

CINCINNATI ROWING CLUB SAFETY MANUAL
Licking River Boathouse

REVISED 2/1/2006

Throughout its long history rowing has established itself as a safe sport. Consistent with that history, operations of the Cincinnati Rowing Center, its members and all associated organizations will be conducted with safety as the number one priority.

The location of the Licking River boathouse presents several safety challenges. The size of the river, sharp turns, commercial barge traffic, pleasure boat traffic, and varying flow rates are all potential safety hazards. This safety manual is intended to outline the best procedures to ensure a continuous safe rowing operation. It has been drawn from the experience of rowing clubs throughout the world, U.S. Coast Guard navigation rules, recommendations of the U.S. Rowing Association and consultation with local river interest.

Every participant is responsible to know and follow the procedures outlined in this manual. Every participant is responsible to monitor the activities of other rowers and provide feedback and immediate corrective action in the event of any non-compliance or if observing and unsafe actions or condition. The same co-operative team effort required for good rowing is necessary to ensure a safe operation. Coaches have an additional responsibility for training, supervising and controlling their teams.

Failure to comply with the procedures in this plan will result in follow-up and disciplinary sanctions with the individuals or groups involved. Repeat or serious infractions will result in banishment from the property and activities of the Cincinnati Rowing Center.

**Libby Beene
Safety Director
Cincinnati Rowing Club**

ACCOUNTABILITY

- 1) All rowers under 18 years of age will be under the direct supervision of a coach when rowing.
- 2) All rowers will read and acknowledge with their signature that they understand and will comply with all club safety rules prior to participating in any club activities. A Safety Assessment will be completed by any person wishing to row as a member of the club. Rowers under 18 and their parents will be provided training on the pertinent parts by a coach or CRC Captain and will sign the acknowledgement.
- 3) Prior to participating in any club activity, everyone will sign a USRowing waiver of liability acknowledging the risks and hazards of rowing. A parent or guardian will sign for anyone under 18.
- 4) All practices will be recorded in the log book prior to rowing. Coaches may log for all boats under their supervision with a single entry. Each boat not under the direct (on the water) supervision of the coach must be logged out and in individually.
- 5) A bulletin board will be mounted in a prominent place in the boathouse with a posting of safety rules, any safety notices or updates and emergency phone numbers. Rowers and coaches will check this board prior to launching.
- 6) No one under 18 may be at the boathouse alone and no one should be at the boathouse alone when it is dark. Coaches will supervise arrival and departure of rowers under the age of 18.
- 7) There will be a safety committee led by the Cincinnati Rowing Club Safety Director to ensure this plan is kept current and followed. The safety committee will complete a monthly safety inspection of the facility and equipment and of the requirements in this manual. The committee will be responsible to ensure any required corrective action is complete. Additionally, the safety committee will conduct an annual review of this manual and update and redistribute as needed.

PROCEDURES

- 1) Each rower will participate in a water safety program. Coaches, the CRC Captain, and the CRC Safety Director are responsible for ensuring rowers are trained. Topics will include:
 - a. Rescue procedures in the water
 - b. Recognition of unsafe water conditions
 - c. Basic first aid
 - d. Hypothermia
 - e. Proper navigation rules and boat handling
 - f. Rowing terminology
- 2) All rowers will demonstrate their swimming/flotation skills by completing the club swimming assessment. As an alternative, rowers who have a current Red Cross Intermediate swimming or higher qualification from within the last 5 years may present that. Anyone not meeting this requirement must wear a life preserver at all times on the water.
- 3) Anyone injured during a rowing activity or on the boathouse grounds will report the injury to the coach, safety director or club officer. If sufficiently serious, a formal incident report will be submitted to the club president. This includes any "close" encounters with a barge or pleasure boat traffic.
- 4) All launches will operate in accordance with applicable safety regulations
- 5) Experienced rowers new to the Licking River will be given complete safety/course rules/river familiarization training before rowing. Ideally they will row the River first with experienced rowers. Beginning rowers must be adequately instructed and supervised until skill level to row unsupervised has been demonstrated and certified.
- 6) Club boats will only be transported on a car, van or trailer by driver specifically designate by the club president or head coach. They will be familiar with related U.S. Rowing guidelines and comply with all motor vehicle rules for doing so.

FACILITY

- 1) All gasoline storage will in a secure, approved storage area and will use approved, flame proof contains.
- 2) Fire extinguishers will be present, clearly marked and regularly inspected.
- 3) Aisles will be kept free of obstacles.
- 4) Launches will be stored in the designated storage area.
- 5) A first aid kit will be maintained in the boathouse and inspected regularly.
- 6) Outboard engines will be stored on designated racks
- 7) Boathouse doors and the road gate will be locked when departing. Boathouse doors will be locked if no one is in the immediate vicinity and on the shore. Leave boathouse lights on!
- 8) Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in or around the boathouse. Any special events deviating from this rule will have explicit approval of the club president and will comply with all local laws.
- 9) Vegetation upstream of the bridge will be kept clear to maintain maximum visibility of approaching traffic from the dock area.
- 10) When entering the boathouse, the alarm must be disabled. If the alarm sounds, anticipate a call from the security service. Give them the code word or the police will be dispatched. Reset the alarm if you are the last to leave.

