

Safety Policy and Emergency Action Plan
September 2013

Contact information:

Boathouse: (413) 736-1322 Police/Fire 911

Background

PVRC strives to offer a safe and welcoming experience for all our members. We have put the following policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of our rower's, the equipment and the club. Members and their guests are expected to know and follow safety procedures at all times.

This document is a continuously under review and development. The PVRC safety committee annually develops and reviews all safety rules, protocols and procedures for the rowing club. To this end, members must sign an annual safety policy before they are able to row. More information can be found at: US Rowing Safety <http://www.usrowing.org/Safety.aspx>.

Park Rules

PVRC is located in Springfield's North Riverfront Park. All rowers, paddlers and guests must follow park rules while at PVRC and NRP which are detail herein.

Children

We are not responsible for child care and will not allow anyone to participate in activities at PVRC or NRP if children are left unattended. Being near water is potentially hazardous for unattended children. All children must be wearing a personal floatation device when around the dock area even if attended.

Paperwork & Requirement

All members are required to have the following items on file prior to getting on the water.

- **Current year US Rowing waiver** - All rowers must sign a waiver from US Rowing. Rowers under 18 must have a parent or guardian sign on their behalf.
- **Swim evaluation** - Each participant is required to have the ability to swim 200 yards, tread water for 10 minutes and put on a PDF in the water.
- **Paper registration** – The registration includes emergency contact, health info such as allergies/medical needs, insurance, permission to treat & photo release (photo release is optional, but please let us know if you chose to opt out).
- **Bike & kayak waiver** – As part of you program registration includes a bike membership and 50% off kayak, canoe and SUP rentals.
- **Safety Evaluation** - Rowers are required to complete a safety evaluation once they finish their Learn to Row/Scull class. This is not meant to be a pass/fail test but a tool to help the PVRC staff and rowers address gaps in knowledge.

The safety evaluation consists of:

1. Evaluation of rowing skill
2. Written test
3. US Rowing Safety Video

Swimming Policy

Rowers who are uncomfortable in the water or unable to perform the above tasks with ease will be required to use a life jacket while on the water.

Juniors (under 18) are required to perform the swim test before the individual can participate in rowing. Thereafter, it is expected the participant is able to swim and tread water. Should that change, please notify PVRC staff immediately.

Adults (over 18) Adults may choose to attest to their swimming abilities without performing a swim test, but do so at their own risk.

PVRC General Safety Measures

All coaches and staff must have current CPR and First Aid certifications.

All coaches are trained to perform non-emergency water rescues.

A safety launch accompanies all learn to row, junior and outreach rowing programs

A safety launch and trained PVRC staff will be on hand during open sculling hours

Safety Launch

Before a program starts, a PVRC coach or staff member will perform a safety check. Rowers cannot launch until the safety equipment has been approved for use.

- Key in, adequately fueled & battery tested
- Minimum of 10 PFD (there must be 1 PFD per person, including rowers, coxswains, coach and launch riders)
- Safety Kit: paddle, bailer, anchor, rope/line, first-aid kit, rescue throw-line, knife, emergency blankets (9), flashlight, and air horn/whistle.

Safety Board

The PVRC staff maintains an easy to find message board to quickly update rowers to the water conditions. The board will quickly let you know what types of boats are safe to row. However, the board is only a tool to be used in assessing safety conditions and should be second to common sense and general rules listed below. On the board you will find:

- Weather report
- Water quality & current condition
- Wind speed & direction
- Notes, hazards and other useful information

When is it unsafe to row?

- During electrical storms (e.g. lightning / thunder)

- Wind exceeding 10mph heading North, 15mph heading south or waves that have whitecaps.
- Fog. There must be at least 100 yards of visibility and clear indication of improving conditions.
- Excessive floating debris in the river. Most debris is larger than what is visible.
- There is limited visibility – at dusk/dawn great care should be taken when rowing in darkness or near darkness. Safety lights should be used that are visible from the bow and stern.
- Cold weather: ambient temperature below 45 F and water temp below 50 F are considered dangerous.
- River flow above 45,000 CFS (8.5 feet on the river gauge).

****When a coach or staff member has determined conditions to be hazardous and decides to cancel scheduled rowing, he/she has the authority to keep all boats on shore for everyone's safety (including those of potential rescuers).**

Traffic Pattern

- Study the river map that demonstrates local traffic flow and hazards. Please share observations with others regarding the location of shallow water, stumps, rocks, seasonal problems and landmarks.
- Be aware of river level. Low levels reveal submerged hazards such as sandbars, logs and rocks. High river levels increase the speed of the currents especially between bridge abutments.
- Faster shells pass to the middle of the river. Slower boats are required to pull closer to shore.
- Larger boats should yield to human powered craft. If your boat is going to be waked, and you or the coxswain deem it unsafe to row through, turn the shell parallel to the wake and roll with the wake. Try to stay in a safe place close to the shore.

