

# **AMOSKEAG ROWING CLUB**

## **Safety Policy**

**Adopted September 14, 2009**

This policy applies to all persons using the Club's facilities or equipment.

Safety is a primary concern of any athletic event and the sport of rowing carries with it some inherent risks. These risks include, but are not limited to, drowning, hypothermia (cold), hyperthermia (hot), injuries caused by collisions, equipment failures, overexertion, or lightning strikes, and health problems caused by underlying medical issues. Each person is responsible for their own safety and rowing is ALWAYS at one's own risk.

The risks during any particular rowing session can be significantly increased by the compounding of one or more hazardous conditions present. For example, the wind and waves that are merely a challenge on a warm summer day, can add up to a significant danger if combined with cold weather and a broken oarlock. Other factors which affect the risk level include the physical conditioning of the rower(s), their rowing skill and confidence in the shell type being rowed and whether they are being supervised by a coaching launch.

The sum total of the risk factors present must be considered when deciding if rowing is reasonably prudent at any particular time and under the given circumstances. It is the responsibility of the each person to assess the current risk factors and make adjustments to rowing plans (including not going on the river) in order to manage the risks.

In order to effectively manage the risks of rowing, this Amoskeag Rowing Club Safety Policy and the USRowing Safety Bulletin should be reviewed and followed. Both of these documents will be updated periodically and it is each person's responsibility to access the current versions.

As with any policy, strict adherence to the letter is not possible in all circumstances and all conceivable situations cannot be anticipated. These guidelines merely provide the minimum rowing safety standards to guide those who out of the ARC boathouse.

Therefore, all facility or equipment users are expected to remain alert and flexible, and to exercise good judgment in all circumstances.

### **BASIC SAFETY**

Use of ARC facilities and/or equipment is ONLY open to club members in good standing, their guests as allowed by the ARC Guest Policy or to ARC satellite teams and their guests.

All persons using ARC facilities and/or equipment must have signed the ARC Liability Release.

Club members or guests under 18 years of age must be directly supervised by their parent or a coach.

Guests are NOT allowed to use club equipment unless approved by the ARC Captain or one designated by the Captain.

For the purposes of this Safety Policy, all club members will be considered Novices until they have demonstrated knowledge of boat handling, safety, boathouse

procedures, and rowing ability to the ARC Captain, or one designated by the Captain by passing the ARC Captain's Test. Members who have done so will be considered and called Experienced Rowers.

Novices may only row when supervised by a coach or a member who is an Experienced Rower.

Members must receive approval from the Captain prior to beginning to row club racing singles.

All coaching launches will be equipped and operated in compliance with USRowing guidelines and New Hampshire Department of Safety Watercraft Safety Rules. Launch operators must, at a minimum, be trained by an experienced operator, although it is recommended that all launch operators complete the NH Marine Patrol Boating Education Class prior to operating a launch during a rowing practice. It is recommended that everyone riding in a coaching launch wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD).

### **DAILY SAFETY**

Members must use the log book to sign yourself, and, if you are using a club boat, to sign it, out and in before and after every row.

Check all equipment before rowing. Equipment failures can cause shells to capsize, swamp, sink or otherwise become inoperable. You are responsible for checking the conditions of the boat, rigging, and oars prior to their use. Please bring any missing parts, damage or malfunctions of club equipment to the attention of the equipment

manager immediately and if the equipment is unsafe to use, visibly label it as such before returning it to storage.

All shells must be equipped with a bow ball and shoe heels tied down.

Make sure you have the supplies that will keep you physically comfortable and contribute to your safety while on the water – such as warm clothing, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, water and a cell phone in a water proof container. It is also recommended that footwear be carried in the boat to be used if one is stranded away from the boathouse and needs to walk to get help.

If caught unexpectedly in hazardous conditions, make your way back to the boathouse only if it is safe to do so. Otherwise, go to the nearest shore as quickly as possible, get off the water and either wait out the conditions or walk/call to get help.

