beaches as quickly as possible as water will transmit strikes from further away. Hold the oars parallel with the water and not up in the air.

If safe to do so, individuals and crews should return immediately to the Club; however this has to be with due consideration to the “30-30” rule for lightning. The rule being to count the time taken until you hear the thunder. If it is 30 seconds or less you must seek proper shelter immediately. If there is a 5 second gap between the lightning and thunder then the activity is one mile away.

Individuals and crews must remain at the club or under proper shelter for a minimum period of 30 minutes after the last lightning or thunder, before considering it safe to commence the outing.

2.5 Fog and Reduced Visibility

If the wall of Bishop’s Park is not visible then no crew may boat from the club. If Fulham Football Ground can’t be seen then crews may boat with caution but must use lights. Be aware that fog banks can drift and what was once acceptable visibility can become opaque very quickly. If in doubt, do not go out.

2.6 Cold water

Care should be taken when the water temperature is low, even if the air temperature is higher. Do not go out rowing alone, ever, when the water is very cold. Hypothermia is deadly quick at lower temperatures.

2.7 Low tide

Crews should avoid boating when the tide is very low. Boats should not be put on the water when the tide height is less than 1m on the flood tide or 2m on the ebb time. If crews are planning to row at low tide, they should conduct a thorough risk assessment including the Tideway experience of the cox or steers, the Tideway experience of the coach, and the value of the shell being used. Crews must never row in the dark at low tide, see section 2.13.

2.8 Condition of Equipment

Prior to use, all equipment is to be checked to ensure that it is serviceable and appropriate for the purpose for which it is intended. Any damaged equipment is to be reported using the signing in and out book and by email or in person to the boat man. The damage will be listed on the whiteboard in the workshop. Squad co-ordinators will be kept informed of progress on repairs to boats used by their squad.

2.9 Incidents and Accidents

All members are responsible for reporting all accidents, incidents and near misses that they have knowledge of or witness within 24 hours of the event, via the internal incident reporting system on the Thames website. Incidents that qualify for reporting will then be further logged on BR’s incident reporting website.

All accidents and incidents will be reviewed by the Club Rowing Safety Adviser, and these may be discussed at safety sub-committee level and/or escalated to the Club Committee along with any additional control measures that are deemed necessary to avoid any future repetition.

2.10 Launches

Launches may only be used for coaching by those people authorised to do so, who must at a minimum have passed their Thames Level 2 launch driving. This consists of the Level 0 reading, the Level 1 online test and an in-person Level 2 assessment with an approved tester. Where possible this should include holding their RYA L2 Powerboating. The Club Rowing Safety Adviser holds a list of approved launch drivers, and access can be given on request.

All drivers and passengers are to wear life jackets or buoyancy aids with a kill cord. The driver is responsible for ensuring that a safety bag / launch rescue kit is carried and has its full contents. Any items used or missing are to be notified to the boatman as soon as possible, along with any problems with the launch. All launch drivers are to ensure that the launches are handled with consideration to other river users and in accordance with PLA requirements and should ensure they are focused on driving, not eg videoing or timing. All launch drivers should carry mobile phones with them.

The launches are designed to carry two persons, the driver and the coach. In the event of a capsize recovery operation the maximum number of persons on the launch may exceed two persons in order to safely convey athletes to the bank or boathouse. The maximum number of people the launches can carry without swamping is listed on the plate on the inside of each launch and exceeding this number will likely cause the launch to sink. If in doubt the driver should call 999 and ask for the coastguard immediately. The launches are designed as coaching launches rather than rescue launches, and as such care needs to be taken to ensure the stability of the launch in a rescue situation. Anyone helped into the launch should therefore only be brought in over the decked area at the front of the launch and the launch engine must be in neutral or switched off during rescue.

