

OLRA- BSS Safety Policy

Version: April 2024

References: (See also OLRA website under 'Reference/Safety'):

- **Rogers Lake Traffic Pattern** (also posted in the boathouse): <https://bit.ly/Traffic-RogersLake>
- **US Rowing Safety Resources (Safety Video, Safety Guidelines, etc.)**
<https://bit.ly/USRowingSafe>
- **CT DEEP Regulations regarding racing shells and personal flotation devices**
<https://bit.ly/PFDReg1> and <https://bit.ly/PFDReg2>

Safety Considerations

- The rowing season will run from no earlier than March 15 until no later than December 15.
- Weather: If thunder or lightning has been detected, boats are not allowed to launch until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder or flash of lightning, whichever is longer. Seek shelter in the boathouse or a hard-topped metal vehicle.
- If fog is such that the first island is not visible from the boathouse, boats may not launch.
- Boats should not launch if whitecaps are evident.
- All boats should return to the dock immediately if weather conditions become unsafe as described above. In the event of thunder or lightning observed while rowing, rowers should either return to the dock or bring the boat ashore, depending on the judgment of the rowers as to what will be safest.
- For Junior rowers, up through high school graduation and until reaching their 18th birthday, there must be an appropriate number of safety launches on the water at all times.
- Until the water temperature reaches 50 degrees:
 - There must be no less than four oars on the water, i.e. no singles or pairs.
 - Under cold water conditions (water temperature below 50 degrees), boats must stay in eye contact at all times.
- Once water temp has reached 50 degrees as determined by the Director of Rowing, the four oars on the water rule will no longer be required but rowers are encouraged to row together.

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- NOTE: Water temperatures around 50 degrees are very dangerous, all precautions should be taken, row with a buddy. Consider staying within sight of other boats and carrying a small whistle.
- CT DEEP regulations for PFD's are to be followed:
 - During the period from October 1st through May 31st all rowers must wear an approved personal flotation device of appropriate size and in serviceable condition unless accompanied by a properly equipped chase boat/coaching launch.
 - NOTE: Some inflatable belt style PFD's are available in the boathouse but it is recommended that members purchase and maintain their own.
- Under no circumstances should a rower in the water leave his/her shell. Even if a swamped boat is within a swimmable distance from the shore, the rower should swim the boat to the shore unless a launch is available at the scene. Never leave your floatation (shell) even if you consider yourself a strong swimmer.
- At a minimum, boats must carry a bow light if operating around dawn or dusk. As per Coast Guard regulations, any vessel operating between sunset and sunrise must be lit appropriately.
- The Rogers Lake traffic pattern should ALWAYS follow the route indicated on the aerial map, EXCEPT for the following situations:
 - An officially scheduled high school sprint race that is known in advance. High school races begin at the northeast corner of the lake (at the rock) and proceed over a 1500 meter course in a straight line south to the flagpole finish. Boats travel on the west side of the Lake up to the start.
 - Any other races and/or scrimmages that have been sanctioned through the OLRA Board, with proper notifications posted.
- ANY other scrimmages and/or race pieces should take place according to the established traffic pattern. If a 1500 m practice piece is desired on the racecourse, this should go from the flagpole heading north to the rock, with the boats returning on the west side of the lake as per the traffic pattern.
- Each team (Masters Men, Masters Women, Blood Street Sculls juniors) shall choose a captain who will have final say on safety issues and boat assignments in relation to level of experience. BSS juniors will defer to coaches.
- The captain(s) will provide instruction and testing in safety (encourage members to review the USRowing Safety Video annually) and determine when a rower is qualified to row at a given level.

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- All rowers must attest that they are able to swim 150 yards, tread water for 10 minutes, and swim 10 feet underwater.
- Members who ignore club rules will have their membership privileges suspended for a period of up to two weeks, at the discretion of the Director of Rowing. A second infraction will mean suspension of membership privileges for not less than one month. A third infraction will terminate membership for the season.
- Chase boat drivers must have a boating license, be authorized by the OLRA board and should complete an orientation session with an experienced launch driver. Copies of safe boating licenses must be submitted to the Director of Rowing prior to operation of any club launches. Operators of chase boats / launches should wear a suitable PFD.
- Club boats (e.g., small boats such as singles and doubles) should not leave the premises without permission of the Director of Rowing.
- All OLRA/BSS Members are strongly encouraged to make use of the Rowing Logbook in the boathouse: this is for safety and to record boat usage and comments (e.g. needed repairs)
- Wipe-Down Policy: To ensure safe operation and proper maintenance of all OLRA/BSS rowing shells, all boats must be thoroughly wiped down inside and out (including tracks) after each rowing session. This will permit examination of the hull and all working parts to ensure any needed repairs are identified and recorded (e.g. in iCrew or the Logbook)
- Water levels on the Lake will vary throughout the year due to seasonal changes, during very rainy and very dry periods, and from time to time when the Rogers Lake Authority lowers the water level for specific purposes. At all times, keep a minimum of 50 feet from the shore and islands.

Masters Rowing Times

- Masters Regular Schedule for Team Rowing is:
 - 6-8PM Tuesdays and Thursdays (late fall changes to 5-7PM)
 - 7-9AM Saturdays and Sundays
- Newer rowers are strongly encouraged to row at the times listed above.
- Masters Open Rowing shall be from 6-9AM Monday to Friday.
 - During the early morning summer junior program, Masters access to club boats should be confirmed with the junior program coaching staff.

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- Qualified adult rowers are allowed to take out club boats during open rowing periods, respecting the cold-water policy. All rowers are encouraged to log-out in the log book before going on the water, and log in again when they come back.

Additional early/late season procedures to Consider

- Row 'near' shore (as opposed to rowing across the lake)
- If water becomes rough head back
- Do not turn the boats if they must go parallel to large waves, turn in sheltered area

Information for launch drivers:

Catamaran launches have 12 lifejackets and a blue bag with whistle, air horn, space blankets and a small first aid kit.

Suggested equipment for launch operators:

- 7/16" and 3/4" wrench, pliers, screwdriver, knife
- Two bags of lifejackets (six jackets each)
- Paddle
- VHF radio on Channel 73
- Blue emergency bag (horn, whistle, space blankets, first aid)
- Cell phone (waterproof bag attached to above)
- Consider use of walkie talkies with coxswains
- Wear an inflatable life jacket
- Use 'kill switch' lanyard (extension)

In an Emergency

- Rowers MUST stay with boat (right it and sit in flooded boat if possible)
- Blow airhorn/whistle, multiple short blasts
- Call other launches/coaches on VHF or walkie-talkie
 - o What
 - o Where
 - o Emergency level (8's, far from land: very high, 4's close to shore: high)
- Safety launch sends their crew to the dock and assigns nearest coach to monitor by radio

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- Nearest coaches go to accident, send their crews to the dock, farthest coach monitors them
- If safety launch is far away, attempt to bring boat to shore or ferry athletes
- If on shore, deploy space blankets
- To load the catamaran safety launch:
 - Go forward and put the ladder down
 - Bring the launch close to the swamped/flipped boat
 - Help the first rower on board (coxwain)
 - Go to the boat controls first rower helps the second and then goes aft
 - Second helps third, etc last rower raises the ladder
- Safety launch ferries all to boathouse
- All go inside, huddle if cold
- If conditions warrant, or an extended period in water, check for signs of hypothermia, call 911
- Get boat later