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## SAFETY

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### Purpose:

The Halifax Rowing Club (HRC) is committed to the safety of its members, visitors and others who use the waters of the Northwest Arm. This policy lays out roles, responsibilities and procedures at HRC that are designed to create the safest environment possible.

### Scope:

All HRC members and Learn-to-Row participants, and all HRC coaches/instructors are responsible for their own safety, the safety of others and the safety of HRC's equipment.

### Responsible Party:

The HRC Board of Directors is responsible to oversee this Safety Policy. The HRC Board of Directors is primarily responsible for (a) ensuring that HRC meets all safety requirements as set out by Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) and any other requirements for due diligence, and (b) promoting rowing safety to all members, coaches and volunteers.

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## POLICY

### I. Policy Statement

“Rowing is a safe sport when conducted with due consideration for the risks inherently associated with any outdoor water sport. There is the risk of personal injury from collision and the risk of drowning when rowing participants find themselves in the water. All risks are heightened in cold water. While contending with difficult weather conditions is part of the sport, safe enjoyment of the sport is the aim. Concern for personal safety must be paramount.” (quoted from RCA Safety document) In accordance to RCA Safety Requirements and Safety Guidelines, HRC is “responsible for assessing the risks in its particular environment and in establishing the appropriate safety procedures to minimize those risks”. The following are HRC Safety Procedures.

### II. Procedure

1. HRC will appoint a Safety Advisor “whose duty is to ensure that an appropriate safety program is drawn up and implemented at the club, in accordance with” RCA guidelines. Normally, the Safety Director will fulfill this role.

2. HRC will draw up and display its own **Safety Code**<sup>1</sup>, following the recommendation of the RCA Safety Checklist ([https://rowingcanada.org/uploads/2019/02/safety\\_checklist.pdf](https://rowingcanada.org/uploads/2019/02/safety_checklist.pdf)) that guides instruction of rowers, is reinforced by coaches to all athletes and guides policy development. The Local Safety Plan shall be reviewed annually by the Safety Director and a report provided to the Board with recommendations.
3. HRC will have an **Emergency Action Plan (EAP)** posted visibly in the boathouse. The EAP will include:
  - a. A list of vital telephone numbers displayed prominently in the boathouse that includes:
    - i. Doctor/Ambulance/Police
    - ii. Fire Department
    - iii. Closest Hospital Emergency Department
    - iv. Harbour police
    - v. The emergency service that can provide the quickest on-water response.  
All boat drivers are expected to have these numbers programmed into their mobile phones that are charged and carried with them.
  - b. Directions to the St. Mary's Boat Club / Halifax Rowing Club
  - c. Information about the location of medical files of participants
4. Safety and first aid equipment will be readily available in the boathouse including:
  - a. First aid kit (fully stocked and regularly checked);
  - b. Thermal blankets/exposure bags;
  - c. Life rings/buoy and line;
  - d. An AED<sup>2</sup>.
5. HRC will have a **Cold Weather/Water and Hypothermia Policy**<sup>3</sup> that guides coaching decisions, preparations for on water practices and instruction.
6. HRC equipment normally is only used while the Club is open. For exceptional circumstances, procedures for **Rowing Outside of Program Hours** are included in the HRC Safety Code.

... end of policy

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed elements of the Safety Code are appended to this document

<sup>2</sup> There is an AED on the second floor of the SMBC

<sup>3</sup> Cold Weather/Water and Hypothermia Policy is part of the HRC Safety Code

## **HRC Safety Code:**

HRC will take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of HRC members and guests at events and regattas attended by HRC members. All HRC programs, including learn-to-row, adult, para, junior, novice, recreational/fitness and competitive rowing and training, will be planned, implemented and managed with the safety of all in mind. Coaches/instructors will be required to hold high safety standards, will be reminded often of their role in reinforcing safety at HRC and will review the HRC Safety Policy, Safety Code and Safety Procedures at a minimum annually, but preferably more frequently.

## **Environment**

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### **Waterway**

A plan of the local water showing the traffic circulation pattern, local rules of use, hazards and safe landing sites in the event of an emergency must be posted in the boathouse in a place that is easily viewed by all rowers. HRC rows on the Northwest Arm of Halifax Harbour, which is approximately 5 kilometers long. HRC uses the whole waterway between Horseshoe Cove and Point Pleasant Park. The circulation pattern is inbound on the boathouse shore and outbound on the Dingle shore.