### **HANDLE YOUR BOAT CAREFULLY**

Follow the rules for correct boat handling. This will minimize the risk of injury to yourself and others and damage to the boats.

### **KNOW WEATHER AND WATER CONDITIONS**

Check the weather and water conditions and forecasts prior to going on the river.

Be particularly cautious about going out when the river or weather is cold, the water level is high and the current fast, if there is debris in the water which could damage equipment or cause you to capsize, visibility is poor, thunderstorms are threatening or wind and waves are present.

Be aware that **HIGH WATER** and **STRONG CURRENTS** significantly raise the risks of rowing. The ARC boathouse is located ~ 500 meters upstream from the Hooksett dam. Being swept by the current over the dam would likely be fatal. This danger increases as the river current speed increases. Individuals riding in shells or launches which capsize, swamp or are otherwise unable to make headway against the current are at risk of being carried over the dam.

Do not go any further down the river from the ramp at the boathouse than is necessary to follow the required traffic pattern while approaching the ramp.

Stay as far as possible upriver from the boat warning barrier (cable with buoys strung across the river) above the dam. This barrier is a visual warning to all river users of the presence of the dam immediately below. However, the physical barrier itself is a hazard to water craft. Do not approach the barrier or allow your boat to come in contact with it.

Strong currents can also be dangerous to boats or swimmers by pulling them into and then under obstructions in or just above the water. Capsized rowers may find it difficult to reenter their boat on swiftly moving water, swimming it to shore may be difficult and approaching the shore may be dangerous if obstructions such as downed trees are present along the shore.

If the river level is moderately high (the water is up to or above the base of the tree just south of the launch ramp's end) it is recommended that only Experienced Rowers with strong skills and confidence should row without a coaching launch present and they should not go down stream of the launch ramp. It is also recommended that only

shells with four or more oars (no singles or pairs) be rowed to reduce the chance of capsizing.

If the river level is at or above the flood warning level (USGS Concord gage height at or above 10 feet) it is recommended that no rowers be on the river unless there is one coaching launch per shell and the launch is carrying equipment (motors, anchors, lines, etc.) sufficient to hold both the launch and shell in place against the current.

If the river is at or above flood level (USGS Concord gage at or above 14 ft) it is recommended that no one ventures out on the river.

If you can see **LIGHTNING**, or a storm approaching, get off the water immediately.

Do not row in **FOG** that limits your ability to navigate and/or avoid collisions.

Use care and lights if rowing **BEFORE SUNRISE** or **AFTER SUNSET**. The NH Marine Patrol requirements for lights must be followed .

Be aware of the dangers of **HYPERTHERMIA** when rowing in hot or humid weather. Hyperthermia (heat exhaustion and heat stroke) occurs when there is an increase in body temperature. It occurs when sweat cannot evaporate (air is humid or rower is overdressed), the body is being heated by the environment (air temperatures usually over 75F and/or exposure to strong sun), and dehydration results from insufficient body fluid replenishment. Heat stroke, the more severe phase of hyperthermia, can be fatal. See the USRowing Safety Bulletin to learn about hyperthermia symptoms and first aid.

Know that rowing on cold water or in cold or wet weather significantly raises the risks of hypothermia and drowning.

**COLD SHOCK** is a significant risk when rowing on water colder than 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Recent research has shown that cold shock is more of a risk than hypothermia, can incapacitate even good swimmers, and can lead to drowning within 3 to 5 minutes. The cold shock reaction to sudden immersion in cold water is an involuntary response (a gasping inhalation followed by hyperventilation) that can make it difficult or impossible to hold one's breath under water, to get into a life jacket or to get back into a boat.

