



**R I V E R S**  
**R O W I N G**  
**ASSOCIATION**

# Safety Guidelines for Rowers & Coaches

May 1, 2020

## 2020 Rules & Guideline Updates

The following is a summary of rules updates that will take effect on May 1, 2020.

Updates	Summary
<a href="#">Safety Matrix</a>	Clarified wording around experience levels, particularly novice requirements.
PFD Requirements	PFD Requirements have been updated by groups.
Coxswain Life Jacket provision	Clarity for coxswain in bow loader boats: Must have at least a low profile PFD in Zones 3, 4 and 5.
<a href="#">Paddling Safety Matrix</a>	Clarified wording on the Dragon Boat and Outrigger Canoe Safety Matrices
Navigation Lights	Navigation lights (red/green and white) are now required for all boats.  Requiring RowKraft (or technological equivalent) for all shells in low light situations.
Launch Spot Lights	Minimum requirement of 1000 Lumens.

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**INTRODUCTION**

**The Safety Committee shall consist of:**

- A member of the Board of Directors or designate who will serve as chair unless he/she declines to serve as chair and then an alternate will be selected.
- The TRRA Executive Director (non-voting, consistent with TRRA bylaws).
- A representative of one of the major collegiate tenants (Pitt, CMU, or Duquesne) on a rotating basis.
  - Note: It is the responsibility of this rotating member to ensure all other college programs are consulted and kept up to date on the activity of the Safety Committee.
- Representatives from each of the masters teams using the Boathouse
- The Three Rivers Head Youth Rowing Coach (non-voting, consistent with TRRA Bylaws).
- A representative from the paddlers program.
- A representative from the scholastic programs .
  - Note: It is the responsibility of this member to ensure all other scholastic programs are consulted and kept up to date on the activity of the Safety Committee.
- Other interested members and program representatives by invitation ONLY.

<b>2020 Three Rivers Safety Committee</b>	
Bob Heister, Chair	TRRA Board Member
Matt Logue	TRRA Executive Director
Stephen Eckstein,	Collegiate Representative
Currently Vacant	Scholastic Representative
Earl Bohn	AAA Masters Representative
Betsy Ensminger	AA Masters Representative
Thomas Huygens	A-Team Masters Representative
Matt Grau	TRRA Youth Rowing Representative
Bob Robinson-Dassel	Paddlefish Representative
Mina Hare-Rubinstein	Paddlefish Representative
Jim Roberston	Out-rigger Canoe / Paddling Representative.
Andrew Behnke	TRRA Board Member

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**The Safety Committee shall:**

- Meet at least twice per year to review safety matters.
- Recommend to the TRRA Board of Directors (Board) any rules/guideline changes as needed.
- Interpret rules, assess penalties and the like to assist staff in their day-to-day implementation.

**TRRA Staff shall be responsible for:**

- With the assistance of the Safety Committee, holding a spring and fall seasonal safety meeting with mandatory attendance by coaches and crew leaders, scullers, coxswains using an outline developed in conjunction with the Safety Committee.
- Responding to breaches of the Rules and Guidelines or other unsafe practices as set out in the Rules.
- Maintaining and posting as appropriate, listings of crew leaders and certified scullers.
- Alert Executive Director to all incidents.
- Holding a Coxswains' Training, and a Steerers' Meeting once a year.

**SECTION 1 SAFETY RULES**

**Dock Closures**

- TRRA docks are available to authorized users for the purpose of launching rowing shells, kayaks, dragon boats, canoes, outrigger canoes, or launches unless they have been closed by the Executive Director.
- The TRRA Executive Director decides when dock closing is necessary. When closing the docks, the Executive Director shall take under consideration criteria affecting boating safety as specified by the safety rules.
- When the docks are closed, no boats of any kind may be launched from TRRA docks or property by any user or individual.
- When the docks are closed, they shall remain closed until the Executive Director has opened them.

