

MHRA Safety Rules

Before Rowing

- Sign waiver & sign that you have read MHRA Safety Rules
- Pass the swim test. The swim test (swimming 50 yards, staying afloat 10 minutes, and putting on a life jacket while in the water) will be given in the spring of the year and must be passed within one year of joining MHRA. Learn-to-Row, Learn-to-Scull participants and new members that join after the swim test is given must sign a waiver attesting that they can accomplish the requirements of the swim test.
- Take Learn-to-Row, Learn-to-Scull or demonstrate equivalent knowledge i.e. document prior training, certifications, experience, etc.
- View USRA Safety Videotape

Beginning of Practice

The designated rowing supervisor is to be responsible at each practice. The supervisor has the authority to cancel practice for safety reasons. The supervisor for the session will be in order of priority: the coach for the session, the tenant liaison, the launch driver.

Log in and Out - Mandatory for all boats, rowers and scullers

- Name, Date, Time out, estimated time of return, direction of row, actual time of return, distance rowed, Comments/problems/observations

Weather Guidelines

- Be aware of tide. Recommended to start your row against the current. A change in the tide may cause the river to become choppy. If it gets rough you can always float back to the dock.
- Fog: Do not launch unless you can see:
The Railroad Bridge (about 500 meters).
- Wind: Do not row if there are whitecaps on the water
- Temperature: Cold water rowing rules will apply when the river temperature is 60° F and under. Be aware of the danger of hypothermia, which is especially acute when water temperature is below 50 degrees.

Cold Water Rowing Rules

- The buddy system will apply for singles and doubles when the river temperature is 60° and under.
- A launch will be required for sculling when the river temperature is 50° F and under.
- Storms: Be aware of weather and do not go out if you hear thunder or see lightning. Do not launch until 20 minutes after the last audible thunder or visible lightning. If you are caught in a thunderstorm, seek shelter from lightning under a bridge or as close to shore as safely possible until the storm has passed.
- Darkness: Shells without lights will not launch more than 30 minutes prior to actual sunrise or land after 30 minutes of actual sunset. Shells may launch 1 hour before actual sunrise and land one hour after sunset if they are equipped with a bow and stern light.
- Know safe places to land along the shore in an emergency. See Appendix A

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Equipment

Qualification for use of club equipment is governed by Crew Certification Committee

On land

- Check seats, foot stretchers, and riggers for loose or missing parts prior to approaching dock. .
- Make any adjustments while the shell(s) is properly supported on slings.
- Record any damage in the problem log.
- *Significant equipment adjustments to club equipment i.e. pitch, span, gearing, load, etc. must be approved by the head coach/equipment supervisor.*
- All safety/first aid equipment such as lifejackets, signal devices (whistle, air horn), first aid kits, etc. (Checklist?!!!) will be checked on a monthly basis during the normal maintenance time.
- Check the operation of shell and launch safety lights if launching in foggy conditions, before dawn or if a landing after sunset is likely.

On the Water

No Four or Eight person shells shall be on the water without a launch in the Vicinity unless approved by the MHRA Coaches Committee and the HRRR Operations Committee.

MHRA does not recommend that scullers row alone. Uncertified scullers must be accompanied by a launch.. It is recommended that certified scullers use the buddy system at all times. Cold Water rowing rules prevail when water temperature is below 60° F.

Launch must contain :

- PFD's for everyone on the water
- First aid kit
- Paddle
- Noise maker (whistle, air horn)
- Anchor
- Flashlight
- Fire extinguisher
- Emergency rescue blankets
- Flares
- 15 meters of floatable rope

It is recommended that when operating the launch alone that ballast be placed in the bow and that the trim of the motor be set to keep the launch on plane.

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Traffic pattern

Follow the east shoreline going north. Stay at least 100 meters off the east shore going south. Stay out of the shipping channel. If crossing to the western shore, row west perpendicular to the river until within 100 meters of the shore. When returning to the eastern shore, again row east perpendicular to the river until within 100 meters of the shore.

Wakes

If waves are:

- Higher than gunwales then turn the shell parallel to the wake to avoid having parts of the shell unsupported by the water. Stop rowing and sit with oars resting on the water.
- Lower than gunwales and widely spaced then continue to row without course adjustment.
- Lower than gunwales and tightly spaced then steer so the bow is directly into the waves.

Emergencies

Launch motor becomes disabled

Signal for help and then paddle to shore or anchor launch until help arrives.

