



LORC Cold Weather policy

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INTRODUCTION

Rowing when the [water temperature](#) falls below 10°C or the [air temperature](#) falls below 4°C should be done with great consideration and caution.

Hypothermia (see *App. I*) is a swift and incapacitating killer that strikes when the combination of cold weather and moisture work to decrease body temperature. It can take mere minutes before a full-size adult is incapable of helping themselves once hypothermia has set in.

One does not have to fall in the water to get hypothermia. Cold air temperatures and any moisture on the body (from being splashed, rain, sleet, snow) can lead to hypothermia.

In turn, this severely increases the risk of drowning (see *App. II*).

AIM

The following safety rules have been established to **minimise the risks in cold weather** (as defined in the introduction).



RULES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RULES, when the Cold Weather policy is in effect:

- **Sufficient thin layers of appropriate clothing to retain body heat must always be worn** (see App. III). In cold weather, especially during the winter months, the risk of becoming chilled to the point of hypothermia because of wearing insufficient clothing or because of not exercising vigorously enough to generate sufficient body heat is a real danger. Coxes especially must be well protected. In windy or wet conditions, the outer layer should be windproof and/or waterproof. **Members are not permitted to boat unless they are adequately clothed for the prevailing conditions.**
- Rowers must adhere to the **4-oar rule**: only boats with a minimum of 4 oars combined may be on the water. That makes doubles and fours the smallest option for rowing. *(For the avoidance of doubt, this rules out 2 smaller boats rowing in close proximity at all times [e.g. 2 singles rowing in close proximity = 4 oars].)*
- The **'Buddy' system applies to all boats at all times**; at least 2 boats must be on the water for a session to go ahead, or have a landside coach in close proximity at all times.
- Rowers with fewer than 10 hours of experience in a 2x may **not scull in doubles**.
- Rowing is restricted to the Finish line > **1k mark** (except for 8+ boats, allowed to the Start line).
- Rowing drills / technical exercises are to be attempted **by the second pontoon**.
- Rowing drills / technical exercises are to be **carefully considered** in relation to the crew's ability/experience.
- Coach / Session lead to check **availability & access to Safety launch** before session begins.
- **Coaches must have mobile phones** with them which are protected and easily accessible in case of emergency.

When conditions make it doubtful whether it is safe to row, the coach(es) or the Club captain will make a decision as to the extent to which rowing is permissible. **Their decision will be final.**

RECOMMENDATIONS, when the Cold Weather policy is in effect:

- **'The lesser the experience, the bigger the boat'** approach to crew/boat allocation is used.
- Rowers are advised to take their **first strokes at ¾ slide**, to minimise risk of capsizing.
- Rowers who may struggle to climb on top of the boat in the event of a capsize should be **carrying a buoyancy aid** in their boat during their row.
- Rowers are to be reminded of safety rules at the start of sessions in order to **visualise / prepare for hazards**, and consider how they would react to those.
- Novices should **not normally be allowed to row in adverse conditions** but special consideration may be given to the experience and level of competence of a crew.
- Rowers should consider **carrying a mobile phone** in a watertight bag whilst they are on the water, in case of emergency.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I - DEFINITIONS

HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia is a condition that occurs when the temperature of the human body is lowered to a dangerous point due to exposure to cold and/or wet conditions. Cold temperatures and wet conditions work together to pull heat away from the body, lowering the body's core temperature. Even in mild conditions, the addition of rain or submersion in cold water can sufficiently reduce body warmth to trigger hypothermic conditions in the body. A person's condition can degrade rapidly, impairing breathing and coordination, making it impossible to swim or keep one's head above water. Emergency action needs to be taken no matter what the level of hypothermia.

EARLY HYPOTHERMIA

Symptoms: Rapid shivering, numbness, loss of strength and coordination, semi-consciousness.

Action: Maintain open airway. Transfer to a warm environment as soon as possible. Remove wet clothing. Use blankets to help warm individuals or, if available, a warm shower. Warm torso area first. Seek medical attention.

PROFOUND HYPOTHERMIA

Symptoms: Person will be pale, stiff, and cold, unresponsive to stimuli, and possibly unconscious. Little or no cardiac or respiratory activity will be present.

Action: Move or manipulate as gently as possible. Prevent further heat loss, but DO NOT attempt to re-warm. Maintain open airway, and activate EMS (Esophageal Motility Study) procedures. Call for emergency help immediately.

