

Weymouth Rowing Club Health & Safety Handbook



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Foreword & Purpose

This handbook sets out the Weymouth Rowing Club (WRC) safety standards and the practical procedures that all members, coxswains, coaches and volunteers must follow. It prioritises clarity for day-to-day rowing and aligns with British Rowing RowSafe guidance and the CPGA framework. It replaces prior versions of the handbook and consolidates club rules, emergency procedures, environmental limits and risk assessments into a single easy-to-use document.

This is the authoritative source for WRC safety practices.



How to Use this Handbook

Chapters are arranged in the order a typical rowing session flows: pre-session checks, equipment and boathouse safety, launch and recovery, rowing on the water, emergency actions and post-session reporting. Use the checklists at the end of Sections 2, 4, 5 and 9 for quick verification before launching and when handling incidents.

1. Welcome & Safety Principles

WRC believes harm is not inevitable and most incidents are preventable when members follow agreed procedures and exercise sound judgement. Every member has a duty of care for their own safety and for others affected by club activities. The Club will provide clear rules, training and equipment; members are expected to comply.

Core principles:

- We prioritise people over performance and property.
- We obey harbour and maritime rules at all times.
- We assess conditions before, during and after outings and are prepared to cancel or return early.
- We learn from incidents and near-misses and keep records to continuously improve.

2. Before You Row (Preparation & Self-Assessment)

Before any outing the coxswain must confirm crew fitness to row, weather and sea state limits, tide times, daylight, traffic, and the availability and condition of mandatory safety equipment, including a fully charged VHF radio.

2.1 Personal Readiness

- No alcohol or intoxicating substances before or during rowing, coxing, coaching or assisting.
- Declare any medical conditions that may require help (e.g., inhalers, seizure risks).
- Dress for the forecast and potential inactivity as cox; avoid jewellery that can snag.
- Bring water and sufficient nutrition for the planned activity and contingency.

2.2 Crew Composition & Limits

- Maximum of 8 persons per club gig, including any passenger.
- Exceptions: emergency rescue of persons from the water; or an inclusive session supporting a person with additional needs where the coxswain completes a specific risk assessment and judges it safe.
- The boat must not be anchored and left with fewer than five persons onboard, except in an emergency judged by the coxswain.
- All persons in the boat must be recorded by name in the session system; guests must complete day-membership steps before launch.

2.3 Environmental Limits (go/no-go)

Do not commence sea rowing if within two hours after launch the forecast indicates any of the following in the intended area:

- Mean wind \geq 15 mph (max 19 mph).
- Sea state $>$ 3 (approx. wave height 0.6 m mean / 1.0 m max).
- Visibility $<$ 1 km.
- Lower limits apply for junior/novice crews or weaker crews at the coxswain's discretion.

If conditions at sea are unsuitable, confine rowing to the harbour only if launch and recovery are safe and traffic conditions permit.

2.4 Coxswain Go/No-Go Decision

- Coxswain's decision to row, confine to harbour or cancel is final.
- Complete a pre-launch boat check (hull, bung, rudder, oars, fenders, pins, tow line, bailer, bow fender).
- Confirm all mandatory safety equipment is embarked (see Section 3).
- Conduct a radio check before leaving the pontoon.

2.5 Quick Checklist – Before You Row

- Crew fit? Names recorded? Guest day-membership completed?
- Conditions within limits for crew experience?
- Equipment and emergency kit onboard? Radio charged and tested?
- PFD policy understood and complied with?

3. Equipment & Boathouse Safety

3.1 Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- PFD wearing is compulsory for coxswains, non-swimmers, junior rowers (under 16), additional passengers and anyone in safety boats.
- PFDs must not be covered by clothing and should be visually checked prior to use; damaged units are quarantined and serviced per manufacturer guidance.

3.2 Mandatory Boat Safety Kit (per gig at sea)

- Buoyant marine VHF radio operated by a competent person (normally the coxswain).
- Emergency dry box containing: basic first aid kit; thermal exposure blanket; sharp knife in sheath; at least two smoke generators/flares; compass; grab line and throw bag; sound signalling device; shed key.
- Additional dry box with at least six PFDs for rowers.
- Spare thole pins; tow-line; bailer/bucket; bow fender fitted.

- All-round white light or torch if launching within one hour before sunset or when reduced light is expected.

3.3 Boathouse Rules

- No smoking in the boathouse or during launch, recovery and maintenance.
- No LPG stored in the boathouse; BBQ LPG must be kept in the designated external storage.
- Water from the external tap is not for drinking.
- Fire extinguishers and first-aid kit locations must be kept clear; electrical systems inspected annually per insurance requirements.
- Boathouse location:



3.4 Equipment Maintenance & Defect Control

- Report defects immediately to maintenance or the Safety Officer; quarantine unsafe equipment.
- Do not take damaged safety kit on the water; log all issues on return.
- When sanding/painting, ensure ventilation and wear appropriate PPE (gloves, eye protection, masks).

