



St Michael's Rowing Club Head of the River Safety Statement

O'Briensbridge – 11th October 2025

1. Introduction

Welcome to St. Michael's Rowing Club Head of the River, October 2025. We hope that you have an enjoyable, safe and successful days racing. With your help and co-operation, we (and our equipment) should survive the day intact. This Safety Plan incorporates the key points of all the rowing clubs involved, our aim is that all competitors, officials and visitors will uphold all Good Practice that exist in Rowing throughout all the clubs participating. Trained medical personnel will be on site during the day of the HOR and will be present during the whole competition. Safety boats will be patrolling the course throughout the regatta. Marshals are equipped with loud-hailers and basic safety equipment; throw-bags and emergency blankets. Safety boats and other regatta officials are provided with radios.

2. Safety Procedures & Preventive Measures

2.1 Safety Instructions & Information for Competitors Equipment:

It is the responsibility of each crew to ensure that the equipment that they are using is safe and compliant with the requirements of Rowing Ireland rules and safety manuals. Coxes presenting at the pre-launch inspection without life jackets on will not be allowed on the water. All boats must have secure bow balls, heel restraints and watertight buoyancy chambers. Coxswains must wear a life jacket or buoyancy aid in the correct manner and be familiar with the method of operation. In "front-loader" boats coxswains must wear manually operated gas inflation life jackets or equivalent that allow for easy exiting of the coxes seat position. Inspections will be conducted, and omissions may lead to disqualification. Coxes: All coxes should be familiar with the method of operation of their life jacket.

Swimming Ability: Every competitor is expected to be in good health and able to swim. It is the responsibility of each club to ensure that their members competing in this event are able to swim. Competitors' Responsibility: While we endeavour to provide a safe system at this event, each competitor and competing club also has a duty of care to themselves and others.

- Their own safety, remembering that they have a duty of care to themselves and any third party both on the water and on land.

- Ensuring that any equipment (e.g. boats, blades, buoyancy aids, etc.) are safe and prepared to the standards as required. Spot checks may be made by marshals to check on bow ball, heel restraints or other quick release mechanisms and coxes' life jackets.
- Ensuring that their boats comply with the buoyancy requirements.
- The strict observance of any 'local rule' or traffic/circulation pattern along with any competition specific safe' provisions.
- Deciding whether or not they are competent to use the water course in the prevailing weather conditions; this decision may be taken by the individual or with their coach/crew.
- Adequate clothing / protection is worn suitable to the conditions on the day.

2.2 River Hazards

Beware of the waterfalls and trees past the start line. Ensure you follow the instructions of the safety launch and starter in this location. Access beyond this point is forbidden, this hazard will be monitored from the bank by the starter and a safety launch will be available near the start at all times.

2.3 Launch Plan Slipway

The slipway and approach will be marked for inward and outward crews. Please obey instructions of slip stewards in this area. Crews are advised to wear appropriate footwear when using the slipway. Oars should be removed from the slipway as quickly as possible.

2.4 Traffic Plan Training

Traffic plan included below the HOR prospectus. Please ensure all crews and coxes are familiar with this and follow the plan while on the water.

Racing: Know the rules: The HOR will be a rolling head format. Please plan your races to allow races to be spread fairly evenly throughout the day to avoid too much overcrowding on the slipway etc. Give yourself plenty of time to boat before your race time, as the marshalling area can become very congested and slow moving. The start is c. 2K from the slipway so less experienced crews may take some time to get there. Please ensure experienced coxes are used. Listen for start marshals' instructions - they are all experienced in the job and know the event and the river well. If you see an accident: Please report to the nearest official immediately, who will act or alert the rescue services by radio as necessary. Umpires, marshals and officials will be the initial public contact points for reporting of emergencies. Marshals will wear a high visibility jacket for identification at all times. This Safety Plan is distributed to marshals and other HOR officials organising Committee. Safety Boats: A number of dedicated Safety Boats will be available at all times, positioned along the course in strategic positions dependant on conditions. These shall be equipped with competent people, radios, throw lines, safety blankets and first aid equipment. First Aid cover / EMT station will be signposted.

Emergency - The nearest Accident & Emergency unit is University hospital Limerick. Phone 061 301111

2.5 Incidents – Collisions & Capsizes

Above the start/below the finish: Get any boat that is damaged and unable to proceed to the side. On the course: Get any boat that is damaged and unable to proceed off the course to avoid further incident. It should be noted that there are a number of access points to the river is from the banks and marshals are aware of their local access point. Umpires and marshals: Shall pay particular attention to any incident on the river. Should a crew be involved in a collision or suffer any injury that requires assistance, or a crew member falls out of a boat, the official shall summon a safety launch by radio. Capsize: The whole course is visible to marshals. Every marshalling position is equipped with throwing lines and a radio to inform Race Control. **STAY WITH THE BOAT!**

2.6 Incidents

Extreme weather conditions & other threats Where extreme weather conditions or other situations that could require the cancellation or postponement of racing, either for the day or until the conditions change, the decision will be the responsibility of the HOR secretary. The HOR secretary or the Safety Advisor also reserve the right to amend this plan if weather or competition conditions on the day make this necessary. Amendments, postponement or cancellation will be published at Race Control and announced over the public-address system. In the case of lightning a risk warning will be broadcast advising participants already on land to avoid moving boats and oars during the period of the storm. The message shall make clear whether racing could be resumed if conditions improve and whether crews already on the water should return immediately or complete their race first. As soon as the decision is made, every effort will be made to get all competitors and Safety boat crews ashore and safe as quickly as possible. As for determining when things are safe, the HOR will use the 30-30 rule. After you see lightning flash, count the number of seconds it takes until you can hear thunder crack. If the time is less than 30 seconds, you are still in danger and should stay in a safe place. Similarly, a person should wait 30 minutes after seeing the last flash of lightning after a storm.

