

Halifax Rowing Club Safety Policy

August 15, 2022

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Safety

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 for overseeing 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.

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.” (Rowing Safely: RCA Safety Requirements & Safety Guidelines, <https://rowingcanada.org/uploads/2019/05/safetyguidelinesrcav2.pdf>, page 2)

In accordance with RCA Safety Requirements & Guidelines, HRC is “responsible for assessing the risks in its particular environment and in establishing the appropriate safety procedures to minimize those risks” (ibid.) The following are the Safety Procedures of the Halifax Rowing Club (HRC).

II. Procedures

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” (ibid., p. 2). Normally, the Safety Director will fulfill this role.

2. HRC will draw up and display its own Safety Code,¹ following the recommendation of the RCA Safety Checklist (https://rowingcanada.org/uploads/2019/02/safety_checklist.pdf), which 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. 911, VHF channel 16 – for Ambulance, Police, Fire Department
 - ii. Joint Reaction Coordination Centre – 902-427-8200, VHF channel 68 – this is the emergency service that coordinates 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, 1641 Fairfield Rd, Halifax, NS B3H 2A6
 - 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 automated external defibrillator (AED).²
5. HRC will have a Cold Weather/Water and Hypothermia Policy³ that guides coaching decisions, preparations for on water practices, and instruction.
6. HRC will have a Fire and Evacuation plan.⁴

... end of policy

¹ Detailed elements of the Safety Code are appended to this document.

² There is an AED on the second floor of St Mary's Boat Club.

³ Cold Weather/Water and Hypothermia Policy is part of the HRC Safety Code – appended here.

⁴ Fire and Evacuation is part of the HRC Safety Code – appended here.

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.

1. Environment

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 many mooring and navigational buoys in the Arm, wakes from motorboats not observing the requirements of the no-wake zone or 11km/hr speed limit, and potential use conflicts between sail boats and rowing shells (interference in sail races, near collisions, etc.). In addition, recreational use of the waterway by other vessels such as sea-doo's and stand-up paddle boards has increased.

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's and women's single scull head races), usually in conjunction with a larger regatta attended by other clubs. Regatta organizers must inform other users of the waterway of this event, to enhance the safety of rowing racing.

The Port Authority is responsible for managing aspects of water use and boat traffic. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) addresses maintenance of navigability. Halifax Regional Municipality (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

All on-water participants need to be aware of the forecasted weather and should evaluate the environmental conditions before heading out onto the water, for their own and others' safety and the safety of equipment. **Coaches will have the final say** on cancelling a row due to poor weather. However, all members can check the forecast app 'Windy' (see Figure 1) for weather condition guidelines. The precise coordinates for the NW Arm are at this link:

<https://www.windy.com/44.636/-63.606/waves?waves,44.633,-63.590,15>

Conditions under which coaches are likely to cancel rowing on the water include, for one hour either side of the session:

- Winds: sustained winds over 17 km/hr (9 knots) and or gusting over 23 km/hr (12.5 knots). If available, an anemometer at the club should be used to make the decision.
- Waves: greater than 50cm (0.5m) or when white caps present
- Swell: greater than 50 cm (0.5 m) every 10 sec for either swell 1 or swell 2
- Visibility: less than 1000 meters or non-illuminated land reference points cannot be seen
- Storm: any sign of lightning or thunder will result in rowing being cancelled for a minimum of 30 minutes
- Windy app colour coding: no colour or blue = good to row; all other colours = no row. (See Figure 1.)