Emergency Conditions

1. Under no circumstances should a rower in the water leave his/her shell. Even if a swamped boat is within a swim able distance from the shore, the rower should swim the boat to the shore. So do not leave your floatation even if you consider yourself a strong swimmer.
2. Should someone give the command “weight enough! Hold water,” don’t ask questions, just respond immediately by stopping all forward body movement. Square the blades in the water and bring the boat to a halt.
3. Use these distress signals to communicate to other boats: wave the arms or a shirt above your head or raise one oar in the air.
4. Man overboard - Immediate command “weight enough! Hold water!” If the safety launch can get to the victim first, allow the launch to rescue the victim. If the launch is not in the immediate vicinity, back the shell to the victim and have him/her hang onto the shell until the launch arrives. Another rower may have to enter the water to assist if the victim is injured.
5. Rower injured - Immediate command “weight enough! Hold water!” Signal launch if first aid is needed.
6. Shell damaged but afloat and not taking on water - Immediate command “weight enough! Hold water!” Make adjustments or signal launch for assistance.
7. Shell swamped - Immediate command “weight enough! Hold water!” A shell is swamped when the interior water reached the gunwales. If rowers stay in the boat, the floatation ends may cause the boat to break apart.

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- a. Coxswain directs rowers to untie, and by seat number rowers should carefully, but quickly, slip overboard.
 - b. If the boat is taking on excessive water, signal the launch and unload rowers by pairs - starting in the middle of the boat - as soon as possible in order to avoid damage to the boat. Pairs should form “buddies” and keep watch of each other. The cox should buddy with the stern pair.
 - c. If rescue is not imminent, take the following steps: 1) Remove oars and place them parallel to the shell. All persons should move to the two ends of the shell. It is dangerous to roll a shell when near riggers. 2) Then roll the boat to form a more stable floatation platform so rowers can either lie on top of the hull or buddies can hold onto each other across the hull. 3) Remember that body heat loss occurs 25 times faster in the water. Do not attempt to roll the boat if rescue is on the way.
 - d. A launch can shuttle rowers to the nearest shore. Be careful not to overload the launch.
 - e. When the boat has been brought to the shore, remove the oars. If the ends of the shell have filled with water, they must be drained before the boat can be removed from the water. Remove the shell carefully to avoid injury or damage. A boat full of water is very heavy, so try bailing first, then roll the boat slowly and remove it from the water.
8. Singles should be rowed with a buddy boat or launch. The rescue boat will stabilize the re-entry. Entering the shell directly from the water may cause splashboard damage. Swim the boat to shore, lying in the stern, using the shell as a paddleboard. In very cold weather you can abandon your shells and lie on the stern deck of your buddy’s boat to be taken to shore. The loss of muscle control can occur very quickly and dramatically in cold water. The stern deck rescue may be your only option.
 9. Shell capsized - Immediate command “untie!” This rarely happens except in small boats. Be sure that all rowers and cox are accounted for. Stay with the boat until assistance arrives.
 10. Shell broken and sinking - Immediate command “untie!” Get out of the boat and follow the same procedures as for a swamped shell. Do not leave the floating boat. Swim boat to shore if launch is not immediate.
 11. Another boat in distress - If a distress signal is seen and insufficient assistance is near that craft, maneuver your shell to the distressed shell. Assist in any way that does not jeopardize the lives in your shell.
 12. Shells should stay within hailing distance of their safety launch. The launch has been outfitted to provide assistance to rowers and/or their shell in the event that it is needed. Most frequently, the toolbox and coach’s expertise is available for small equipment adjustments or breakdowns, which allow the shell to continue rowing after a short stop. If more serious needs arise, the launch and expert are there for rapid transportation.
 13. Paddle-down at the end of your workout. It is important to your health that you don’t race up to the dock. Once the boat and oars are stored, it is important to take another few minutes to go through your basic stretching exercises to identify unnoticed sprains or strains that began during your row.

MHRA Safety Rules

Boathouse Postings:

Safety rules - MHRA and US Rowing poster
Location of nearest phone and US Coast Guard Contact 718-354-4120
Rowing log
Shell problem/repair log
Sunrise/sunset times and Tide tables
Chart of river indicating emergency landing sites
Weather radio
List of people with CPR & First Aid training
Traffic Pattern

Sculling/Unsupervised Rower Certification

Certification is the responsibility of the Crew Supervisor Committee or their approved designees.

Certification will include at a minimum :

- Knowledge of MHRA procedures and boat use policies
- Knowledge of MHRA/USRA safety rules and regulations
- Knowledge of typical local weather conditions as they affect suitability for sculling
- Knowledge of general and local rules of navigation and traffic patterns
- Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate and safe dry land boat, equipment handling and storage
- Demonstrate knowledge of typical equipment adjustments to suit individual
- Demonstrate ability to launch and land unassisted
- Demonstrate ability for static maneuvering i.e. balancing for wakes, 180 degree turn, etc.
- Demonstrate ability to sight and hold a straight course then adjust as needed to accommodate obstructions, hazards, boat traffic, etc.
- Demonstrate ability to assess wakes and adjust course and speed as needed and appropriate
- Demonstrate appropriate response to capsize
- Demonstrate ability for self-rescue i.e. swim shell to shore, righting and reentry to shell, etc.