**Safety Matrix**

- All rowers and paddlers must abide by the provisions of the published safety matrix, which represents the minimum acceptable standards for water temperature and flow for safe rowing and paddling conditions.
- The Safety Matrix does not cover all conditions relevant to safety, and each rower, paddler, coxswain, steersperson, crew leader, or coach is responsible to assess all conditions and decide whether, even if permitted by the Matrix, it is advisable to launch.
- **All coaches, rowers and paddlers are required to use common sense.**
- Follow this link to the current Safety Matrix: [TRRA Safety Matrix](#)

**Traffic Patterns: Right of Way**

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- All watercraft must be operated in compliance with the relevant boating regulations including General Marine Right of Way as promulgated by the PA Fish and Boat Commission and other agencies.
- General Marine Rules of Right of Way:
  - Vessels with the least maneuverability have right-of-way, but should be cautious and take action to avoid all other types of boats.
  - Non-powered boats have the right of way over powered boats.
  - Barges have very limited maneuverability, so that they always have the right of way over rowing shells, kayaks, outrigger canoes, or dragon boats.
    - Also, barge pilots cannot see small craft easily and their radar will not pick up rowing shells, kayaks, outrigger canoes or dragon boats. Be aware that there is a significant 'blind spot' (the line of sight from the pilot house to beyond the bow of the barge) in front of a barge.
  - When in doubt, always yield the right-of-way.

**Rowing Traffic Patterns**

- All boats launching from a TRRA dock (Washington's Landing and/or Millvale) should comply with the posted TRRA traffic patterns.
- Any boat not complying with the posted traffic patterns must yield right of way to boats in the pattern, except in the case of emergency.

**Traffic Patterns at TRRA Docks:**

- Launch and land with bow upstream.
- When launching use the most upstream section of available dock space and walk the boat up as space opens up.
- When landing use the most downstream section of the available dock.
- If you are staying in the channel, after launching paddle upstream under the railroad bridge in the back channel before turning to face downstream.
- When launching kayaks, outrigger canoes, and dragon boats from Millvale, paddle upstream to at least the shore pavilion before turning downstream, or cutting over to the main channel of the river.
- Incoming (docking) boats have the right of way over launching boats.
- When other crews are waiting for dock space, tie in and adjust foot stretchers on the water.
- Boats may not turn in front of or between the docks at Washington's Landing, unless there is no other traffic.
- Dragon boats should not send the boat's bow or stern out into the channel to take the boat out of the water unless there is no other channel traffic.

**Traffic Patterns in the Back Channel:**

- Keep to the right hand/starboard side (from the coxswain or paddlers' perspective) of the channel
- Exit the back channel as quickly and safely as possible (e.g. avoid drills that use less than all rowers at full slide until out of channel, especially if there are boats following).
- Observe right of way when exiting the Back Channel.
  - Boats without coxswains have the right of way over boats with coxswains.

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- All crews are prohibited from returning to the docks at either facility via the top of the channel, barring adverse weather conditions or of another issue related to the safety of the crews.
- Entering / Exiting the Channel:
  - When exiting the upstream end of the Channel, boats must cross to the right hand side of the river between the 40th Street Bridge and the first upstream green buoy.
    - The rules of the Channel extend upstream to the first green buoy.
  - When entering the upper end of the channel, boats should turn toward the channel after passing under the center arch of the 40th Street Bridge but before the bottom dock of the sternwheelers.
  - When exiting or entering the downstream end of the channel, boats should cross over between the end of the sandbar at the bottom of the island and the Pipeline Crossing sign / or overhead wires).
- Boats traveling in the channel may not do slow drills, such as pick drills, if there are other boats behind.
- Power pieces are only allowed downstream of 31st Street Bridge when the course is clear and safe to do so.
  - **Boats doing power pieces must always yield the right of way in the Back Channel.**
  - All crews should practice on the main river whenever possible.

