Safety Manual for McLean High School Crew Club

Updated October 2026

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, coxswains, coaches and parents. The continued safe conduct of all MCC rowing practices and events is everyone's responsibility.

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, coaches, or the majority of MCC members deem appropriate.

Throughout this document, the term "athlete" 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1.1 The **head coaches** for the men's and women's teams are the highest authority, unless superseded by someone of greater authority, at 1) Thompson Boat Center (TBC), during training on the Potomac River; 2) McLean High School, during training at the high school; and 3) at regattas, while on-site for racing. They will ensure coaches and athletes are properly trained, and they observe all safety rules and procedures at all times. The head coach or their designee will secure the facility after practice and ensure all athletes have left the facility.

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

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

2. USE OF EQUIPMENT AND THE BOATHOUSE

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, winter training, and the high school spring rowing season.
- Other entities, 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 the MCC Board President.

2.3 The Board shall provide and maintain a first aid kit in the MCC boathouse area of TBC and in the Erg shed at McLean HS. 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, with TBC Management, for lockers for storage of gasoline when not in use in a launch. The coaching staff is responsible for ensuring gas containers are returned to the storage cabinet after each use and the locker is locked.

3. PROCEDURES AND RECORDKEEPING

3.1 All athletes shall receive a link to the Safety Manual for McLean High School Crew Club at the beginning of each season.

3.2 Before an athlete joins the team on the water for the first time for Learn-to-Row or the spring rowing season, every athlete 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 athlete is a member of the team. The Board shall maintain this file.

3.3 Every athlete or parent, on the athlete's behalf, shall complete all steps in the registration process prior to the start of winter conditioning. Head coaches, in coordination with the MCC Board, will verify the required forms are received prior to the start date of the athlete's training with MCC. These forms will be kept on file throughout the season and be maintained, where applicable, by the MCC Board. Forms include, but are not limited to:

a. Complete MCC Rower Membership Registration
b. Read the MCC Handbook
c. Join/Renew US Rowing
d. Complete SafeSport training
e. Read the Safety Manual for McLean High School Crew Club
f. View the USRowing Safety Video
g. Read the MAAPP Policy
h. Complete the following forms: Crew Participation, Membership Agreement, MAAPP Waiver, Parental Authorization Field Trip, Field Trip Luggage, Weight Room, Driver and Vehicle Insurance, and Student with Student Driver, Student with Parent Driver Safety Manual, and Verification the USRowing Safety Video has been viewed form.
i. A current Virginia High School League (VHSL) physical examination
j. Register for crew at https://www.mcleanathletics.org/page/participation-forms

Note that for Learn-to-Row, the Board may utilize a registration process that does not include the full set of steps listed above. The Learn-to-Row registration process will be communicated to athletes and their parents before the start of Learn-to-Row, and athletes or parents on the athlete's behalf must complete all required steps before participating.

3.4 All coaches shall complete the following classes and certifications. MCC President shall maintain verification of these documents:

a. Coach will complete all necessary requirements to comply with FCPS Coaching Guidelines as well as any required training by McLean High School within one year of their start date.

b. Coach will obtain a DC Boating license before the first day of on-the-water training.
c. Coach will complete SafeSport Training prior to working or communicating with athletes and maintain a current status throughout the duration of the contract.
d. Coach will view the US Rowing Safety Video prior to the start of the spring season.
e. Coach will obtain or renew CPR and First Aid Training before the start of winter conditioning.
f. Coaches must be a member in good standing with US Rowing.

3.5 If an injury occurs, it shall be reported in writing to the MHS Student Activities office for documentation and follow-up by the trainers. If an emergency occurs and/or 911 is called, the current Director of Student Activities shall be updated as soon as possible after the athlete has been connected with emergency medical personnel. If a parent of the student is not available, a coach should remain with the athlete.

4. SAFETY TRAINING

4.1 Coaches and athletes will complete all requisite safety training as outlined in sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this Manual.

4.2 Coaches shall conduct a safety briefing for all athletes at the beginning of each season. Topics will include:
a. Safety rules and procedures.
b. Weather-Related Health Emergencies (See Appendix A).
c. Capsize Procedures and Person Overboard Training (See Appendix B).
d. Emergency rescue procedures, including practice in donning a personal flotation device.
e. Emergency communications.
f. Recognition of dangerous water and weather conditions.
g. Safe handling of boats, oars, launches and other equipment.
h. Safe navigation and traffic patterns, to include hazards on the Potomac, commercial and sport boat traffic, submerged hazards, and floating objects.
i. Recognition of landmarks useful in reporting one's position on the Potomac.