Certification levels

Novice/Learn to Scull : May not scull alone with club or privately owned singles
Must be accompanied by a launch. May row in a double with a certified advanced sculler

Intermediate: May scull club and private singles and doubles when using buddy system

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Advanced: Private boat owners may scull alone but use of buddy system or launch coverage strongly recommended. Club equipment shall be used only with the buddy system and/or launch coverage.

All Certification levels must be accompanied by a launch when water temperature is below 50° F (18°C).

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Appendix A

EMERGENCY LANDING SITES

East Side

- The mouth of the Fallkill Creek next to Adolpho's Pavilion on the City of Poughkeepsie waterfront. Watch the debris.
- The cove south of the Quiet Cove Park..
- The cove just north of the Quiet Cove Park
- The launch ramp at the River's Edge Boat shop on the north side of the Brass Anchor Restaurant.
- Either of the Brass Anchor's two marinas would provide safety. Have the shell(s) row inside and inshore as far as possible, then disembark the rowers.
- On the south side of Rodger's Point Marina is a boat ramp that would be available in an emergency. It will be difficult, but rowing the shell right up to the marina boat ramp will assist you to get the rowers ashore. The gradient is so steep that even if the bow can step out of the boat into ankle deep water, the coxswain will be over her head, but she can use the boat to pull herself to shallow water.
- At Kaal Rock Park, on the south side of the Mid-Hudson Bridge is a small beach area, onto which a shell can be beached. The depth drops off quickly and the oars need to be on the ground to stabilize the boat.
- The Waryas Park Boat launch drops off steeply but could be used in the event of lightening.

West Side

- South of Mariner's Harbor Restaurant, there is a shallow section by the shoreline that would allow emergency landings.
- Opposite the Quiet Cove Park, on the west side of the river where the Columbia boathouse used to be it is possible to get ashore on the small section of land that juts out from the railroad bed. Beaching on the south side of this area is recommended. Watch out for rattlesnakes in this area.

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Appendix B

MHRA Unsupervised Sculler Certification

**Minimum requirements for sculling unsupervised (i.e. using the buddy system):
One year of regular rowing, a minimum of ten trips of 8000 meters on the river, and demonstrated knowledge of this skills guideline.**

SAFETY

- Know and follow Club safety rules
- Know safety procedures re: tide, river safe landing points and hazards, navigation, sunrise/sunset, weather
- Know the accepted river traffic pattern and follow it
- Know how to use the club logbook and regularly use it
- Know what to do if you flip over or swamp

CARE/HANDLING OF EQUIPMENT

- Know which boats/oars belong to the club and which are private equipment
- Know how to carry the boat and oars on and off the racks and to and from the dock
- Know how to adjust the foot stretchers, and close the gate on the oarlocks
- Know how to clean the wheel tracks and check nuts/bolts for security
- Know how to attach a bow light

SEAMANSHIP

- Demonstrate ability to install oars correctly and get into boat safely
- Know how to launch and land at the dock
- Know how to maneuver around river debris and other boats
- Demonstrate steering by looking over shoulder or using a rearview mirror
- Demonstrate quick stop
- Demonstrate backing stroke
- Demonstrate ability to make a 180 degree stationary turn
- Demonstrate ability to get out of boat and remove oars safely

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Appendix C

MHRA Launch Driver Guidelines

SAFETY

- Know and follow Club safety rules
- Know the safety rules re: weather, tide, sunrise/sunset, capsizing/swamping
- Know what to do if the motor dies (check gas line, how to restart motor, call for assistance)
- Be aware of safe landing points and river hazards
- Know the accepted river traffic pattern

CARE AND HANDLING OF LAUNCH

- Know how to set up the launch with the proper safety equipment (blue box, appropriate life jackets, paddle, light, anchor with line and reel)
- Know which fuel to use/which fuel can to bring into launch
- Know how to attach the motor and how to start and restart the motor
- Know how to detach the motor
- Know how to take the launch out of the water and where/how to store it

SEAMANSHIP

- Know how to launch from the boat ramp and the dock
- Know how to land at the boat ramp and the dock
- Know how to steer forward and reverse, idle, and maneuver around large and small boats
- Know how to handle the launch in wakes and how to advise shells to handle the wakes

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Appendix D

Coaches Certification

MHRA rowing coaches should have knowledge comparable to USRA Level 1 Coaches Certification. That is, MHRA expects coaches to emphasize the safety and health of the rowers. Coaches must have knowledge of the rowing stroke and boat movement. They must be able to identify mistakes in the rowing stroke and communicate ways to fix them.

Check List:

- CPR & 1st Aid Certified
- Swim Test Certified
- Knowledge of:
 - MHRA Safety Rules
 - HRRA Boathouse Operating Procedures
 - Local navigation on the Hudson River
 - Basic rowing technique
 - Steering a shell
 - Basic rigging (remove & install seats, riggers and foot stretchers)
- Ability to:
 - Identify errors in technique and communicate fixes to the rowers
 - Communicate steering directions and drill instructions to the coxswain
 - Organize a practice
- Approval of MHRA Coaches Committee