There are three yacht clubs on the Arm, each with significant mooring areas, and many private moorings. Recreational boat traffic can be quite heavy, especially on summer evenings. Sailing races are held in the Arm, beginning at the Armdale Club. Wednesday evening is the main race time.

Challenges include the proliferation of mooring and navigational buoys in the Arm, wakes from motor boats not observing the requirements of the no-wake zone, and potential use conflicts between sail boats and rowing shells (interference in sail races, near collisions etc.). In addition, there has been an increase of recreational use of the waterway by other vessels such as sea-doo's, stand-up paddle boards.

HRC holds informal races on the Arm (for example, Saturday morning race pieces and club regattas) and hosts the Cogswell Medal and Pelham Prize Races (men and women's single scull head race), which is usually held in conjunction with a larger regatta attended by other clubs. Other users of the waterway are informed of this event to enhance the safety of rowing racing.

The Port Authority is responsible for managing aspects of water use and boat traffic, DFO addresses maintenance of navigability, HRM oversees shoreline development. However, there is little active management of the Northwest Arm,

as the Port Authority is mostly focused on commercial shipping and port development.

## Weather

Coaches/instructors need to be aware of the forecast weather and should evaluate the environmental conditions before deciding, considering the rowers' capabilities and limitations, whether it is safe for rowers to go out on the water.

Weather conditions under which rowers should not venture on the water include:

- high winds that create unsafe conditions, guidelines: winds over 20 km/hr., where a flag is at  $\frac{3}{4}$ -fully open are often unsafe.
- whitecaps or large waves. It may be safe to restrict a practice to areas close to the boathouse.
- fog, unless the visibility is at least 1000 meters and land reference points can be maintained always.
- electrical storm or within two hours of hearing thunder

## Rowing in Low Light Conditions

Low light conditions are considered defined both by time of day (30 minutes or less before sunrise, and 30 minutes or less before sunset) and by actual lighting conditions. Rowing before posted sunrise and after posted sunset is discouraged and should not be practiced without an accompanying safety boat. The Club Manager, Coaches, and/or Safety Director may declare that low light conditions exist at any time of the day. If this occurs, low light rowing procedures will be followed by all members.