HOURS OF ROWING

All rowing from the Licking River boathouse will be during daylight hours. No boats may depart the dock before official sunrise and all must be back at the dock by official sunset.

WINTER ROWING

The Licking Boathouse will generally be closed for the winter from December 1 though March 1. The head coach, Club President and Safety Director, will make any adjustments to those dates. Single scullers may not launch in the month of March until individually cleared by the Safety Director whose decision will be based on water conditions and the rower's skill level. Generally a water temperature of 50 degrees or higher will be required before single scullers, not directly supervised by a coach may launch. Winter rowing (Dec 1 through Mar 1) by any CRC club member requires prior approval of the Safety Director or CRC Captain. Any member who wishes to continue to row through the winter season may request approval prior to the season starting. Approval will be given based upon rower's experience and ability and may be revoked at any time.

WEATHER

- 1) Rowers/coaches must always be aware of weather conditions. Watch for gathering clouds, changes in wind speed/direction, temperature changes, etc.
- 2) A weather radio will be kept in the boathouse and should be checked if they're in any doubt.
- 3) Do not row if a thunderstorm warning exists for the immediate area. If a watch or a warning is in the region but outside the immediate vicinity exits, stay close to the dock area and monitor conditions. Land all boats at the first sign of lightning.
- 4) Boats will not launch in high wind conditions, defined as causing whitecaps on the water. If such conditions are encountered while on the water return to the dock immediately if safe to do so. If not, seek and stay in a sheltered area until winds subside and then return.

- 5) Do not row in fog unless visibility is at least 100 yards. If fog sets in while on the water, keep a land reference on one side and return to the dock, moving slowly and prepared to stop. Make noise frequently with a sound device or by shouting to warn other boats. Ensure quiet when not signaling to listen for other boats.
- 6) Rain throughout the Licking Ohio basins can have a large impact on Licking River conditions. Hazards include flow rate and floating debris. When those conditions exist, rowing will be limited. Who should launch should be based on specific river conditions, water and air temperature, boat size and the skill and experience of the rowers and coxswains.
- 7) When the water temperature is below 50 degrees, the risk of hypothermia increases significantly. The safety director will monitor water temperature and post it in the boathouse and via e-mail. When water temperature is below 50 degrees, no boat with less than 4 oars may launch, unless under the direct supervision of a coach in a launch. Larger boats may launch only after receiving approval from the Safety Director or CRC Captain.

EQUIPMENT

- 1) Any boat launching from the facility must have a bow ball affixed.
- 2) Every boat launching from the facility must have heel restraints/quick release mechanisms in compliance with USRA rules. Coaches and safety directors will assure they are properly maintained.
- 3) Shoes with Velcro closures are strongly recommended in all boats. If tied shoes are used they should be only snug enough to hold the foot stable but remain loose enough for quick foot removal in the event of an emergency.
- 4) For both safety and equipment maintenance reasons rowers will only use boats that are consistent with their skill level. As beginner rowers progress in skill, club leadership will designate available boats. This does not preclude "rowing up" in higher level equipment under the supervision of experienced rowers or coaches. See the CRC Policy and Procedure Manual.

RIVER TRAFFIC

The greatest hazard associated with rowing is the interaction with other boats on the water. That is particularly true on the Licking River with the regular barge traffic. The barge is trying to maneuver in a very limited space (and is much bigger than us), will often use a large part of the river and cannot see around corners. Barges cannot stop to avoid us, so we should maneuver to avoid them. For our own safety and consistent with navigation rules rowers will always assume the barge has the right of way. To ensure safety, actions of rowers and barges must be consistent and predictable. The following rules will be followed by all rowers.

- 1) Course rules are to keep to the right – travel upstream on the Covington side and back on the Newport side, which is consistent with the Coast Guard navigation rules. That is, two boats approaching on opposite courses will normally pass port side to port side. If debris or other hazards cause a deviation from this pattern, return to the correct side as soon as possible and pay particular attention approaching turns.
- 2) When encountering an approaching barge, rowers will stop and move as close to the river bank as is safe, leaving some room to absorb the anticipated wake. Acknowledge the barge's presence with a wave or other signal, keep it in sight and establish eye contact with the pilothouse of the tug. In the worst case scenario and collision would appear possible, row the shell into the shore and get out onto the shore, abandoning the shell.
- 3) The movement of the barge through the water and force of the tug's drive create a very strong inward suction along the sides even though the water may appear calm. Stay as far away from the side of the barge and tug as possible by pulling toward the shore.