**Traffic Patterns in the River (Appendix B - River Map):**

- Coaches and all paddlers and rowers should be aware that **the center of the river is a federally designated commercial waterway, used by barges.**
- Always keep to the right hand/starboard side (from the coxswain and paddlers' perspective) of the river.
  - EXCEPTION: between the top of the Channel and the first upstream green buoy. Here, boats may proceed upstream on the left hand side of the river **until the first green buoy only.**
- River Buoys
  - River buoys generally mark the navigation channel for larger commercial traffic.
  - Only two buoys, the one near the Millvale Marina (first green one upstream above the 40th St Bridge) and the one near Etna (third green one upstream), actually mark areas that are stream outlets and shallow enough to be of concern to our rowers, paddlers, and safety launches.
    - In all other cases, including the second (or middle) green buoy above the 40th Street Bridge, the preferred and safest course is to the shore side of the buoys, outside of the navigation channel.
  - Striking buoys, particularly in combination with fast current, is a significant safety hazard and is likely to cause serious equipment damage. Care must be taken by all persons responsible for course steering to locate the buoys well in advance of reaching them and planning safe passage past them.
  - No wake' buoys: You may wish to take the bow number (PA registration) of any boat violating these rules and report the incident to the TRRA Executive Director or the PA Fish and Boat Commission.

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## Crew Leader Requirements

### Certifications

- All outings shall comply with Crew Leader or Blind Boat Certification Requirements.

### Accountability

- Crews shall comply with safety related directives from their designated Crew Leaders.

See [TRRA Rules on how to apply to be a Crew Leader](#)

## Safety Equipment Requirements

### Paddling / Rowing Equipment

- All paddling and rowing boats shall be equipped with required safety equipment.

### Paddling Boat PFDs:

- PFDs must be worn when required by the safety matrix. Vest PFDs must be worn at all times by all paddlers 18 and under, steerers, drummers, camp/corporate participants, Summer League Participants, and paddlers with special needs (including adaptive paddlers).
- **All kayakers must wear PFD.**
- TRRA regular dragon-boat members (Paddlefish and Hearts of Steel) are exempt from wearing PFDs if they have filed a swim test certificate with the club and the Safety Matrix is followed. If a PFD is not worn, it must be close at hand.
- The dragon boat must contain at least one PFD per person on board.

### Rowing Boat PFDs:

- Coxswains must wear or have available a PFD as set forth in the Safety Matrix.
  - It is strongly recommended that coxswains wear float suits, float coats or low profile life jackets at all times and in all zones.
  - If the coxswain is in a bow loader boat they must wear at least a low profile vest PFD in zones 3, 4 and 5.
  - Children under 12 and any adults not having passed their swim tests must wear a PFD.
  - When in doubt, carry a PFD such as an auto-inflate pouch or a regular life jacket.

### Lights for Rowing Shells and Paddling Boats

- All rowing boats, kayaks, and outrigger canoes shall exhibit properly functioning lights before sunrise and after sunset.
  - Bow light: Red / Green navigation light
  - Stern light: Solid or flashing white light.
  - TRRA requires that all programs and private boat owners invest in [RowKraft lights](#) (or technological equivalent as determined by the ED) for all of their shells.
- These lights must be large enough to be clearly visible from a distance of 2 miles and visible from 360 degrees.
- All bow lights shall be mounted on the rowing shell.

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- On sculling boats, the stern light shall be mounted on the rowing shell.
- In stern-coxed boats, it shall be permissible for the stern light to be worn by the coxswain, provided that it faces in the appropriate direction, does not hang down, and is not obscured by the coxswain hair or clothing.
- Dragon boats should have an elevated white light in the stern, and the traditional red/green running light on the bow, either attached thereon, or to the back of the drummer's seat.
- Spotlights are also required in the safety launch and should be used to illuminate hazards, such as buoys and debris and to signal other craft on the water, including barges and other motorized craft.
  - Spotlights must be at least 1000 Lumen in brightness.

### **Responsibility for Safety Equipment**

- It is the responsibility of the person in charge of each watercraft to ensure that it is in proper operating condition and that all required safety equipment is on board and properly deployed.

### **Zone 5 Procedures**

If programs wish to row in Zone 5, the following steps must occur:

- Coach has a meeting with the Executive Director to ensure everyone has a full understanding of rules and emergency procedures. The coach should come prepared with their safety action plan for their program while rowing in Zone 5 and a complete roster with updated emergency contact information for each rower, coach and coxswain.
- Coaches must have a meeting with participants and guardians (if under 18) highlighting the circumstances (high flow and/or cold water temp) of Zone 5 and appropriate safety procedures.
- Have a letter signed by the coach, and rowers/guardians (if under 18) and return it to the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director will notify the coach if approval to row in Zone 5 has been granted in a timely manner.
- Crews must be strong enough to row upstream through the top of the channel with only  $\frac{3}{4}$  of rowers rowing.
- Crews must have no less than 2 hours of on-water time during the immediately preceding 5-day period.
- Rowing in Zone 5 may only occur during daylight as defined in APPENDIX #1.
- Rowing in Zone 5 is prohibited in the face of visible whitecaps.