4. Launch & Recovery Procedures

Launching and recovering gigs on the public slipway require coordination and positive control to manage heavy lifting, public interactions and slip hazards.

4.1 People & Roles

- Minimum seven able-bodied people to manoeuvre a gig between boathouse and slipway.
- Two trolley drivers (bow and stern) control movement and public awareness; one person calls lifts and gives clear commands.

4.2 Movement Controls

- Lift one end at a time with six lifters while a seventh controls the trolley; use the slipway ladder to protect the keel.
- Keep the gig level, distribute people evenly, and secure the gig on trolley blocks before moving.
- Monitor for pedestrians, cyclists, anglers and dogs; stop and allow them to pass.

4.3 Slipway Hazards

- Check for slime, chemicals, sharps and wave wash; wear suitable footwear; abort if snow/ice present.
- Warn other slipway users and coordinate a clear route before launch or recovery.

4.4 Mooring & Embarkation

- Deploy fenders; secure the gig to pontoon or slipway before full embarkation.
- Embark/disembark one at a time to maintain trim; avoid finger pinch points between boats.
- Use gangway access only; do not jump between wall and pontoon; manage numbers on pontoons to avoid overloading.

4.5 Trailer Launch/Recovery (other slipways)

- Secure trailer and posts; check road-worthiness and secure the gig and all equipment before towing.
- Use a spotter when reversing; re-check load security shortly after departure.

4.6 Quick Checklist – Launch & Recovery

- Seven people available? Two trolley drivers appointed?
- Slipway state checked? Public informed?
- Gig secured and level on trolleys?
- Embark/disembark one-at-a-time with fenders deployed?

5. Rowing Procedures (Harbour & Sea)





Operate within harbor byelaws and Portland Harbour regulations. Keep a proper lookout, especially near shipping channels, and respect small ferry movements and navigation signals.

5.1 Conduct Afloat

- A qualified coxswain is in command at all times; rowers comply with commands immediately.
- Maintain at least six active rowers underway in fresh conditions.
- Avoid seat changes at sea unless calm and only one person standing at a time; no transfers between gigs except in emergency.

5.2 Navigation & Local Rules

- Pass port-to-port and keep well clear of commercial traffic.
- Enter Portland Harbour via the recommended North Entrance; If coxswain decides to use East entrance, then verbal permission must be obtained from Portland Port using VHF Ch. 74 when prudent.
- Observe traffic signals at Weymouth Harbour South Pier. Comply immediately with restrictions.
- Give way with a wide berth to the rowing ferries operating across the harbour and proceed at slow speed nearby.

	I am altering my course to starboard
	I am altering my course to port
	My engines are going astern
	I am doubtful if you are taking sufficient avoiding action

5.3 Swimmers & Speed Limits

- Respect the beach 8-knot zones and keep outside swimmer buoys where practicable, especially at Newton's Cove.

6. Coxswain Standards

- Coxswains complete club training and refreshers as required; experienced joiners receive WRC-specific induction.
- Wear a PFD at all times; carry and test the VHF before departure.
- Be conversant with local rules, sound signals and emergency procedures.

7. Junior Rowing

- Maintain a current list of juniors with emergency contacts and flagged medical needs; the coordinator briefs the cox.
- Juniors must not row outside Weymouth Harbour without an operational safety boat.
- Safeguarding and supervision ratios follow Club policy; parents/guardians are informed after any incident once the immediate situation is safe.

8. Safety Boats

- Drivers are trained and competent (e.g., RYA Level 2 or equivalent); ideally operate with a second person as spotter.
- All personnel on a safety boat wear a PFD.
- Carry VHF, bailer, sound signal, throw line, thermal blankets, first-aid kit, sharp knife in sheath, handholds, anchor and line, two smoke generators/flares and a compass.

9. Emergencies

In any emergency, the coxswain (or next competent person) takes charge, provides clear instructions and communicates with the Coastguard/Lifeboat or Emergency Services as appropriate.

