

Safety Manual for McLean High School Crew Club

This manual establishes the safety and security procedures governing the conduct of the McLean High School Crew Club (MCC) program.

As with any other physical activity, there are risks involved in rowing. The sport also carries some special risks because it is conducted on the water. Safety is therefore paramount. The safety rules and procedures in this manual are based on long standing experience and sound practice. They involve everyone in the program – rowers, coaches and parents. The continued safe conduct of all the MCC rowing practices and events is everyone's responsibility.

Throughout this document, the term “rower” applies to any rower or coxswain who is a member of the Mclean High School Crew Team.

1. ACCOUNTABILITY

1.1 The **head coaches** for the men's and women's teams are the highest authority at Thompson Boat Center (TBC), during training on the Potomac River. They will ensure that coaches and rowers are properly trained, and that they observe all safety rules and procedures at all times. The head coach or his/her designee will secure the facility after practice and ensure all students have left the facility.

1.2 **Coaches** are ultimately responsible for the safety and health of the rowers under their care and will be alert to safety infractions or unsafe practices, and make corrections as appropriate in a timely manner.

1.3 **Rowers** are responsible for their own safe behavior. They are expected to learn and understand the safety rules and procedures, conduct themselves safely at all times, and to be alert to unsafe conditions or conduct. If rowers notice an unsafe condition, they should immediately report the situation to the nearest MCC coach.

2. USE OF THE BOATHOUSE AND EQUIPMENT

2.1 Use of MCC equipment shall be restricted to members of the following groups, in approved programs under the supervision of a coach:

- The McLean Crew Team, during the Learn-to-Row fall program, green days and high school spring rowing season.
- Rock Creek Rowing, as specified in contracts with MCC or on occasion with verbal agreement from the President of MCC.
- TBC Racing, as specified in contracts with MCC or on occasion with verbal agreement from the President of MCC.

2.2 No one else is authorized to use MCC equipment without express permission of one of the MCC Board Members. Individual or unsupervised workouts are not permitted at any time. A dock master and/or coach shall be on the premises of the boathouse during program hours to provide supervision of athletes not on the water.

2.3 The Board shall provide and maintain a first aid kit in the MCC boathouse area of TBC. The Head Coaches are responsible for inspecting the kits monthly, notifying the Board of needed supplies, so that the kits can be restocked as necessary.

2.4 The Board shall provide approved gasoline containers and arrange for gas storage lockers for storage of gasoline when not in use in a launch. Coaching staff is responsible for ensuring gas containers are returned to the storage cabinet after each use.

3. PROCEDURES AND RECORDKEEPING

3.1 All rowers shall receive a link to the MCC Crew Safety Guide at the beginning of each season.

3.2 Before joining the team on the water for Learn-to-Row or the spring rowing season, every rower shall complete a swimming test, demonstrating the ability to tread water for 2 minutes and swim 100 meters in long pants and a long sleeved t-shirt. Swim tests must be witnessed by a coach or designated parent volunteer. Completion of the swim test will be documented and kept on file for as long as the rower is a member of the team. The Board shall maintain this file.

3.3 Every rower shall have a current Virginia High School League (VHSL) physical examination, in accordance with Mclean High School requirements for student athletes. Every rower and one parent shall complete the concussion education, in accordance with Mclean High School requirements for student athletes.

3.4 Each rower shall sign a form each year in acknowledgement of having watched the USRowing Safety Video. Coaches shall arrange for the viewing of the video in their presence and shall confirm the viewing with the MCC Safety Video Confirmation form. These forms will be kept on file throughout the season and maintained by the MCC Board.

3.4 Each rower shall complete with parent signature: 1) FCPS Participation Policy Student Activities Form 2) FCPS Emergency Care Form 3) FCPS Parental Authorization and Acknowledgement of Risk Form 4) FCPS Athletic Training Program Communicable Disease Information Sheet 5) FCPS Weight Room Parental Authorization and Acknowledgement of Risk Form 6) FCPS Field Trip Driver's License and Vehicle Insurance Form

3.5 If an injury occurs, it shall be reported in writing to the MHS Athletic Department for documentation and follow up by the trainers. If an emergency occurs and/or 911 is called, the current Athletic Director shall be updated as soon as possible after the rower has been connected with emergency medical personnel.