### **Behavior at TRRA Facilities and in TRRA Equipment**

#### **Personal Behavior**

- Violations of USRowing SAFESPORT policies will not be tolerated.
  - For more information on SafeSport visit this site: [TRRA SafeSport Policy](#)
- No rowdy behavior, horseplay or any behavior likely to cause injury to persons or damage to property is permitted.

#### **Alcohol**



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- No alcohol is permitted to be brought to or consumed on the premises or in any TRRA boat, except in connection with Club sanctioned events and parties.

### Weapons

- No weapons, knives (spring-operated or over 4 inches), or firearms of any description are permitted in TRRA facilities, equipment or on the property.

### Incident Reports

#### Reporting

- All occurrences of personal injury, major equipment damage, collision with other boats, must be reported immediately to the Executive Director, who in turn will inform the Safety Committee chair as soon as practicable.
- The involved parties will submit an online [TRRA Incident Report](#) as soon as practicable.
- **In case of injury requiring hospital or EMS treatment, the Executive Director must be notified as soon as practicable and will inform the TRRA Board Chair and the chair of the Safety Committee, in addition to any other required notifications.**
- Should reports of such incidents be required by any governmental authority, such reports must be filed in a timely fashion and the TRRA Executive Director must be copied.
  - The Executive Director will update the Safety Committee as soon as practicable.
- See Appendices for Incident Report Form, Equipment Damage/Maintenance Form, and Equipment Damage policy.
- All Minor equipment damage will be noted in the repair log located in the boat bays for that purpose.
  - ALL equipment damage must be reported as soon as possible so that it can be addressed and have as little impact as possible on rowing operations.

### Infractions

#### Reporting

- When the Executive Director becomes aware of a breach of the Rules and Guidelines or of an otherwise unsafe practice, the Executive Director will follow the steps outlined in the [Safety Violations & Penalties document](#).
- In addition to the procedures outlined in the Safety Violations & Penalties document, if the Executive Director determines, based on prior conduct and/or penalties, or based upon a new incident report, that the individual, coach or program shows a disregard for the safety rules and guidelines, the Executive Director shall request a meeting with the individual, coach or representative of the program. The chair of the Safety Committee shall be informed prior to the meeting taking place.
- Following the meeting, any penalties issued shall be consistent with the structure of the Safety Violations & Penalties document, with notice to all appropriate individuals.

## SAFETY BEST PRACTICES & PROCEDURES

### Equipment Checkout

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### Personal Responsibility

- Each rower, paddler, and sculler should take personal responsibility for:
  - Being physically conditioned for the sport of rowing or paddling. Consult a physician before starting any form of exercise. Before beginning to paddle or row, go through a warm up and/or a basic set of stretching exercises.
  - Being fully aware of the weather conditions and possible safety hazards.
    - Listen to the weather forecast, review TRRA's Weather & Water Flow Page and/or consult the many available weather and storm-tracker apps.
    - The current official apps of TRRA are:
      - [Weatherbug](#)
      - Vessel Tracker
  - Properly reserving boats using the online reservation system and properly signing out on the crew/sculler's/kayak/outrigger canoe/dragon boat logs attached to the outside of the boathouses.
  - Adhering to the Equipment Classification System which indicates the boats each rower is permitted to use according to skill or certification level.