Launches should be returned to their positions in the bays after outings, following checks of the log to see which bays are not in use. Bay 4 should only contain 1-2 of the lighter launches as it is predominantly used by single scullers. Launches should always be left in locations that show consideration to other club members, for example not blocking bays or blades.

2.11 Coxswains and Steers

In all coxed boats, the coxswain is the master of the vessel and as such is liable for the safety of the vessel and crew. The wearing of lifejackets or buoyancy aids by coxswains is compulsory. Coxes should wear manual life jackets and this is mandatory for bow loaders.

In coxless boats, the person controlling the rudder (when fitted) is deemed responsible for the overall safety of the boat and the crew. If no rudder is fitted then the person responsible for steering should be made clear at the beginning of the outing and should be the person to sign the boat out.

All coxes and steers MUST have completed the Level 0 reading and email before steering. Coxes and steers should work through the Thames RC steering levels (see Appendix 1) and should be appropriately supervised by coaches, in line with the matrix in Table 1 above.

2.12 Coaches

All coaches should have completed their Level 2 launch driving and work their way towards their Level 3 safety test as soon as possible. They should have a good awareness of safety and understanding of the Thames Safety Plan. All coaches should sign the Coaches' Safety Induction document which outlines their responsibilities in more detail.

Coaches are to ensure that:

- Crews use suitable rowing/sculling equipment;
- The outing is conducted appropriate to the prevailing weather and water conditions, tide, competence of the cox and crew and general level of traffic on the river;
- Consideration is shown to other water users; and
- The coach is to be particularly alert for symptoms of hypothermia and heat stroke / dehydration.

Particular attention should be paid to the coaching of coxes as their competence is essential to water safety as well as the crew's success.

Coaches should keep a proper lookout at all times, both for themselves and for the crews they are accompanying. Coaches should not be carrying out any additional activity (for example timekeeping or videos) while driving.

Coaches must behave courteously to all other river users. They should control their wash when passing other crews, particularly for smaller boats, and be polite when talking to other boats.

2.13 Night rowing

Rowing at night should only be undertaken with experienced and competent steers and coxes. Anyone rowing at night should pay particular heed to the tidal conditions and floating objects in the water; this is especially important at low tide. No crews may row downstream of Fulham Railway Bridge. Bright clothing should be worn, particularly by bow and stroke.

Rowing boats must have a bright white light fore (flashing) and aft (fixed) from one hour before sunset until one hour after sunrise. A good guide is that if the street lights are on, or are going to come on during your outing you need lights. Note that lights may be required at other times depending on weather conditions. Lights should be visible at a 180° angle from bow and stern and at a distance of 800m and be securely attached to the boat. Crews should carry a spare light and be able to attach it if necessary.

Launches should have a white light visible around 360° at least 30cm above the head of the driver, as well as a green light to starboard and a red light to port. Drivers should check the batteries and lights before boating. They should carry spares for themselves and for the boats they are coaching.

No crews may go out in the dark at low tide. Crews should not boat if the tide will be lower than 2m at any point in the planned outing. This should be estimated using tide tables.

2.14 Rowing downstream of Putney Bridge

The PLA and TRRC do not allow rowing downstream of Putney Bridge between three hours before and two hours after high tide at London Bridge because this is when large commercial vessels berth and leave at Wandsworth Waste Station. This equates to roughly

3.5 hours before high time to 1.5 hours after high tide at Putney. Rowing downstream of Chelsea Bridge is only allowed if London Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) is contacted in advance. The club does not recommend that un-coached crews or small boats row downstream at higher tides or in poor conditions.

All crews (or groups of crews) going downstream of Wandsworth Bridge must submit a written risk assessment in advance, which must be approved by the Club Rowing Safety Adviser before boating.

2.15 Rowing upstream of Kew Road or Rail Bridge at low water

If you become aware that you can't fit inside the buoys upstream of either Kew Bridge then when it is safe to do so you must stop and spin and return downstream. If you want to do a long outing when the tide is this low, it is generally preferable to extend your outing by going downstream of Putney.