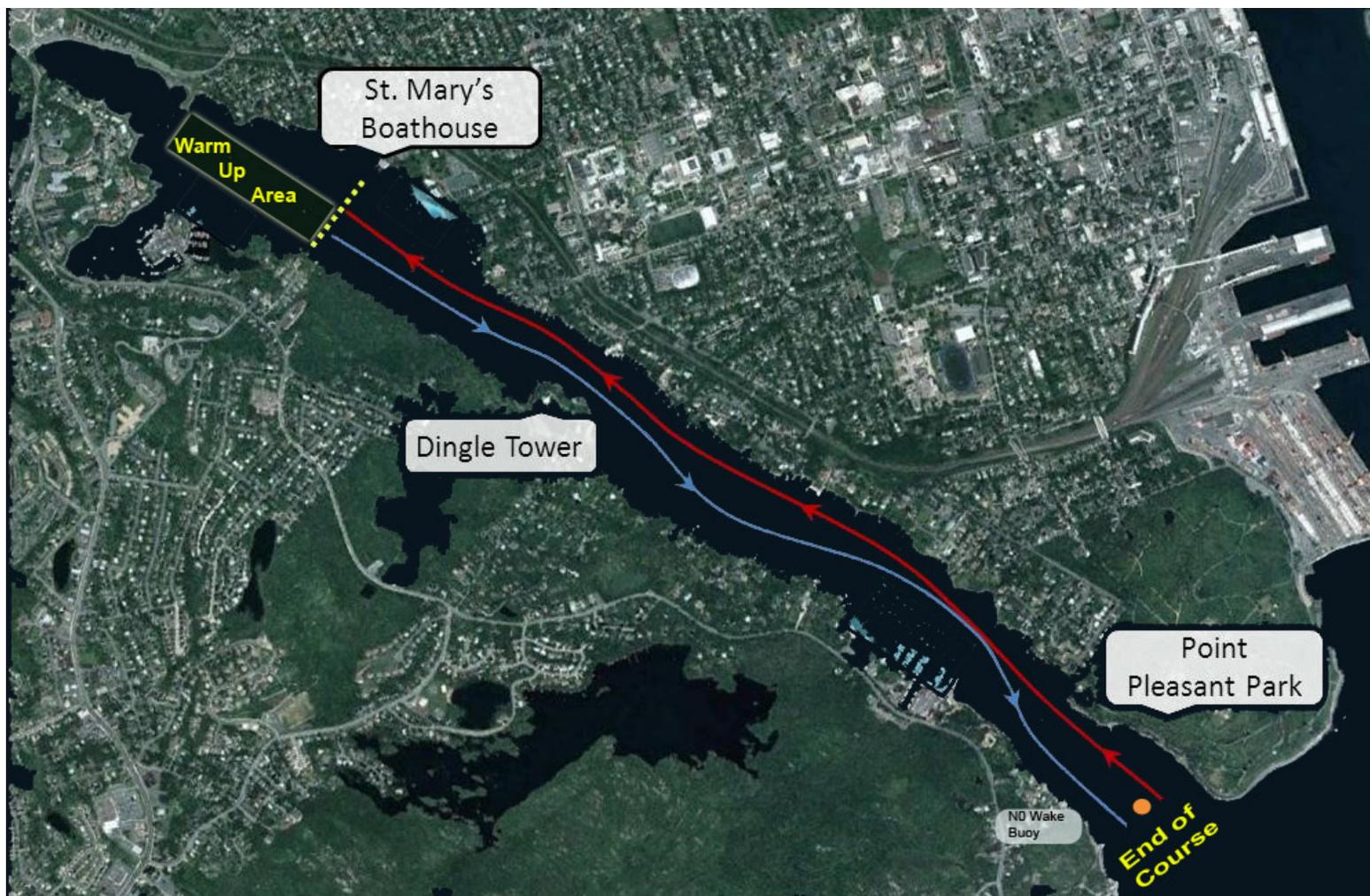
- 1.1 It is **recommended** that all rowers wear high visibility clothing or clothing with high visibility reflectors.
- 1.2 All rowers **will ensure** that their shells have required lights on their shells
- 1.3 Lights:
  - 1.3.1 **All shells must** have a bow and a stern light attached to the shell or person, both with maximum visibility to signal their presence to others
    - 1.3.1.1 The Bow light must include a red light
    - 1.3.1.2 The Stern light must be a white light
  - 1.3.2 **All coach / safety boats must have** a bow light and a stern light attached, both of which give 360-degree visibility to signal their presence to others
    - 1.3.2.1 The Bow light must include a red light
    - 1.3.2.2 The Stern light must be a white light

## Cold Weather/Water and Hypothermia Policy

Rowing when the water is cold presents an additional safety concern to HRC.

- 1.1 Rowing between November 1st and April 30th is automatically deemed to be cold water rowing no matter what the air or water temperature.
- 1.2 Cold water rowing will continue after May 1st until the water temperature is at or above 10 deg Celsius for three days in a row.
- 1.3 Cold water rowing will begin before November 1st if the water temperature is below 10 deg Celsius for three days in a row.
- 1.4 Water temperature will be checked by the Club manager, a Club Coach or the Safety Director and posted each day in a clearly visible location in the club.
- 1.5 Water temperature will be obtained from a thermometer lowered into the water, from the end of the dock, to a depth of 1m and left in the water for a minimum of 3 minutes.
- 1.6 During cold water rowing period, no members or guests will be allowed to row in HRC rowing shells unless a safety boat is:
  - 1.6.1 on the water and operated by a qualified person
  - 1.6.2 equipped with all required safety devices, an emergency kit, PFDs, etc.
  - 1.6.3 within 500 metres of all rowing shells on the water always.

## Traffic Pattern and Landmarks



The traffic pattern on the NW Arm is to stay to starboard (i.e., the shore is always closest to your left side). Always be courteous and respect the rights of other boats. When in doubt, give way to avoid collision or injury. Always stay well clear of other boats. All rowers, but especially those in a single scull, or in the bow/cox of a crew boat, must understand and follow the flow pattern on the Arm – if you do not know, ask.