WATER TEMPERATURE SURVIVAL TIMES

Water Temp (°C)	Loss of Dexterity (no protective clothing)	Time to exhaustion or unconsciousness	Expected survival time
0	<2 mins	Up to 15 minutes	<15 – 30 minutes
0 – 4	<3 mins	15 – 30 minutes	30 – 60 minutes
4 - 10	<5 mins	30 – 60 minutes	1 – 3 hours
10 - 16	10–15 minutes	1–2 hours	1–6 hours
16 - 21	Up to 40 minutes	2–7 hours	Up to 40 hours

APPENDIX II - BRITISH ROWING SAFETY ALERT - COLD WATER KILLS



Safety Alert - Cold Water Kills

In the past two months, four rowers have died due to cold water immersion. Three died in March in The Netherlands and one died in April in the USA.

These events are most likely at this time of year when the air is getting warmer but the water is still very cold. This is compounded by the fact that we tend to wear less kit now than we do in the winter so if we do enter the water then our skin cools very rapidly.

Rapid skin cooling results in the involuntary gasp response. This isn't just a little gasp, it's a huge gasp that totally fills your lungs. You may experience several of these gasps in a row. If your head is underwater when you gasp, you will immediately drown. One gasp underwater will result in you having enough water in your lungs to kill you.

So, what can you do? Firstly, and obviously, do not fall into the water. Take care: -

- to avoid collisions as these often result in capsizes. Keep a good lookout and keep to the circulation plan;
- when getting into and out of the boat, lots of capsizes occur, even in crew boats simply because there is no-one holding the rigger;
- when doing catch drills and starts, capsizes occur when blades are square in the water at the catch.

What can you do if you do enter the water? Try to: -

- enter the water as gradually as you can. This is not always possible but try;
- keep your head above the water to avoid inhaling water when you gasp;
- keep calm and get your breathing under control;
- remember that it will feel horrible at first but you will feel better later;
- get free of the boat;
- get as much of your body out of the water as soon as you can;
- get off the water without delay;
- re-warm with care, drink warm (not hot) chocolate or a cold, fizzy, sugary drink, the sugar will fuel your re-warming.

Make sure that you stay with the boat, it is your life raft.

An auto inflation lifejacket will help too and it should help you to keep your head above the water when you gasp.

You can learn more from the [Cold Water and Hypothermia training](#) on RowHow.

If you want to know more, or if you think you know it all, then take the challenge at <http://www.respectthewater.com>.

Do not assume you are only at risk when sculling. Of the four recent deaths, one rower was lost from an 8+ and three from a 4+.

Stephen Worley
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APPENDIX III - ROWING IN COLD WEATHER CONDITIONS

Source: <https://www.britishrowing.org/2013/11/rowing-in-cold-weather-conditions/>

Here is just a reminder of a few things to consider when deciding whether or not to row during the increasingly cold winter weather:



- **Clothing** – Make sure you are appropriately dressed and prepared for changes in weather conditions. That includes considering the use of pogies or single layer gloves such as sailing gloves, which it is perfectly possible to row in if the correct ones are worn. Multi-layers of clothing of a modern wicking type that does not hold water is recommended. You may consider wearing a life-jacket or buoyancy aid particularly if going out in a single scull.
- **Food & drink** – Ensure you have eaten sufficiently before you exercise and if the outing is longer than an hour take a bottle of appropriate drink with you.
- **Cold water immersion** has a high risk of harm associated with it. All club members should read the RowSafe guidance ([Chapter 8](#)) and be aware of the effects of cold shock and hypothermia.
- **Risk Assessment & Recovery Plans** – These will need to be specific for your location but in very cold weather, there should be even higher priority given to assessment, preparation and communication. You need to be absolutely certain you have assessed all foreseeable risks and you can react effectively to an incident, having planned for “What if...?” scenarios. The most important thing is to reduce the likelihood of a capsized. You could restrict outings to more stable boats, limit outings to experienced crews and increase the level of launch supervision to help prevent incidents and also be able to alert rescue services immediately.
- **Safety Equipment** – You may need to carry more safety equipment in the boat/launch and you will definitely need an enhanced emergency plan to identify what to do when an incident has happened and how to recover people as quickly as possible.
- **Ice** is an important indicator of extreme cold. It is a risk on land – slipping and dropping the boat and on the water – floating sheets of ice can damage boats.