A list of telephone numbers relevant to emergencies is at the top of the noticeboard in the boathouse. Other useful numbers are as follows;

- **Coastguard**

Emergency ☎: 999
Maritime & Coastguard Agency ☎: 02392 552 100

- **Police**

Emergency ☎: 999
Non-emergency ☎: 101

- **Fire Station**

Emergency ☎: 999
Weymouth Fire Station ☎: 01305 252600

- **Ambulance Services**

Emergency ☎: 999
Ambulance Station ☎: 01305 257643

- **Hospital**

Dorset County Hospital ☎: 01305 251150
Weymouth Community Hospital ☎: 01305 760022

- **Weymouth Harbour Master**

Weymouth Harbour Office ☎: 01305 838423 or VHF Ch. 12

- **Portland Harbour / Portland Port**

General enquiries ☎: 01305 824044 or VHF Ch. 74

- **Health and Safety Executive**

Plymouth Office ☎: 01752 668481

- **Environment Health Officers**

Environmental Protection (Dorset Council) ☎: 01305 251010

9.1 On the Water – Casualty Only (boat upright)

- Assign a trained first aider to the casualty using the emergency kit; others row as directed to a rendezvous point.
- Call the emergency services/coastguard and arrange to meet at pontoons or shore as directed.

9.2 On the Water – Capsize or Flooding

- Send a Mayday on VHF Ch. 16; request lifeboat assistance.
- All personnel don PFDs, stay with the boat for buoyancy and warmth; do not attempt to right the boat.
- Adopt heat-conserving posture in water; remain calm and breathe steadily.

9.3 Boathouse Fire

- Raise the alarm; evacuate and muster at the designated point.
- Use the extinguisher only if safe, and an escape route is assured.
- Do not re-enter until authorised by the person in charge or Fire Service.

9.4 Shore-based Incidents

- A first aider assesses, calls emergency services if required and stays with the casualty until handover.
- A responsible member accompanies the casualty to hospital when appropriate.

9.5 Post-Incident Actions

- Record all accidents, injuries and near-misses in the club accident/incident system immediately after return.
- The Safety Officer reports lessons learned to the Committee and at the AGM.

10. Sharps, Health & Hygiene

- Be alert for sharps around the slipway, benches and grassed areas; use the club's sharps box with tools provided and arrange collection per local procedure.
- Use sunscreen and sun protection; manage hydration and heat exposure in hot weather.
- Manage cold exposure; use thermal blankets in emergencies and abort outings if hypothermia risk increases.

11. Reporting, Training & Continuous Improvement

- All incidents and hazards are recorded; members notify the Safety Officer of hazards not covered by assessments.
- The Club provides cox training and first-aid opportunities; refresher training is scheduled as required.
- Risk assessments are reviewed after incidents and at least annually.

12. Risk Assessments (Framework)

WRC maintains risk assessments for all normal activities. Standing assessments are reviewed after reported accidents or incidents to incorporate lessons learned, and additional assessments are created for special activities (e.g., regattas, endurance rows).

12.1 Risk Matrix

Risk = Severity × Likelihood. Severity is rated as Minor, Major, Fatal. Likelihood is rated Low/Medium/High based on crew experience, conditions and controls in place.

12.2 Core Activity Risks (Examples)

- Activity: Launch & Recovery

Key hazards:

- Manual handling injuries while lifting or moving boats.
- Gig toppling from trolley; collision with public; slip on slimy slipway.

Controls:

- Use a minimum of seven people; one calls the lift; two trolley drivers.
- Check slipway; manage public; wear suitable footwear; use ladder to protect keel.
- Activity: Rowing (Harbour & Sea)

Key hazards:

- Capsize/swamping in rough seas; grounding on reefs; inability to row against tide.
- Collision with buoys, moored boats or moving traffic; striking swimmers.

Controls:

- Respect environmental limits; confine to harbor if necessary; maintain lookout; obey signals.
- Train emergency stops; avoid swimmer areas; practice maneuvering in restricted space.
- Activity: Equipment & Boathouse

Key hazards:

- Trips in untidy shed; radio fails in emergency; equipment failure at sea.

Controls:

- Maintain tidy storage; charging and radio checks; pre-launch inspections; quarantine defects.

13. Ergo Training (Concept2)

- A minimum of three people must be present for any ergo session; no solo or pair use.
- A trained, competent ergo lead must be present; the club provides training on safe setup, use and storage.
- Clean down machines after use and lock away securely.

14. Transporting Gigs by Road (Summary)

- A minimum of 2 (two) persons when towing is required
- Use suitable trailers and compatible towing vehicles; maintain trailers in roadworthy condition.
- Driver to confirm license, insurance including trailer cover and competence to tow.

- Pre-journey checks: structural integrity, tires, brakes, lights, straps, roller/pad support and number plate; carry spare wheel and tools.
- Use a helper when reversing; re-check load security shortly after departure; monitor wind/ice and traffic.

15. Version Control

Changes are logged here; the Safety Officer maintains the master copy and issues updates after Committee approval.

V5.0 (Mar 2026)

V4.0 (Nov 2023): Previous consolidated edition.