As crews leave the dock at the beginning of practice, it is important to do the same thing every time to assure a safe warm-up and gathering with the coach boat to get the instructions for the practice. When changing directions or crossing the waterway, it is essential that the bow/cox of the boat make sure that it is safe before proceeding.

Unless a Coach/Instructor tells you otherwise, all crews will:

- leave the dock and row North on the Arm, towards Horseshoe Park
- row down to Horseshoe Park and then, when it is safe to do so, row directly across the Arm (toward the Armdale Yacht Club)
- turn, and when it is safe to do so, row south up the Arm, staying close to the west side of the Arm, to gather across from the Club and wait for instructions for the practice from coach.

As a rule, when turning around (e.g., at Point Pleasant Park, or if returning to the Club at any time), crews should, when it is safe to do so, row directly across the Arm. At the end of a rowing session, crews should row to the Club and when they are directly across from the Club, cross the Arm directly to the Club.

It is the responsibility of all single rowers and bow/cox persons to be aware of the course their boat is taking, the location of other crews/shells relative to their crew/shell, and the location of other boats, buoys, or other objects on the Arm relative to their crew/shell. Single rowers/bow/cox persons need to check frequently (e.g. every 5-10 strokes) that they are following a safe course and more often when the waterway is busy. Single rowers/bow/cox persons should always put safety first and give way to boats or other crews.

Because vessels **least able** to maneuver always have the right of way, and because this will vary with conditions, rowers must continually be making decisions about passing and changing direction. For example, in very light winds, a rowing shell may be more able to maneuver than a sailboat, in stronger winds, the opposite may be true.

When passing a boat, the overtaken boat moves toward the shore, while faster boats move toward the middle of the waterway. Do not insist on right-of-way if this places you and your shell at risk.

There are shipping lanes outside the limits of the NW Arm, with BIG, FAST and POWERFUL ships. To them rowing shells are invisible; therefore, HRC shells must not go past the end of Point Pleasant Park.

## Hazards

The main hazards on the water are shore at low tide, moored boats and buoys. When following the correct traffic pattern on the NW Arm, there are few sections where one can row absolutely straight. This is because there are narrow sections at Dingle Tower and also at the Yacht Squadron; this results in frequent course corrections.

## **Personnel Safety Training Requirements**

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Coaches are responsible for those in their charge and must be informed of safety procedures and abide by them. And, HRC must assure that coaches have experience/training to carry out their roles.

Motorboat drivers must have a Pleasure Craft Operator Card and be competent to control the boat so that it does not become a danger to anyone;

It is HRC practice to have at least one safety boat on the water during all rowing programs.

Safety boats should carry:

- enough life jackets for number of rowers + coxswain in the largest rowing shell on the water
- a safety kit that contains a first aid kit and tools to provide on the water boat repair – screwdrivers, wrenches, nuts, wing nuts, speed washers and duct tape.
- Bailer and throw line, lights and a mobile phone.

Safety is the responsibility of all rowers, coaches and coxswains. As such, everyone must be constantly surveying the safe condition of equipment before taking it on the water, assuring familiarity with the local water use rules and traffic and flow patterns on the NW Arm.

### **Members**

All new members of HRC and LTR participants must view the RCA Safety video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVOCsfJna3Q>) and review the HRC Safety Policy and Code (this document) before going on the water.

### **Guests**

Coaches are responsible to assure that guests have sufficient knowledge of key safety rules, traffic pattern information, before they are allowed on the water.

Rowers must follow instructions of coaches and when rowers are transitioning between programs (e.g., LTR to novice), it is up to the coach to determine the competence of a rower and place them in an appropriate crew/program.

## **Boathouse Rules**

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### **Code of Conduct**

Rowers and coaches will pursue the sport of rowing while paying regard to their responsibilities to other rowers and the Halifax Rowing Club.