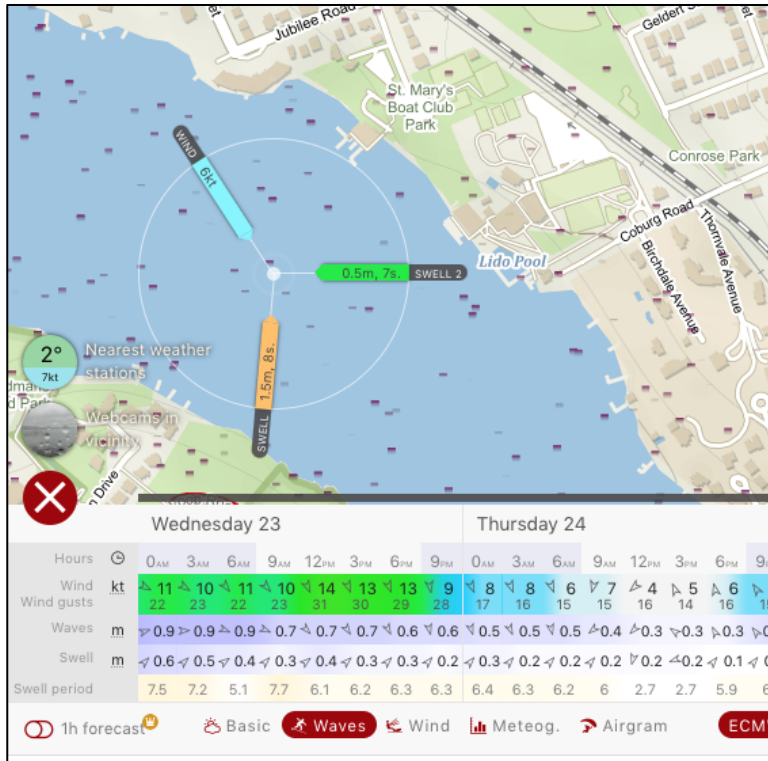


Figure 1 In this example from Windy, rowing on Wednesday would not be advisable as the winds are gusting more than 17 km/hr and the waves exceed 0.5 m. The forecast for Thursday is good for most of the day but the 5:30 am row may need to be reassessed as the waves exceed 0.5 m at that time.

Rowing in Low Light Conditions

Low light conditions are 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, all members will follow low light rowing procedures.

1. It is recommended that all rowers wear high visibility clothing or clothing with high visibility reflectors.
2. All rowers are required to attach a bow light and a stern light to their shell or person, both with maximum visibility to signal their presence to others;
 - a. the bow light must include a red light;
 - b. the stern light must be a white light.
3. All coach / safety boats are required have a bow light and a stern light attached, both of which give 360-degree visibility to signal their presence to others.
 - a. the bow light must include a red light;
 - b. 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. Rowing between November 1st and April 30th is automatically deemed to be cold water rowing no matter what the air or water temperature.
2. Cold water rowing will continue after May 1st until the water temperature is at or above 10° Celsius for three days in a row.
3. Cold water rowing will begin before November 1st if the water temperature is below 10° Celsius for three days in a row.
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.
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.
6. During cold water rowing period, no members or guests will be allowed to row in HRC rowing shells unless a safety boat is:
 - a. on the water and operated by a qualified person, and
 - b. equipped with all required safety devices, an emergency kit, PFDs, etc., and
 - c. within 500m of all rowing shells on the water always.

Traffic Pattern and Landmarks

The traffic pattern on the Northwest Arm is to stay to starboard (i.e., the shore is always closest to your left side; see Figure 2). 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, especially those in a single scull or in the bow/cox seat of a crew boat, must understand and follow the flow pattern on the Arm. If you do not know, ask.