Turning

- Turning shells yield to oncoming traffic.
- If there are other crews on the river stop your boat close to the shore and allow crews to pass. When it is safe turn the shell 90 degrees and row straight across the river. Stop and complete your turn close to the shore so you are pointing your shell downstream.
- Turn on the downstream side of any bridge. This avoids the potential of being washed into a dangerous situation.
- Coxswains and scullers are responsible to communicate their presence and intentions to other boaters and rowers.
- All rowers must be familiar with different ways to turn, from small to large radial turns, using the backing and rowing strokes.

Landing and Launching

Launching - The PVRC dock is located just south of a large sandbar. For this reason we have our boats launch with their bows downstream unless water level is above 3 feet or 24,000 cfs, at which time singles may launch upstream (river levels can be found on the PVRC Safety Board). When your stern is clear of the dock turn your boat straight at the West Springfield side of the river and head west.

* Rowing North: head turn in the middle of the river and proceed through the North End Bridge (refer to bridge diagram below)

* Rowing South: Continue rowing to the West Springfield side of the river. Place oars about 35 feet from the shore and head south. BE AWARE, just south of the Memorial Bridge the West Side of the river gets shallow.

Returning to the dock from north of PVRC

Head downstream through the first or second arch of the North End Bridge (refer to bridge diagram below), continue downstream until the end of the NRP fence. Turn boat towards the shore and row until you are 20 feet from shore. Turn boat upstream and approach the dock.

Docking from the south

When approaching from the south please remember the Springfield side of the river is shallow. Stay to the middle of the river until you get to the end of the PVRC fence (during low water stay in the middle until the last tree before the dock). Point your boat toward the shore and row until you are in front of the dock. Point your bow at the edge of the dock and proceed with caution.

Shallows

The channel or deep part of the river is always on the outside of a turn.

Springfield side of the river is shallow from the Railroad Bridge until the first turn (or end of the bike path).

West Springfield side of the river is shallow between the Memorial Bridge and the South End Bridge. Review map in the boathouse for more details.

Open Sculling Policy and Procedures

Rowers who have passed Learn to Scull or equivalent are able to use the PVRC sculling equipment during Open Sculling Hours. For your safety PVRC has developed procedures for our rowers which must be adhered to every time you go on the water.

Open Sculling Hours

Each season there are set hours when PVRC staffs the boathouse for open sculling hours. During these hours a PVRC staff member will be available to assist rowers in landing and launching and to ensure the safety of our members and facility.

Program Requirements

To ensure your safety there are a few requirements every rower must adhere to before they are cleared to row. Once the following requirements are met, rowers will receive a unique identifier (a popsicle stick, more info below):

Announcements

Completion of Learn to Scull or equivalent

1. Skill assessment by PVRC coach

2. Pass the PVRC safety test
3. View the USRowing Safety Video
4. Register Online for "Open Sculling"
5. Payment – all payments are expected in full unless a payment plan or scholarship is approved by the PVRC Director)
6. Paperwork
7. Current Years USRowing Waiver, Swim Evaluation, Paper Registration

Popsicle Sticks - These sticks are a tool we use to ensure your safety on the water.

Once a rower is cleared to row they will receive a popsicle stick with their name on it, and 1 or more dots that indicate the boat level you are cleared to row. If your stick is not in the "Cleared to Row" cup, please check with the boathouse staff as there might be a hold on your account. The popsicle sticks are used to reserve your boat on the equipment board

Equipment Board – This very simple tool is essential and enables the staff to ensure your safety and to communicate to our rowers which boats are currently available to row.

Rowers simply place their popsicle stick under the boat they will be rowing that day. This board makes it simple to see who is on the water, what equipment is being used, and what boats are unavailable - either due to repairs or reserved for a program. Rowers can only reserve boats at their current skill level.

Boat Levels

PVRC has three levels of boats available to our rowers. When you are ready to move up to the next level inform one of the PVRC rowing staff. We will be more than happy to help you become accustomed to your new boat. The boat level you are cleared to row will be marked on your popsicle stick.

Level 1 (green) – these stable boats are great for beginners.

Level 2 (blue) – These boats are a bit thinner and require a good grasp of rowing form and technique.

Level 3 (red) – these boats are lighter and faster. Rowers who would like to row in these boats must demonstrate the ability to re-enter that boat from the water.

Log Book

The PVRC Log Book not only keeps track of the clubs total miles rowed, it is also an important safety tool. All shells and launches taken out of the boathouse for any practice are to be signed out in the logbook. For team boats, coxswains are responsible for signing the boats in and out of the logbook. Please fill out each column each time you row. Name, boat, which direction you plan to row, what time you left, what time you are expected back to the dock and your cell phone number.

If a rower does not return within 10 minutes of their expected time of arrival, the boathouse staff will call the rowers cell phone. If the rower does not answer, a safety boat will be launched in the direction indicated in the log book.

Cell Phones

Rowers are required to bring a cell phone on the water when using PVRC equipment. If there is an emergency on the water call 911 before you call the boathouse. If you do not have an emergency situation but need assistance while on the water, please contact the boathouse staff and a safety boat will be launched to assist you.