- 4) After passage, rowers must still cope with the barge wake. Its size will require it be taken parallel to the shell. There are two distinct parts. The first will be to the side and be taken by lining up nearly parallel to the direction of travel. The second will be created by the strong prow ash from the tug and will be a series of large rolling wave following directly behind the tug and oriented perpendicular to travel. Shells can generally stay to the side of the river, letting these swells pass by. If not, take them parallel to avoid breaking the shell.
- 5) While navigating the Licking during daylight hours, barges may sound their whistle to warn as we approach. This is more than just a warning. It is a signal. Rowers, coaches and coxswains will be familiar with the following whistle signals from barges:

When you hear **ONE PROLONGED BLAST**, it means a barge is approaching a blind riverbend within a couple of minutes. Exercise extreme caution. If you are on the dock, do not launch until the barge clears the bridge. If you are on the water near the bridge stay well away from the bridge. A downriver barge will use the entire bridge opening to get by and they cannot see us. If near a bend upriver from the dock, stop before the turn, pull to the side and wait for the barge to pass. This is the most common signal we should hear and coaches should establish radio contact to coordinate passing.

If the barge sounds a series of **FOUR OR MORE SHORT BLASTS**, this means the barge is signaling a dangerous situation or doesn't understand our intentions. Make it perfectly clear by moving out of the way, stopping, acknowledging with a wave or signal, and establishing eye contact. Coaches should communicate on the radio to both avoid and respond to this type of situation.

In all cases all parties are to exercise judgment to ensure safety. The absence of a whistle signal or other communication should not be taken that no traffic exists. Rowers will always assume traffic will be encountered. Coxswains will always remain vigilant and scullers, through the use of mirrors or very frequent visual checking, will ensure clear water ahead.

- 6) The rowing club will maintain a VHF radio in the boathouse for communication with river traffic. Just prior to launching any boats, a VHF radio call will be made using the following procedures:
 - a) Turn on the radio, confirming it is operating.
 - b) Ensure it is turned to Channel 13.
 - c) Listen and confirm no one is talking.
 - d) Say "This is the Cincinnati Rowing Club, near the mouth of the Licking River, launching (describe the boats leaving) heading upstream on the Licking (or whatever your intent). Any barge traffic on or entering the Licking River, please respond." Or something similar.
 - e) Listen for any responses for at least 60 seconds.
 - f) If any approaching traffic responds, establish position and jointly plan anticipated passing.

THE ABSENCE OF A RADIO RESPONSE SHOULD NOT BE ASSUMED TO MEAN A CLEAR RIVER. NORMAL CAUTION SHOULD ALWAYS BE EXERCISED.

- 7) Coaching launches will carry a VHF radio with them on the water and monitor Channel 13. Communicate directly with barge traffic. Since this channel is monitored by all traffic on the Licking and Ohio Rivers, minimize radio talk to keep the channel clear and to avoid distracting barge crews. If necessary to communicate between coaches, do not use Channel 13. Say "channel switch" and both go to channel 60. Return to channel 13 as soon as business is complete.

DOCK OPERATIONS

- 1) Launching – All shells and launches will launch downstream on the Licking (toward the Ohio). After traveling downstream a minimum of 50 yards, establish clearance from any traffic, turn upstream, cross the river and proceed in accordance with normal course rules.
- 2) Recovering – All shells on the Licking River will pass through the bridge and proceed downstream of the dock at least 100 yards. After establishing clearance from any traffic, turn and proceed upstream to the dock.
- 3) If shells are waiting for dock space to land and a barge approaches, line up single file close to the Covington shore until it passes.

THE WATER

Rowing takes place on the water, not in it. The Licking River in particular presents a variety of hazards from pollutants, current, floating debris, bottom hazards, etc.

- 1) No club member may get in the water without the explicit permission and direct supervision of the coach. There will be no swimming, no throwing in of coxswains, any horseplay, etc. Items dropped in the water that are not visible and within reach from the shore are considered lost and not recoverable.
- 2) Water quality varies and is often poor. Current Tetanus and Hepatitis shots are strongly recommended for all rowers. Rivers water should be kept from any open wounds (blisters too) as much as feasible. Wash with soap and water as soon as possible after rowing. Wet clothing should be washed prior to wearing again.
- 3) The bottom and shoreline, particularly where water level rises and falls, should be considered hazardous. To protect feet, shoes should be worn in and around the boathouse and at the water's edge.

COMMUNICATIONS

- 1) A boathouse telephone will be maintained to facilitate emergency communications. Emergency numbers will be posted near the phone.
- 2) A weather radio will be in the boathouse and accessible to all.
- 3) A VHF radio will be in the boathouse and in all coaching launches to facilitate communication with commercial river traffic.