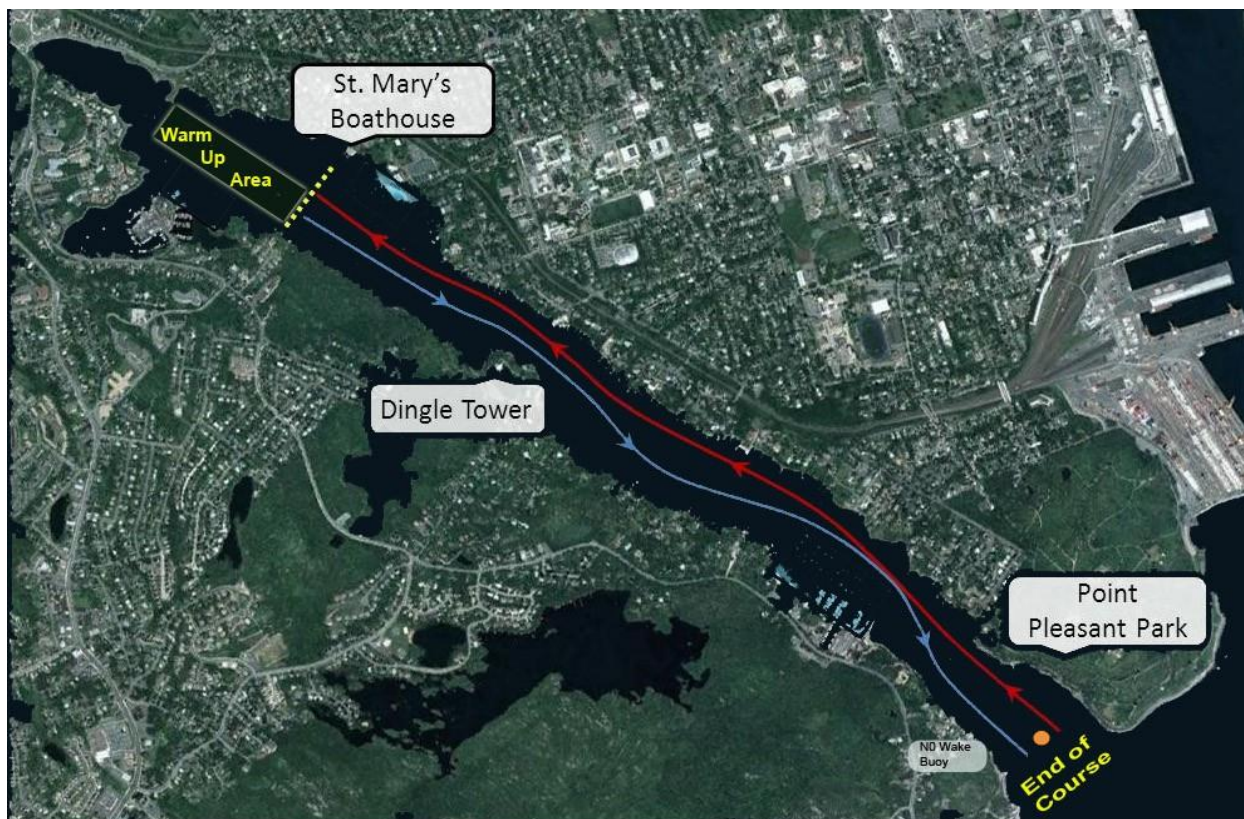


Figure 2 Traffic pattern on the Northwest Arm.

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 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 the Coach.

As a rule, when turning around (for example, at Point Pleasant Park, or when returning to the Club at any time), crews should row directly across the Arm when it is safe to do so. At the end of a rowing session, crews should row to the Club and, when they are directly across from the Club and it is safe to do so, 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/coxswains need to check frequently that they are following a safe course every 5-10 strokes, or more often when the waterway is busy. Single rowers/bow/coxswains 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 make decisions about passing or changing course. 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, the slower (overtaken) boat moves toward the shore, while the faster boat moves 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 Northwest 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 Northwest Arm, there are few sections where one can row absolutely straight. This is because there are narrow sections at Dingle Tower and the Yacht Squadron; this results in frequent course corrections.

2. Personnel Safety Training Requirements

Coaches are responsible for those in their charge and must be informed of safety procedures and abide by them. HRC must ensure that coaches have the training and experience necessary 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.

Safety is the responsibility of all rowers, coaches, and coxswains. As such, every person must check their equipment is in a safe condition before taking it on the water every time, and every person must be familiar with local water use rules and traffic and flow patterns on the Northwest Arm.

Members

All new members of HRC and LTR participants must view the RCA Safety video (https://youtu.be/AJ_s5iBZy1c) and review the HRC Safety Policy and Code (this document) before going on the water.