### **Responsibilities to the Club**

Rowers shall:

1. conduct themselves in a manner that ensures respect for the rower and the Halifax Rowing Club
2. show respect to opponents, athletes and coaches
3. use Club equipment as directed, with care and will not knowingly put equipment at risk of being damaged
4. act to keep the boathouse in a clean and tidy condition and to protect the boathouse and its contents from damage and theft
5. recognize the Board as the authority over the Club's policies, procedures and financial affairs
6. pay all fees in a timely manner
7. when possible, assist the Club in a voluntary capacity, especially with respect to fundraising.

Responsibilities to Others

Rowers shall:

1. conduct themselves in a manner that contributes to a positive, sporting atmosphere
2. when in a crew, work with other crew members to assure the safety of the rowers and equipment
3. recognize the coach as the authority over decisions on crews, practices and safety
4. follow instruction of the coach, coxswain or bow seat rower
5. take appropriate action when a safety hazard is identified.

In addition,

HRC members should report any health and safety concerns to the coach on duty. The coaching staff should inform the Safety Director all incidents and safety concerns, actions and needed actions.

All HRC members **are required** to wear a PFD when rowing in any boat, at all times.

All HRC members rowing a single shell, and the bow persons or coxswains in any multi-rower shells **are required** to wear an approved whistle.

All HRC members will understand and follow the procedures associated with Weather Safety, Cold Water Safety, and Rowing outside Program Hours.

All HRC members will wear clothing that is suitable for the weather conditions. **It is strongly recommended** that rowers wear high visibility clothing no matter what the lighting conditions but especially during the early morning or late evening hours, or when the conditions are dull.

All HRC members **will** ensure that they and all crew members in their rowing shell are **'signed out'** in the HRC Logbook prior to the shell leaving the dock. It is the responsibility of all crew members to know for certain that this has been done.

All HRC members will ensure that they and all crew members in their rowing shell are **'signed in'** in the HRC Logbook prior to leaving the club after rowing. It is the responsibility of all crew members to know for certain that this has been done.

**No rower will wear any type of headphones** or listen to any type of audio device while rowing.

**Rowers must** obey the directions of their coxswain or bow person at all times. Rowers must also listen to and follow the directions of any coach or safety boat driver.

## Rowing Outside of Program Hours

Any rower wishing to use HRC rowing shells outside of regularly scheduled program hours must:

- Have been approved by a Club Coach
- Have a minimum of four (4) rowers on the water at the same time with at least two (2) boats on the water, at least one of which is a multi-rower shell (2x, 2+ or larger) [note: not all boats need to be Club owned boats]
- Have the safety boat prepared, ready for use and on the water
- Sign their boats out and in, wear a PFD, and there will be at least one whistle per boat. All rowers must be signed out.
- Row between sunrise and sunset
- Row with one rower who has a valid Pleasure Craft Operator's card

All rowers rowing outside of regularly schedule program hours will be responsible for assessing rowing conditions and only launching boats when it is safe to do so.

During cold water rowing, no rowers will be allowed to row outside of regularly scheduled program hours unless there is also a safety boat on the water with them that is operated by a qualified operator, and all other safety considerations associated with cold water rowing are followed.

## Report Incidents and Shell Damage

All incidents (flipping, swamping, capsizing, collision or other incidents that result in personal injury or equipment damage, or near misses) must be reported by completing an Incident Report on the HRC website, or completing a paper form and giving to a coach. This is required for: (1) our insurance policy through

Rowing Canada and (2) by understanding how incidents happen, the Club learns how to prevent them. Report any shell damage promptly to coaches and the boathouse manager. The coaching staff will determine the need to investigate further, cause of incident and remedy. The coaching staff should inform the Safety Director incidents (using the reporting tools described above) and safety concerns, actions and needed actions.

## Equipment

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The following HRC equipment requirements are designed to ensure that all equipment used for rowing and coaching is safe and maintained in good order. In the event that equipment is brought to the Club for regattas or visiting rowers, the responsibility for their order lies with the owner.

Every rowing shell must have (as per RCA Rules of Racing):

A white ball of not less than 4 cm diameter made of rubber or material of similar consistency on its bow, unless the construction or nature of the boat is such that the bow is properly protected, or its shape does not represent a hazard;

Heel restraints to allow 'hands-free' release of feet; make sure the heel restraints are firmly attached and in good condition. The heel of the shoes should not rise above the lowest fixed point of the shoe on the stretcher. Shorten the restraint if necessary.