Boathouse Staff

During open sculling hours PVRC provides a dedicated staff member to assist the members with equipment and ensure you have a safe and enjoyable row.

PVRC staff has the right to restrict access to the water in unsafe conditions. If the staff determines conditions unsafe to row please understand that it is for your safety.

Equipment Usage

We ask that rowers only row boats that are in their approved level of ability.

It is the responsibility of the rower to check equipment before and after each row. If there are any issues please report them immediately to the PVRC Staff. If they are unable to fix the issue please make a note of it in the repair log (see reporting boat damage).

Rowers are also required to clean and wipe down all equipment after use. If a boat is returned unclean, the staff will make note of it on your account. Repeated offenses may result in suspension of equipment privileges.

It is the responsibility of the rowers to make any personal adjustments needed for their row. If rowers alter the spread of the boat or the length & inboard of oars they must inform the boathouse staff. If you would like to learn more about rigging please contact Coach Erin for a lesson. Rigging lessons are \$25 per hour.

Reporting Boat Damage & Equipment Issues

When rowers practice proper boat handling the likelihood of accidents is reduced, but damage is expected at time. Report any issues with a PVRC staff as soon as possible. Write down the issue in the boat repair log – boat name, date, your name and issue. For boats, place a “Repair” stick in the equipment board, for oars set them on the floor under the oar rack by the welcome desk.

If you experience damage while on the water, please return to the PVRC in the safest manner possible. If you are unable to row to the dock, please call the boathouse staff and a safety boat will be launched to assist you.

General Safety

If you capsize:

Get back into the boat quickly, extend oars in normal rowing position, grasp both oars with one hand, and use the other to push up onto the deck.

Note: If a boat has capsized and has been returned to the dock, it is likely extra heavy. Get assistance draining water from the boat and carrying to the rack. Carry from the mid-deck area (not the very ends of the boat) and undo the drain plugs for complete drainage.

If unable to re-enter boat:

- Swim the boat to shore, lying on the stern and using the boat as a paddle board. The shell has been designed for floatation and the oars will glide parallel to the shell providing some balance.
- Do not try to swim to shore. Do not underestimate the current of the river.

In cold weather:

- Stay with boat preferably lying over the boat with as much of your body out of the water as possible.
- Roll the boat to increase flotation.
- Do not move around to try to keep warm, you will lose warmth and energy quickly.
- Try to attract attention (e.g. waving arms, clothing).
- Get dry and warm as soon as possible.

In the event of a boat capsizing or swamping, DO NOT LEAVE THE BOAT. Swim the boat to shore, do not leave your floatation! The only exception would be if staying with the boat would cause a life-threatening situation.

Stay with the boat

The Royal Life Saving Society UK, working in partnership with the Amateur Rowing Association to develop the safety of sport on the water...

Why?

- A capsized boat is very visible to a rescuer and acts as a buoyant life raft for you.
- By staying with the boat you can pull your body out of the water or get back in it and reduce rapid cooling.
- In crew boats by staying with the boat you keep the crew together and can help and support one another.

The only time you should consider leaving your capsized boat is if:

- You know you are safe.
- Staying with the boat will take you into greater danger.
- The boat no longer remains an effective life raft.

If you capsize near the bank and conditions allow then you can tow the boat to the shore following the boat the right way up offers less resistance.

How do you right the boat?

Arrange the blades parallel to the boat and place a foot on the riggers. By standing on the riggers you get the leverage to be able to reach to the far riggers and pull it up and over. Watch out for the blades as the boat rights.

How do you paddle ashore?

Water takes away your heat much quicker than air. So it is important to get out of the water, get on top of the boat to await rescue or surf paddle it to shore keeping your torso out of the water.

Buddy Rescue

When another scull is present a 'buddy rescue' may be an option. This works by the person in the water supporting themselves on the stern carver of another boat which can then be pulled to safety. You may consider a buddy rescue if someone doesn't have the strength to far cannot get back into the boat with ease. Reducing the amount of time your body spends in the water reduces the dangerous effects of cold on the body.

How do you get back into a sculling boat?

- Using one hand, hook the handles together in a forward position.
- Put your feet hard on the deck at the front of the cockpit.
- Kick your legs hard and push down against cockpit to lift yourself out of the water.
- Turn towards the stern all on the deck / slides with your feet in the water.
- You are then in a position to swing your feet and find the seat.

If you tow or paddle your boat into an unfamiliar shore, watch out for underwater obstructions and dangers as you come in to land. If you've been in the water for a while don't try to stand up too quickly. When you have a firm footing, walk until you are at least waist-deep before attempting to do anything with the boat.

Thanks to Cranmore School for use of their pool.

Bow Entry

- Get hold of both blades and move along to the front of the boat pulling the blades with you so the bottoms come away from the gages.
- Slide yourself onto the boat and pull yourself into a sitting position.
- Negotiate the waistcoat and you're back on your seat and ready to go...