RCA has created 6 self-paced interactive safety modules, aimed at new and returning rowers as well as all those in safety related decision-making roles (eg. club safety officers, coaches, umpires, etc). It is recommended that all rowers work through these modules, available at <https://safety.rowingcanada.org/en/#/>

Visitors

With prior arrangement and upon payment of fees, visitors may row at HRC. Visitors may only go out in a crew boat that is bowed by a HRC member.

Rowers

Rowers must follow the instructions of coaches. It is up to coaches to determine the competence of rowers, to place them in an appropriate crew or program, and to decide when they should transition to a new program (for example, from learn-to-row to novice).

3. Procedures in the event of a rower ending up in the water

Capsized boat

1. Remove feet from the shoes of the boat
2. Stay with the shell
 - Stay with the shell until directed otherwise by the coach as the boat can be used as a flotation aid. No one should attempt to swim to shore
3. Inflate your PFD
 - If you are going to be in the water for a long time or would feel more comfortable, remove the PFD from the pouch, put the PFD around your neck and fasten the waistband, then pull the cord to inflate your PFD.
4. Blow your whistle
 - If you are in a single or the bow seat of a crew boat, blow your whistle to alert the coach or instructor that you have an emergency.
5. In the water
 - Use the boat as a flotation aid, 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.
 - If the shell breaks up or sinks, use the oars and any flotsam as floatation devices.
 - Remain in a group and keep close to each other while in the water. Under no circumstances should anyone leave the group or attempt to swim to shore before rescue arrives. Account for all crew and keep “numbering off.”
 - Righting the shell
 - o If you are able to right the shell, take the oars out of the oarlocks first or lay the oars parallel to the shell and then roll the shell by kicking down on the underwater rigger at the same time as pulling the above water rigger towards oneself, turning the boat up right.
 - Getting back in
 - o Once the shell has been righted, if in a crew boat have one side hold the shell while the other side puts their oar(s) across and pushes themselves up and out of the water over the gunnels, and onto their seat. Then the other side gets in. If a single, hold both oars with one hand to stabilize the shell and then push yourself up out of the water onto the seat.
 - o Once back in, bail the shell of water before you resume your row.
6. Swim shell to shore
 - If the Coach or Instructor is not present to assist you, and if you cannot get back in the shell, and if you are close to shore, unship the oars, get up on the shell with your body parallel with the hull, and swim the boat, like a paddleboard, to shore. Once on shore, either try to get back in from land or wait for assistance.

Swamped boat

1. Exit the shell

- If you are in a shell that swamps, keep calm. Since a swamped shell may break apart, you should exit the shell. Beginning in the middle of the shell, paired rowers should carefully, but quickly, slip overboard into the water.
2. Inflate your PFD
 - If you are going to be in the water for a long time or would feel more comfortable, remove the PFD from the pouch, put the PFD around your neck and fasten the waistband, then pull the cord to inflate your PFD.
 3. Blow your whistle
 - If you are in a single or the bow seat of a crew boat, blow your whistle to alert the coach or instructor that you have an emergency.
 4. Rolling the shell
 - Do not attempt to roll the shell if rescue is on the way. If rescue is not imminent, the shell should be rolled to a keel-up position to form a more stable flotation platform. Before doing this, remove the oars from the oarlocks or swing them parallel to the shell. Make sure all persons move to the end of the shell, so they do not get hit by an oar or a rigger when the shell is rolled. Then, roll the shell.
 5. In the water
 - Use the boat as a flotation aid, 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.
 - If the shell breaks up or sinks, use the oars and any flotsam as floatation devices.
 - Remain in a group and keep close to each other while in the water. Under no circumstances should anyone leave the group or attempt to swim to shore before rescue arrives. Account for all crew and keep "numbering off".
 6. Swim shell to shore
 - If the Coach or Instructor is not present to assist you, and if you cannot get back in the shell, and if you are close to shore, unship the oars, get up on the shell with your body parallel with the hull, and swim the boat, like a paddleboard, to shore. Once on shore, either try to get back in from land or wait for assistance.