**HYPOTHERMIA** occurs when more heat escapes from your body than your body can produce. It is a serious condition that can be life threatening. Hypothermia in rowers is typically caused by a combination of moisture (from capsizing, swamping, backsplash, rain or sweat) combined with prolonged exposure to cold (either remaining immersed in cold water or wearing wet clothing in cold air, particularly if the air is moving over the body.) To avoid hypothermia, avoid becoming wet when the weather is cold by avoiding situations where there is a chance of capsizing or swamping (row a larger more stable boat or choose not to row), wearing multiple layers of synthetic clothing topped by a breathable but water resistant shell to repel rain and splashing, and keeping a warm hat available. Add or remove the hat and layers as necessary to remain warm but avoid excessive sweating. Clothing specifically designed to keep the user warm while immersed in cold water (wetsuits, dry suits, etc.) may enable rowers to more safely row in cold conditions. See the USRowing Safety Bulletin to learn about hypothermia symptoms and first aid.

When the water temperature is below 60F or the sum of the air temperature and the water temperature is below 100F, it is recommended that only Experienced Rowers

with strong skills and confidence level in the shell type being rowed, row without being accompanied by a coaching launch. Wearing or carrying a PFD (Personal Floatation Device) in your shell is strongly recommended for all rowers. Inflatable PFD's suitable for use while rowing are commercially available.

When the water temperature is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit or the sum of the air temperature and the water temperature is below 90F, it is recommended that unless a shell is accompanied by a coaching launch, only Experienced Rowers with strong skills and confidence row and that they row only shells with four or more oars. Wearing a PFD is strongly recommended for all rowers.

Rowing is not recommended if ice is present on or in the river or the air temperature is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

### **OBEY ALL LOCAL WATER TRAFFIC AND SAFETY RULES**

Know where you are going by familiarizing yourself with landmarks, potential hazards and emergency landing spots. A map of the river is posted at the boathouse.

Keep a lookout at all times and in all directions for other rowers, motorized craft, floating debris or stationary objects.

Launch shells with their bows pointing upstream and keep to the starboard side of the river at all times. Mentally divide the width of the river in thirds and then row in the starboard third only. Stay out of the middle third of the river unless passing another boat or crossing the river to change your direction of travel and then do so with caution..

Boats returning to the launch ramp should stay to the west side of the river until they are approximately even with the boathouse before starting to cross the river. The crossing should be started sooner if the river is flowing faster.

As a general rule, slower boats should steer a course closer to the shore and should indicate their presence to oncoming boats well in advance of being overtaken.

Be courteous to others on the water.

### **KNOW HOW TO SWIM, BUT STAY WITH THE BOAT IF IT CAPSIZES**

Learn to swim or wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD). Rowers who are not confident that they are able to swim 50 meters continuously, tread water for 5 minutes and put on a PFD while treading water should wear a US Coast Guard approved PFD while on the water. Inflatable PFD's suitable for use while rowing are commercially available.

If you capsize or fall out of the boat, remember that shells are flotation devices. Remain calm and hold on to the boat. Stay quiet and listen for directions from coaches or coxswains if they are present. If help is not immediately present, get back into the boat if able, otherwise swim the boat to shore and reenter the boat from the shore. If the water is cold, get as much of your body out of the water by lying on top of the shell and paddling with your hands. If you are in the vicinity of the dam and are being swept downstream towards it, you will need to get to the closest shore as soon as possible. Do not put yourself at further risk by attempting to save equipment.

Swamping, when a boat is filled with water by large waves, heavy rain or leaks, is a common cause of capsizing. The right way to handle a large oncoming wave is to stop

rowing, turn the boat parallel to the wave, rest oar blades flat on the water and carefully lean slightly away from the wake. If your shell fills with water, take it to shore (it may be necessary to exit the shell and swim it to shore), and then slowly roll and raise the shell, gradually draining the water until the shell can be entirely lifted out of the water and emptied.

### **ROWING ALONE IS NOT RECOMMENDED**

Novices should never row alone. They must pass the ARC Captain's Test before rowing without a coaching launch or experienced rower present.

If you are rowing in a single, rowing with another boat is recommended. Keep in sight of each other and visually check on each other frequently.

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