4. SAFETY TRAINING

4.1 All coaches shall complete the FCPS Coaches Education within one year of their start date. The four components of this training are: FCPS Athletics Orientation/FCPS Local; Concussion Education; NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching and VHSL State Component; and Sports First Aid. Certifications shall be kept on file by the Athletic Department of McLean High School.

4.2 Coaches shall conduct a safety briefing for all rowers at the beginning of each season, including the US Rowing safety video. Topics will include:

- a. Safety rules and procedures
- b. Rescue procedures in the water, including practice in donning a personal flotation device.
- c. Recognition of unsafe water conditions
- d. Proper navigation rules and boat handling (Coxswains)
- e. Safe handling of boats, oars and launches on land
- f. Hypothermia

4.3 Capsize Procedures and Person Overboard Training must be reviewed before rowers begin training on the water at the beginning of the spring season (See Appendix B)

4.4 Coxswain training shall be conducted throughout Winter Conditioning and the spring season. This training may include:

- a. Recognition of dangerous water and weather conditions
- b. Safe navigation, including hazards on the Potomac, commercial and sport boat traffic, submerged hazards and floating objects.
- c. Recognition of landmarks useful in reporting one's position on the Potomac.
- d. Traffic patterns for crews using the Thompson Boat Center, and traffic patterns and regulations for other clubs rowing on the Potomac.
- e. Emergency rescue procedures
- f. Emergency communications

5. SAFETY ON THE WATER

5.1 General

a. A maximum of two 8s or three 4s shall be accompanied by one coach in a launch. On occasion it may be necessary to have more than two 8s or three 4s due to unexpected circumstances such as launch engine failure. Launches shall stay within a visible and accessible distance from the shells at all times. Launches shall be driven only by coaches whose competence in driving a launch has been verified by a head coach. All persons in a launch shall wear an approved personal flotation device at all times while on the water. No more than four people are allowed in a launch unless it is involved in a rescue.

c. A coach under 21 years old shall not operate a launch alone.

d. Launches shall carry the following equipment:

- Approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) for each occupant of the launch and all rowers being coached.
- One Coast Guard approved Type IV throwable PFD with line attached.
- Paddle
- Anchor
- Water bailer
- Emergency line (min. 50 ft)
- Emergency space blanket
- Air horn or other warning device
- Radio or other emergency communications equipment, including a cell phone

5.2 Weather and Water Conditions

a. Rowing is not allowed when the weather conditions such as freezing temperature, high wind, strong current, waves, storm clouds, thunder, lightning or fog indicate a potential hazard to rowers' safety. TBC dockmaster or appointed personnel will close the docks at their discretion and MCC shall follow the dockmaster's advice regarding dock closures.

c. Boats must return to the dock at the first sound of thunder, sign of lightning, or if fog sets in. If caught in a sudden storm, boats shall be taken ashore to the nearest safe point and wait for the storm to pass. Boats may return to the water 30 minutes after thunder is last heard or lightning is last seen. FCPS prefers shelter be taken in an enclosed building and not in a car.

d. Coaches are ultimately responsible for the rowers under their care and should not row on the water if, in their judgement, the conditions are unsafe. Additionally, coaches shall ensure that all rowers are dressed appropriately for the conditions, especially during hot or cold weather. Coaches shall monitor the rowers during training sessions and if a safety or health issue is suspected, should stop training immediately until the situation is addressed. See Appendix A for more information on weather-related health emergencies.

e. Shells and launches embarking prior to sunrise must be equipped with bow and stern lights. All boats must be off the water by sunset if not equipped with lights.

5.3 Launching and Traffic Patterns

a. Head coaches shall ensure that all coaches are aware of the traffic patterns for practice.

b. All boats shall launch from the TBC docks.

c. After launching, crews shall row to a location designated by the coach, normally 300-400 meters away and wait there until the coach is in the launch and prepared to supervise the crew.

d. Crews participating in regattas shall be governed by the safety rules in the current edition of the Rules of Rowing of the United States Rowing Association, and by the rules of the regatta.

6. SAFETY ON LAND

Rowers may begin their practice on land when weather conditions warrant a dock closure or turns must be taken for seats in a boat. The buddy system should be used at all times, with no less than two rowers leaving TBC to warm up with a run. At all times, coaches must be aware of the on land training plan.