### Safety Launch Equipment

- Safety Launches with crews must carry:
  - PFDs Appropriate to the number of rowers/paddlers not already wearing or carrying PFD's
  - 9 emergency blankets in a water tight container
  - Tool kit with:
    - with standard and/or metric wrenches
    - at least 1 adjustable wrench
    - Pliers
    - Electrical Tape
  - First Aid Kit
  - Lifeline or throw bag
  - Fire extinguisher
  - Flashlight and/or Spotlight before sunrise and after sunset
  - Bailer
  - Communication device (radio and/or cell phone)
- Defective or damaged equipment must be reported in writing on the Damage/Maintenance Report (Repair Log).
  - (See the Appendices for a blank copy of the Damage/Maintenance Report. Copies are also located in the file folders at the entrance to the boat storage areas).
- Safety Launches must also have:
  - A Coast Guard Approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD) for each person in the launch and each person in a boat not already carrying one.
  - A throwable rescue device such as an approved floating seat cushion.
  - Lights if before sunrise or after sundown.
    - For Safety launches, these should be standard red/green bow lights and all-around white stern light.

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- A spotlight must also be available and used while in a launch before sunrise or after sundown.
- An efficient noise making device.
- An anchor with at least 50' of anchor line attached to launch.
- At least one oar or paddle.
- Valid registration stickers

## Emergencies

### Who to call:

- Calls for Help - To EMS (Emergency Medical Service), Pittsburgh River Rescue
  - DIAL 911, or
  - CHANNEL16 (Marine Radio)

### What to Say:

- You will be asked, "What is your emergency?"
- You should report the nature of the accident.
  - For example, "There has been a boating accident and there are rowers in the water"
- You may be asked:
  - Your location (name of river, landmarks)?
  - How many people are involved and is anybody missing?
  - Age and ability of people?
  - Are victims conscious or unconscious?
  - Are victims breathing or not breathing?
  - Is CPR being performed?
  - Is CPR required?
  - Time of incident?
  - How many boats are involved?
  - The name of a contact person and the contact information?
  - Will there be someone to meet the paramedics?
  - If you are at the boathouse or on shore that a land based crew will be sent.
  - If you are in the middle of the river and need to have rescue sent by water, you need to request this. An EMS supervisor will make the decision.
- IDENTIFY YOURSELF AND YOUR LOCATION:
  - If you are at the boathouse, you may say " I am calling from the Three Rivers Rowing Boathouse. The boathouse is located at the up river end of Washington's Landing (Herr's Island) on the Allegheny River, accessible from the north end of the 31st Street Bridge. The boathouse docks are located in the channel between the island and the north shore of the river" or
  - "I am calling from Three Rivers Rowing Association, at the end of Riverfront Park in Millvale."
- IDENTIFY THE MEANS BY WHICH EMS WILL CONTACT YOU:
  - You may say, " My mobile/cell phone number is..."
  - The office telephone number at Three Rivers Rowing Boathouse is 412- 231-8772.
    - Indicate your use of marine radio and channel, if applicable.

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- IDENTIFY WHICH TELEPHONE YOU WILL BE ATTENDING:
  - Cell Phone or
  - Office phone or
  - Marine Radio
- REQUEST AMBULANCE AND/OR RIVER RESCUE AS REQUIRED

### **Additional Safety Guidelines**

#### **General Guidelines:**

- Under no circumstances should a rower or paddler in the water leave the floating boat.
  - If a swamped boat seems to be a swimmable distance from shore, the rower or paddler should swim the boat to shore. Do not leave your flotation, even if you consider yourself to be a strong swimmer.
  - The only exception to this would be if you are faced with a worse life-threatening danger by staying with the boat
    - for example if you are in the path of a barge and cannot swim the boat away fast enough to avoid being hit.
- When someone gives the command “Hold the boat” or ‘WAY ENOUGH - HOLD WATER’. Don’t ask questions; just respond immediately by stopping all forward body movement. Square the blades quickly into the water to bring the boat to a halt.
- Use these distress signals to communicate to other boats:
  - wave your arms or a shirt above your head
  - raise one oar or paddle in the air (this method preferable only in eights or doubles and quads)
  - use air horn/whistle, or marine radio.

#### **Person Overboard Guidelines:**

- If a rower or paddler, drummer, or steerer is unexpectedly thrown from a boat, immediately call the command “Hold the boat” or ‘WAY ENOUGH - HOLD WATER’ and signal the safety launch.
- In a dragon boat, the person in the water should swim or move to the center of the boat; with paddlers on the opposite side leaning slightly out, the paddlers in rows 5 and 6 pull the ejected person in together.
  - The command for all other paddlers not directly involved in the retrieval to have their paddles on the water is also recommended.
- In an eight or quad, the rower should remain close to the shell and not try to swim away, but tread water, moving no more than necessary.
  - When the safety launch retrieves the rower, the Coach determines whether the rower will return to the shell.