5. SAFETY ON LAND

5.1 Individual or unsupervised workouts at TBC or McLean High School during regular practice hours are not permitted. All workouts during practice hours at TBC or McLean High School must be conducted per Sections 5.3 and 5.4 below.

5.2 At all times, coaches must be aware of the on-land training plan.

5.3 While at TBC, a badged volunteer, 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. Athletes may begin their practice on land when weather conditions warrant a dock closure or turns must be taken for seats in a boat. If going on runs/leaving TBC for training, the buddy system should be used at all times, with no less than two athletes staying together when leaving TBC.

5.4 While at McLean High School, a coach and/or badged volunteer shall be on the premises of the school during program hours to provide supervision of athletes. If going on runs/leaving the school for training, the buddy system should be used at all times, with no less than two athletes staying together when leaving the school.

6. SAFETY ON THE WATER

6.1 General

a. Head coaches will ensure and verify all staff is competent in operating a launch and report verification of their competence to the MCC President. Launches shall be driven only by coaches whose competence in driving a launch has been verified by a head coach.
b. Coaches will operate launches while wearing an approved personal floatation device and an engine kill switch.
c. No rowing shell shall launch without being directed and accompanied by a coach in a launch.
d. Generally, a maximum of two 8s or three 4s shall be accompanied by one coach in a launch. On rare occasions, it may be necessary to have more than two 8s or three 4s per launch due to unexpected circumstances, such as launch engine failure.
e. Launches shall stay within a visible and accessible distance from the shells at all times.
f. All persons in a launch shall wear an approved personal flotation device at all times while on the water.
g. No more than four people are allowed in a launch unless it is involved in a rescue.
h. A coach under 21 years old shall not operate a launch alone.
i. Launches shall carry the following equipment:
    - Approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) for each occupant of the launch and all athletes 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
    - Marine radio or other emergency communications equipment, including a cell phone.

6.2 Weather and Water Conditions

a. The TBC dockmaster or appointee can close the docks at their discretion, and MCC shall follow the dockmaster's advice regarding dock closures.
b. Rowing is not allowed when the weather conditions indicate a potential hazard to athlete safety. Examples may include freezing temperature, high wind, strong current, waves, storm clouds, thunder, lightning, and/or thick fog that significantly reduces visibility.
c. Boats must return to the dock at the first sound of thunder, sign of lightning, visibility reducing fog, or if excessive weather 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. Where possible, FCPS prefers that shelter be taken in an enclosed building and not in a car.
d. Coaches are ultimately responsible for the athletes under their care and should not row on the water if, in their judgement, the conditions are unsafe. In addition, coaches and select Board members will jointly make determinations regarding cancellation or modification of practice or regatta participation based on weather conditions. All coaches will comply with any such determinations. Additionally, coaches shall ensure that all rowers are dressed appropriately for the conditions, especially during hot or cold weather. Coaches shall monitor the athletes 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 and Appendix B for capsize and man overboard procedures.

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.

6.3 Launching and Traffic Patterns

a. Head coaches will ensure and verify all staff are aware of traffic patterns on the Potomac and will report verification of their awareness to the MCC President.
b. For practices at TBC, 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.

7. TRANSPORTATION

7.1 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

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.

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 the 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!

Heat-Related Emergencies

High temperatures and high humidity can lead to heat-related illnesses that coaches and athletes 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 heat-related 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 to as high as 106 degrees. Skin is dry and clammy.
- *Action*: Get medical help immediately! Lower body temperature by immersing in water and maintain horizontal position of victim. Stop treatment when victim is conscious.

Appendix B: Capsize and Person Overboard Procedures

NOTE: It is the responsibility of any coach 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.

Emergency Swamping and Capsizing Procedures

a. Coaches should calm the athletes, assuring them that the boat has flotation and will not sink.
b. Issue life vests and have all athletes properly wear them immediately.
c. Call fellow coaches for help.
d. Have the athletes extend their oars as best they can to be perpendicular from the hull, in the case of swamping.
e. Coaches should approach the shell carefully between seats 3 and 5 or 4 and 6 and take the middle four athletes 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. In case of capsizing, athletes should be reminded to stay with the boat until rescue and use the boat and oars for flotation. Instruct the athletes in righting the boat, if appropriate.
h. Coaches should not abandon their own crews to assist another coach with a rescue. Have crews row to the emergency scene and standoff nearby or return to the dock, then proceed to help. Do not overload a launch.

Man Overboard Procedures

a. The boat should stop rowing (“way 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, being careful to keep the athlete well clear of the props. 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 them to shore, depending on the victim’s physical condition.