4. Safety Boat Management

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 the 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 charged mobile phone.

Safety boats must be equipped with safety equipment in accordance with Small Vessel Regulations (Transport Canada - <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2010-91/>). 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 could have serious consequences, particularly at a critical time.

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

5. Fire and Evacuation

All employees and athletes are to acquaint themselves with the HRC fire and evacuation plan to ensure safe egress and accountability of members to local fire brigade (see Figure 3).

1. Fire Route: a 24” route within both bays and to back external north door is to remain clear at all times, as is the pathway in front of SMBC and around to the parking lot. If a fire is in the fuel locker, evacuate via rear north door, if in the chemical cabinet use front of club. Coaching staff must take the sign-in/out log with them if they can reach it safely.
 - a. On water boats must return to beach area either side of SMBC or other safe area, wet land, and proceed to muster point.
2. Muster Point: ALL members will congregate at the telephone pole in the SMBC parking lot. Head coach or delegate for session will ensure session attendees are accounted for by coordination of the sign-in/out log and will report to fire brigade attendees the location of fuel and chemical storage.



Figure 3 Fire and evacuation plan.

6. Working with chemicals and liquid hazards within HRC Boathouse

Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHMIS)

As an employer, HRC requires its employees to take the free online course WHMIS 2015 -

https://www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/course_listing.html - and to provide the safety

director with a copy of their certificate, in accordance with the NS Occupational and Safety Act

<https://novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/ohswhmis.htm>

Safety Data Sheets (SDS)

Safety Data Sheets (see https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis_ghs/sds.html)

will be printed off and stored in the SDS binder mounted outside the chemical cabinet. This will ensure safe handling and necessary first aid knowledge while working with chemicals.

Fuel Handling

HRC is limited to storing a maximum of 29 litres of fuel inside the boathouse. Fuel is to be handled by employee staff in accordance with WHMIS regulations. The fuel cabinet (below left) is located at the front of the boathouse on the right-hand wall (if you are facing into the boathouse). The fuel transfer tray (below right) must be used outside on the concrete walkway.



Figure 4 Fuel cabinet.

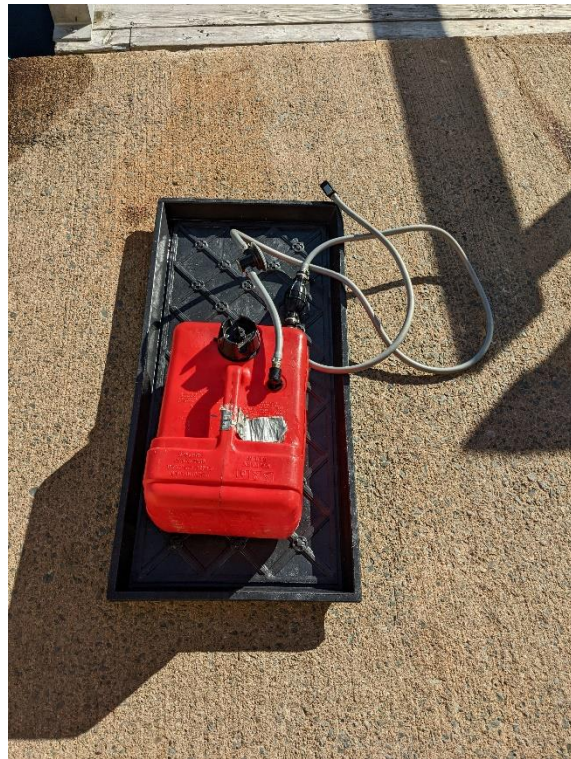


Figure 5 Fuel transfer tray.

In the event of a fuel spill where it cannot be contained and enters the water, proper reporting requirements must be followed:

- If the spill occurs while filling the gas can in the boathouse, contact Nova Scotia Environment – Halifax Office at (902) 424-7773.
- If the spill occurs while the coach boat is on the water, contact Transport Canada at 1-800-565-1633.
- In all cases, the Safety Director or Club President should be point of contact with all government agencies.