#### **Rower or Paddler Injured Guidelines:**

- Immediate command “Hold the Boat” or ‘WAY ENOUGH’.
- Signal launch if first aid needed.
- Know who, if anyone, on your crew has first aid training
  - The crew leader, drummer, or steerer is in charge until the crew member with first aid training takes charge.

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**Shell Damaged, but afloat, on the water Guidelines:**

- Immediate command - 'WAY ENOUGH'.
- Make adjustments or signal launch for assistance.

**Shell or Dragon Boat Swamped Guidelines:**

- A boat is swamped when the interior water reaches the gunwales.
- Immediate command - 'WAY ENOUGH' or Hold the Boat.
- If rowers stay in the boat, the flotation in the bow and stern ends may cause the boat to break apart.
- If the boat is taking on excessive water, signal the safety launch and decide whether to get the paddlers, drummer, steerer, rowers and coxswain out of the boat. This decision will depend on various factors, including water temperature
- If the decision is made to get out of the boat:
  - Command - 'UNTIE' (Rowers)
    - Be prepared to assist someone who is having difficulty releasing his or her feet from the foot stretchers.
  - Then unload by pairs - starting in the middle of the boat - as soon as possible to avoid damage to the boat.
    - Pairs should form 'buddies' and keep watch on each other, Be certain all are accounted for. The Coxswain should buddy with the stern pair; the drummer should buddy with the bow pair and the helmsman buddies with the stern pair..
  - If rescue is not imminent, take the following steps :
    - Remove oars or place them parallel to the shell. Do not worry if the oars float away.
    - All persons should move to the ends of the shell (it is dangerous to roll a shell near riggers).
    - Roll the boat to form a more stable floatation platform, so rowers can either lie on top of the hull or buddies can hold onto each other across the hull.
      - Remember that body heat loss occurs 25 times faster in water.
    - Do not attempt to roll the boat if rescue is on the way as a launch can shuttle rowers to the nearest shore.
    - If the ends of the shell have filled with water, they must be drained before the boat can be removed from the water.
    - Remove the shell carefully to avoid injury or damage.

**If a sculler falls out of the shell Guidelines:**

- Entering the shell directly from the water can cause splashboard damage, so if re-entry is difficult, swim the boat to shore, lying on the stern, using the shell as a paddleboard.
- In cold weather, you can abandon your shell and lie on the stern deck of your buddy's boat to be taken to shore.
  - Loss of muscle control can occur very quickly and dramatically in cold water - stern deck rescue may be your only option.

**Shell or Dragon Boat Capsized Guidelines:**

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- Immediate command for shell - 'UNTIE'.
- For all boats: be sure that all paddlers, rowers and coxswain, drummer/steerer are accounted for.
- Stay with the boat until assistance arrives.
- Follow the same procedures as for a swamped shell.

**Shell Broken and Sinking Guidelines:**

- Immediate command - 'UNTIE'.
- Get out of the boat and follow the same procedures as for a swamped shell.
- Do not leave the floating boat.

**Another Boat in Distress Guidelines:**

- If a distress signal is seen and insufficient assistance is nearer that craft, maneuver your boat to the distressed boat.
- Attempt to summon other launches or stable boats with distress signals.
  - Call 911 or use Channel 16 on your Marine Radio
- Assist in any way that does not jeopardize the lives in your boat.

**Rowers/Paddlers In the Water Guidelines:**

- The launch should approach rowers or paddlers in the water from the leeward side, keeping the propeller away from anyone in the water.
- The engine should be turned off as soon as contact with the boat is made.
- Avoid overloading the launch.

**On Water Repairs Guidelines:**

- Shells should stay within hailing distance of the launch (or within radio contact).
- The launch has been outfitted to provide assistance to rowers and/or the shell if needed.
  - The tool box and coach's expertise are available for small equipment adjustments or breakdowns, which allows the shell to continue rowing after a short stop.
- If more serious needs arise, the launch and expert are there for rapid transportation.