2.16 Single scullers

Single scullers should always carry a mobile phone in a waterproof case, particularly when sculling unaccompanied. This also is strongly recommended for unaccompanied crew boats.

2.17 Insurance

It is recommended that all rowers (particularly steers) and coxes should have British Rowing membership, at least to silver membership, to provide them with third party insurance.

2.18 Para and adaptive athletes

Thames RC has the facilities to support PR3 athletes, including visually impaired athletes. Any athletes within those categories must complete the pre-health questionnaire from British Rowing before participating, so that suitable support can be given.

Crews containing a visually impaired athlete must always be in at least a coached group, regardless of the level of the steers. Visually impaired athletes may not use a single scull or be in a steering seat of any boat. They must be given a full tour of the boat club, with a particular focus on the location of all emergency exits.

3. Off Water-Safety Issues

3.1 Weights room

All members are responsible for keeping the gym areas clean and tidy. After use, every member is responsible for returning all equipment that they have used to its proper place, as well as tidy away anything else that is out of place and no longer being used. All litter should be binned.

All members shall be deemed responsible for their own safety whilst using any of the Club's gym equipment. Should any member have any doubt concerning how to use any item of equipment, or correct technique, they should seek guidance from the Captain or a Coach. The use of any gym equipment by guests is prohibited.

Shoes should always be worn in the gym and weights room.

3.2 No Smoking Policy

The Club has a no smoking policy and smoking is not permitted in any part of the Boathouse other than the balcony. Members are responsible for ensuring that their guests are briefed accordingly.

3.3 Crew room and kitchen

Users of the crewroom and its cooking appliances are to ensure that care is taken in their use, that they are not left unattended when in use and that all appliances are left safe when finished with. Furthermore, work-tops, crockery etc are to be left in a clean and hygienic state.

No one should go in the kitchen without permission of the General Manager or Honorary Commercial Secretary.

3.4 Fire

In the event of a fire the Boathouse is to be evacuated and Leaders Gardens is to be used as a muster point. An attempt is to be made to account for individuals. Members are responsible for the safety of their guests. The fire exits are shown on the map on the safety notice boards and the muster point is on the fire notices in each room.

Fire extinguishers are placed throughout the Club and locations are shown on the map on the safety notice boards. These are serviced annually and have a clear sign indicating which type of fire extinguisher they are. Fire extinguishers should NOT be used to prop open doors. A fire blankets are available in the kitchen. Fire doors should not be propped open.

It is aimed to hold a fire drill annually, usually in the first three months of the season.

4. Boat Transportation

4.1 Drivers

Only individuals authorised by the Captain are to drive the Club truck and trailers. All drivers are to be conversant with the BR Code for the Towing of Boat Trailers and have their trailer licence (or have a driving licence that does not require a trailer licence). All drivers should sign in and out on the vehicle log book, kept in the truck. The Head Coach is responsible for the maintenance of the truck and trailers. The truck and trailers should usually be serviced twice a year and particularly before long trips.

4.2 Boat Loading

When crews are travelling to regattas or alternate training locations, the Head Coach (or suitable delegate) will detail the trailer loading plan and draw it on the whiteboard in bay 2. Loading is to be strictly in accordance with this plan and the driver is to check compliance with the plan prior to departure. The driver is to ensure that all boats and equipment are safely secured prior to departure and that the necessary requirements for rear projections and lighting are observed. As a reminder ratchet straps are not certified by manufacturers for commercial use (packaging on branded products usually has a disclaimer) and as agreed with our insurers will only be used for slinging singles /pairs as they are the best solution for the situation and the loads are within the manufacturers loading limits for the product.

Further details on the legal requirements for trailering can be found in the [British Rowing Guidance](#).

5. Feedback

Safety is a standard item on the main Committee agenda and is reviewed at every meeting.