Quick release mechanisms that are in working order in all boats equipped with fitted shoes; and

Lights, as required by the Small Vessel Regulations (Transport Canada) when rowing in reduced light.

In addition, the following standard equipment must be present and functioning properly:

- Buoyancy compartments: make sure the buoyancy compartments are tightly sealed (make sure vent covers are attached)
- Rigging: make sure nuts on the rigging are tight
- Oarlocks: **all rowers must** check that the gates on the oarlocks are closed and properly locked. Rowers **must** also adjust the height of the oarlocks to the proper height.
- Foot stretchers: **all rowers must** adjust and secure their foot stretchers while at the dock side and without their feet in the shoes.
- Seat: **all rowers must check** that their seat is in good repair and moves smoothly on the slide.

## **Equipment Handling Safety**

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Although all new rowers are required to view the RCA safety video, safe equipment handling takes practice and reinforcement by experienced rowers and coaching/instructor staff.

### **Getting in and out of the shell**

Too many shells capsize at the dock! Practice proper procedure for getting shells on and off the water and getting into and out of shells. The cox or bow rower should call the procedure. When entering the shell, remember to extend the waterside oar as far as it will go to provide stability before stepping into the shell. Similarly, when leaving the shell, have one foot on the dock before pulling in the waterside oar.

Oars are to be taken from the boathouse and placed onto the oar rack prior to shells being removed from the boathouse.

You and/or your crew need to be sure you can safely lift, carry and handle the shell you are planning to row. Otherwise, ask for help from the Coach / Instructor who may assist directly, or direct more experienced rower(s) to help.

Shells are to be carried out from the boathouse with the 'Tennis Ball' bumpers on the riggers to prevent scratching other boats. Once the shell is safely on the water, the 'Tennis Balls' should be removed and hung on the oar rack. After your row, the 'Tennis Balls' are to be placed back onto the shell before it is returned to the boathouse.

Before leaving the dock, all rowers must:

- ensure that their shell and all crew members is signed out.
- be wearing a PFD.
- all bow/cox persons or single rowers must have a whistle hung around their neck

### **Procedures in the event of a rower ending up in the water**

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#### **If the Shell Swamps**

##### **Exit the shell but stay with it**

If you are in a shell that swamps keep calm. The floatation ends in a swamped shell may cause the shell to break apart so it is usually advisable not to remain in the shell. Beginning in the middle of the shell, paired rowers should carefully, but quickly, slip overboard into the water. Pairs should buddy up across the shell and keep watch on each other. Use whistle to signal an emergency.

##### **Rolling the shell**

If rescue is not imminent, the shell should be rolled to a keel up position to form a more stable floatation platform. Before doing this, remove the oars, or swing them parallel to the shell. Make sure all persons move to the end of the shell, so as not to get hit by an oar when the shell is rolled. Everyone is to stay with the shell — no one should attempt to swim to shore. Do not attempt to roll the shell if rescue is on the way.

#### In the water

Keep close to each other while in the water. Once the shell has been rolled, huddle towards the middle or high point on the hull. Keep as much of your body out of the water as possible. If possible, cover your head. When the shell has been brought to shore remove the oars, bail water out of the shell then roll it slowly and remove it from the water.

#### If the shell sinks

If a shell breaks up or sinks, remain in a group. Also use the oars and any flotsam as floatation devices. Under no circumstances is anyone to leave the group until they are on shore or in the rescue boat. Account for all crew and keep "numbering off". No one should attempt to swim to shore.

#### After rescue

Once everyone is safely accounted for, all rowers should take a shower, using anti-bacterial soap. Do not eat or drink anything until after your shower. Shower facilities are available next door to the rowing club.

#### Safety boat management

Safety boats must be equipped with safety equipment in accordance with Small Vessel Regulations (Transport Canada). Hard sided boats require a step ladder for easy entry from the water.

Motors must be equipped with a kill switch, connected to the boat operator.

Safety boats and their engines should be properly maintained since engine failure, particularly at a critical time, could have serious consequences.

Gas and oil must be stored in containers that comply with fire and safety regulations.