

Recommendations Arising from the BUCS Incident 19th February 2023

Launches

General

Launches must be driven with care and the driver's priority is the safety of the launch and all around it. Coaching takes second place to driving. If coaches want to spend more time coaching, they must have a driver.

Trim

Rowing boats travel just below the planing speed of launches leading to the bow of the launch being elevated. To keep the bow down, if there is only one person in the launch, extra weight should be carried as ballast in the bow. 40 kgs should be enough for most coaches.

The engine should be trimmed as close to the transom as possible; if the engine is tilted upwards, it will tend to lift the bow even more.

Choice of Launches

Many clubs use tinfish (rigid aluminium dories) as they are relatively cheap and durable. Experience has shown that short tinfish lift their bows more than longer ones, so 12-foot tinfish are better than 9-foot and ballast in the bows has more effect on longer boats. Also, the weight of the engine has a significant effect; four-stroke engines are typically 10 kgs heavier than a two-stroke engine of equivalent power.

RIBs (Rigid Inflatable Boats) are generally better for rescue but may create more wash.

Glare

When the sun is low and straight ahead, it can be very difficult to see ahead. A peaked cap or wide-brimmed hat can help to block the direct glare of the sun. Polarised sunglasses are very effective at cutting glare off the water. In combination, these two can make it much safer to drive a launch or steer a rowing boat in these conditions.

Crew Lookout

Crews are required by law (CoLRs) to keep a good lookout. Coxes in the stern of a boat cannot see straight ahead; rowers at bow should keep a lookout as if they were in a coxless boat and warn the cox of any obstructions, including other crews.

Circulation Pattern

All crews should know the circulation pattern for the waters they are on. Normally crews should pass 'port to port' so crews should keep to the starboard side of the waterway (keep right from the cox's viewpoint). They should also know where they may turn around. Being on the wrong side of the river is a significant cause of collisions, and thus of injuries and boat damage.

Turning About

When turning about to go in the opposite direction, it is important to cross the river while turning. Crews doing a spin turn will end up facing oncoming traffic, which is obviously dangerous. It will also take some distance to get back to the correct side of the river.

Event Organisation

There must be a clear handover of responsibility from the host club to the event organisers at the beginning of the event, and vice-versa at the end.

Reporting Incidents

Serious incidents must be reported to the appropriate authorities. This may vary from river to river, but clubs should know what to report. 999 will get the emergency services. On the tidal River Tyne, serious incidents must be reported to Tyne VTS.

All incidents should be reported on the British Rowing Incident Reporting system.

All clubs on the tidal River Tyne should be aware of the provisions of the River Tyne Rowing Club Safety Code and asked to promote these to members.

John Mulholland