Safety sub-committee will meet at least three times per year and will deal with the development of processes and embedding safety across the Club, in accordance with its terms of reference (see Appendix 2).

Safety can only be consistently achieved through a process of good communication, education and periodic review. If any individual identifies any safety related issue which is not documented, or that they feel others can learn from, they can make a significant contribution by discussing the topic with the Club Rowing Safety Adviser who can then take the appropriate action.

6. Other references

British Rowing Row Safe guidelines: <https://www.britishrowing.org/about-us/policies-guidance/rowsafe/>

British Rowing Incident Reporting system: <https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org/>

Appendix 1 – Thames Steering Levels

Level 0:

All athletes and coxes MUST have completed their L0 before the coaches allow them to steer a boat at all. A record of all L0 steers is available to all coaches who are responsible for selecting steers to comply with the risk assessment. Level 0 consists of introductory reading, including the Tideway Code, and a confirmation email.

Level 1:

Level 1 is an online multiple choice test. Steers and coxes will also need to have completed the online basic risk assessment module on RowHow and emailed the certificate to safety@thamesrc.co.uk before being listed as level 1. This ensures that steers have undergone training to familiarise themselves with the rules of the river and that the club has a record of this training before they are allowed out in a group.

Level 2:

Assessment for Level 2 is done by an approved coach with the requisite understanding.

For a novice steers or someone not used to the Tideway, you must have completed a minimum of 5 supervised outings to be certified at this level and the time it takes you to reach Level 2 will be largely dependent on your knowledge and experience both of the sport and of the Tideway (if you have not steered previously, a much higher number would be expected over a period of many months). However, it is important that you AND your coach keep simple records of all your outings, ideally electronically, and ask your coach to sign your “log book” straight after every outing – the Safety Sub-Committee may ask to see this and correlate with the signing out register. The coach will complete an observation form, with the clear understanding that those signed off should be at a suitable level to steer alone in good conditions and the primary responsibility for the future good navigation of that athlete will lie with the coach for the immediate period after certification.

There will be a probationary period of 6 months whereby the coach may rescind their approval of L2 if he or she feels he has come to the wrong conclusion in passing the examinee after which period the status is firm.

Note that *this* level 2 status is awarded separately for coxing, foot steering and sculling.

Level 3:

Coaches should recommend steers for L3 based on the quality of their steering and their level of experience. All steers must have completed sufficient Tideway outings, including at least 3 in the dark (unless they are willing to have a daylight only limitation), before sitting this test (no GPS evidence is necessary). The oral assessment will involve the need to be able to identify all the hazards between Richmond and Wandsworth as specified on the website, scenario based questions and risk assessment scenarios. An area-limited L3 may be given where hazards between Kew and Putney bridges can be identified. Those with an area limited L3 may only be considered L3 between those points.

Club Launch Level 2

All who wish to drive a club launch MUST complete their L0 and L1 test. Once that is completed, they must complete the club level launch test. This can consist of:

- Either RYA L2 plus land-based club launch induction (specific information to the club); or
- The BR club launch training assessment test with approved testers including observation of driving and a hand written record on the BR form which requires printing out and filling at the same time as the tests which can be done over several outings.

Note:

- If a coach considers that an athlete or cox is at an incorrect level, they should tell a safety adviser as soon as possible and make sure the CRSA knows. A steers may be regressed a level following the agreement of a coach and the CRSA.
- If a person has not steered in 3 or more years, they must be assessed by a coach observation and an oral or written retest before returning to their previous level of steering.
- If crews are going out in a group, they MUST all be within hearing range and eyesight of the coach at all times. This will usually mean that crews are going out in similar boat types.

Record keeping:

- All steers are expected to keep a log book of their outings (this may double up as their training diary which may be electronic and ideally will be).
- Coaches must maintain a list of everyone who has steered in a given season in electronic format or scanned such that it can be readily sent at a moment's notice to the safety sub-committee or CRSA.