2.7 Pre-inspection

Approximately 1 hour before the start the race HOR team, on their way to set up the start and finish, will inspect the course and surroundings for any obstructions or likely problems and assess the weather conditions. If anything of concern is found they will report to the safety advisor and the appropriate response will be initiated. Decisions on postponement or cancellation will be considered if necessary.

2.8 Instructions

Marshals, Safety Boats and other officials will be issued with all relevant safety documentation prior to the event. Specific safety information may be issued on the day. Competitors will receive details of the arrangements and instructions prior to the event.

3. Communications

Safety boats are provided with radios operating on the umpires' channel, to maintain contact with umpires when needed. Radio etiquette shall be maintained at all times and only relevant event information shall be relayed by radio. Radio channels for use, for umpires and for emergency service, will be agreed on the morning of the HOR. Back up is provided via megaphones.

4. Emergency Action Plan

4.1 Purpose:

This Emergency Action Plan sets out mitigation and procedures in relation to an emergency which represents a general threat to HOR participants.

4.2 Responsibility:

Responsibility for actions in the event of an emergency rests with the Race Committee.

These individuals will carry radios at all times.

4.3 Actions in the event of a medical emergency:

The nearest radio equipped Race official on the scene will take initial control and will assess the situation. (If necessary, he/she will call emergency services.) As soon as immediate life saving measures are in hand Race Control (if not aware) will be notified. If emergency assistance is required, the Official will call Code-Red (urgent medical issue) and Code-Blue (non-urgent) on his radio and all other radio users will observe radio silence and follow instructions given by that official. For any other situation (obstacles, debris etc) normal radio protocol should be used. The initial incident report for a Code-Red should briefly include;

- What is needed (first aid or higher or safety boat).
- Location stretch of river or bankside that the service is needed.
- What has happened.
- The number of casualties.
- The severity of injuries or illness.
- If racing needs to be suspended.

As soon as an incident is reported, all stations on radio are to minimise their communications. Absolute priority is to be given to Race Control and those responding directly to the incident. In the event of any accident or emergency beyond that detailed in the safety plan and outside the capabilities of the HOR first aid and safety facilities, the emergency services will be called using 999 by mobile phone. Emergency services not familiar with the embankment and requiring detailed information about an incident location can contact Race Control for grid references & post codes.

4.4 Fire

If anybody discovers a fire in the area they should raise the alarm with the safety advisor and he/she will assess the situation and tackle the fire ONLY if they are confident to do so and initially order local evacuation. If the emergency may require the stopping of racing or general evacuation, he/she will inform the HOR secretary. They will agree appropriate action.

4.5 Equipment failure

Should there be a Radio failure during the event, Safety Boats and marshals etc shall use mobile phones & loudhailers to raise alarm, providing the radio is to be replaced hastily. If this is not possible, Race Control shall be informed and racing shall be halted until communication issues can be satisfactorily be resolved.

4.6 Capsize

In the event of a capsize during a race the umpire will call "Rescue, Rescue, Rescue" and state where the incident has occurred and whether additional assistance is required. All unnecessary radio traffic should be discontinued until the event is declared over.

4.7 Floating Hazard

Any significant floating debris or "hazard" seen on the water shall be reported to Race Control immediately. A Safety Boat shall be deployed to clear the water and racing shall be suspended.

4.8 Anti-social Behaviour

A serious public disorder or violent behaviour shall be reported to Race Control immediately. If necessary, racing shall be suspended, and the Gardai shall be called.

5. Reporting of incidents

Any witnessed incidents should be reported to Race Control for recording purposes.

6. Emergency Services Access

Emergency vehicle access is via the main gates, the emergency services will be met by a HOR official at the gate and directed to the location of the incident. It is very important that the access road from this main gate down to the regatta field is kept clear and free of obstructions at all times including two hours before the Head, during the Head and for a reasonable time after the Head. If parked vehicles are causing an obstruction it will be announced once over the public PA system and if the vehicle causing the obstruction is not moved in a reasonable amount of time, the vehicle will be removed by the regatta organisers. The regatta organisers will use a local car removal service to remove the vehicle and all cost incurred will have to be paid by the vehicle owner. SMRC and its committee accept no responsibility for damage caused to vehicles parked in such a way as to cause an obstruction to emergency vehicle access.

7. Feedback

If you have any comments that may help us improve the plan for future events, then please let us know via the SMRC website

SMRC Head of River Safety & Traffic Plan