7. TRANSPORTATION

Boats shall be transported only on boat trailers provided by the MCC Board , and towed by the MCC Board approved drivers during the high school racing season. Drivers shall comply with all motor vehicle laws.

Appendix A: Weather-Related Health Emergencies

A1. 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 and 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.

a. Early Hypothermia

Symptoms: Rapid shivering, numbness, and 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 individual or if available a warm shower. Warm torso area first. Seek medical attention.

b. 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 procedures. Call for emergency help immediately!

A2. Heat-Related Emergencies

Higher temperatures and high humidity can lead to heat-related illnesses that coaches and rowers need to keep in mind. As humidity rises the body's ability to cool off through sweating is diminished since evaporation is limited. The best way to avoid heat-related injuries is to practice at cooler times of the day such as early morning or late afternoon. The body needs time to acclimate to increased temperatures. Intake of fluids is also important and should be encouraged. Dehydration further impairs the body's ability to cool off. There are two major related heat illnesses to be aware of: heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

a. Heat Exhaustion

Early symptoms: heavy sweating, cramps, tiredness, weakness, malaise, mild decrease in performance.

Action: rest and fluid replacement.

Advanced Symptoms: profuse sweating, muscle incoordination, impaired judgement, and emotional changes.

Action: If there is mild temperature elevation, an ice pack may be used to help cool the body to normal temperatures. Several days' rest may be necessary and rehydration is priority.

b. Heat Stroke

Symptoms: confusion, nausea, vomiting, and seizures. The victim loses consciousness. Body temperature rises as high as 106. Skin is dry and clammy.

Action: Get medical help immediately! Lower body temperature by immersing in water, maintain horizontal position of victim. Stop treatment when victim is conscious.

Appendix B: Capsize Procedures and Person Overboard

NOTE: It is the responsibility of any coach boat to provide assistance to any capsized boats even if from another sport, or a pleasure boat. Coaches are reminded to stop at a safe distance and offer assistance. Approach with caution and in a controlled manner. Be aware of your prop!

All crew members should be fully aware of what actions to take when a crew swamps, flips, or capsizes. In any of these events, the crew should remain with the shell. The shell will float (an important reason to close bow and stern ports before going on the water). Furthermore, the oars will act as floatation devices. If for some reason, the shell sinks below the surface, the shell should be rolled so the bottom is facing the sky, as this traps air underneath the shell and increases buoyancy. At no time should any crew member leave the boat to swim to shore. A short swim can be far longer than it appears due to currents, wind, water temperature, or personal fatigue.

B.1 Emergency Capsize Procedures

- a. Coaches should calm the rowers, assuring them that the boat has flotation and will not sink.
- b. Issue life vests and have all rowers properly wear them immediately
- c. Call fellow coaches for help.
- d. Have the rowers extend their oars as best they can to the perpendicular from the hull
- e. Approach the shell carefully between seats 3 and 5 or 4 and 6, and take out the middle four and take them to shore if no other launch is available to assist.
- f. Return to the swamped shell and take out the stern pair and cox, then the bow pair, and take them to shore.
- g. Coaches should not abandon their own crews to assist another coach with a rescue. Have crews row to the emergency scene and stand off nearby or return to the dock, then proceed to help. Do not overload a launch.

B.2 Man Overboard Procedures

- a. The boat should stop rowing (“weigh enough.”) If the coxswain did not see the incident, another rower should make the call.
- b. The coach should stop the practice with a predetermined signal and steer to the victim. Remember that the victim may be dazed, and not react rationally.
- c. Toss the victim a life vest and have them immediately put it on.
- d. Approach the victim from downwind/down current as minimum speed.
- e. Shut the motor off.
- f. Reach out to the victim with a hand, paddle or throwing line. Do not get into the water unless there is no alternative.
- g. Have the victim grab the gunwale of the launch, and move to the stern.
- h. Pull the victim into the launch over the transom
- i. Dress the victim in warm, dry clothes if possible. Return the victim to the shell or take to shore, depending on the victim’s physical condition.

This manual is intended only to set forth safety and security procedures governing the conduct of the MCC and is not intended to establish a general or legal standard of care. The procedures in this Manual may be modified from time to time, without notice, as the MCC Board or the majority of MCC members deem appropriate.