**Dragon Boat Safety Rules for Emergency Situations**

Please view this link for Dragon Boat and Paddler Rules & Procedures: [Dragon Boat Rules & Guidelines](#)

**Best Practices: Good Rowing and Paddling**

- The safety of life is more precious than a few more minutes of practice.
- One of the greatest dangers while on the water is collision caused by limited vision or carelessness - either yours or another boat's.
- Great care should be taken when rowing or paddling in darkness or near darkness. Take extra care to look and listen.
- Before launching and after landing, place all oars clear of the dock.

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- Do not get too close to shore and known hazards. This includes marinas along the river; all shells and paddle boats should stay at least 100 feet away from all marinas whenever practicable.
- Only paddle or row in familiar waters.
- Make sure your lights are working and very visible. Spotlights in the launch are required while rowing/paddling in the dark and can be used to illuminate hazards, such as buoys and debris, and to signal other craft on the water, including barges and motorized craft.
- Warm-Up: Outings should gradually and safely build up to full intensity. Under no circumstances should a crew race or sprint upon initially entering the boat.
- Rowers in multi person boats should always be quiet and attentive to the Coxswain, Steerer, Coach or Crew Leader. All users of TRRA equipment must comply with instructions given by a Coach or Crew Leader.
- Keep oarlocks locked until the boat is securely alongside the dock.
- Keep at least one hand on the oar while on the water.
- Cool Down: Always 'paddle-down' at the end of your workout. It is important to your health that you do not race up to the dock.
  - Once the boat and oars or paddles have been stored, it is important to take another few minutes to go through your basic stretching exercises to heal any unnoticed strains or sprains that began during your paddle or row, thus eliminating soreness and unnecessary pain.

**Best Practices: Commands**

**Before getting into the boat, be sure you know:**

- Which seat and which side you are paddling or rowing- by number, and whether you are in the bow or stern pair/four.
- For rowers, the following basic rowing terminology:
  - BOW and STERN; PORT and STARBOARD
  - TIE IN and UNTIE; READY ALL , ROW; WAY ENOUGH; HOLD WATER
  - PORT (OR STARBOARD) TO ROW, STARBOARD (OR PORT) TO BACK
  - The terms WAY ENOUGH - HOLD WATER are used when the Coach, Crew Leader or coxswain wants a crew to stop immediately because of danger.
- Paddlers should be familiar with the "Hold the boat" or "Hold water" command, used by the drummer or steerer when the boat must stop immediately.

**Best Practices: Clothing**

- Wear several layers of clothing in cold weather.
- Wear flexible, moisture-wicking fabrics.
- Avoid loose-fitting clothing in rowing shells, which can get stuck in the tracks.
- Wear high-visibility top layers whenever possible.
  - This will be a requirement in 2021 for all rowers and paddlers on the water in low light conditions.

**Best Practices: Coxswains, Steerers, kayakers and Scullers**

- All coxswains, steerers, kayakers, and scullers should know the hazards and traffic patterns of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers, and where practices are planned. (Appendix C -River Maps)

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- Stay clear of bridge abutments, barges and other man-made or natural obstacles.
  - Do not stop or turn under any bridges or near any such obstacles.
- Make frequent checks on both sides of the boat and to the rear and listen for other river traffic.
- Each rower is responsible and accountable for their own rigging, foot stretcher, seat, slide and blade, and must check to ensure that all equipment is functioning properly before leaving the dock.
  - If in doubt, ask the Coach or Crew Leader.
- Any deficiencies that may result in further damage to the equipment or endanger safe operation must be repaired before launching.
- Check the following before launching:
  - there is no damage to the hull, steering mechanisms, or structural support sections of the boat
  - the shell is equipped with a bow ball, heel tie-downs, and any other safety equipment appropriate to the shell
  - you have the correct oar and the collar is tight
  - nuts on the rigging are tight, the position of the foot stretcher and the smoothness of your slide are correct
  - forward ends of the slides are blunt and will not gouge your calves
  - you are wearing socks.
  - **Shoes should not be worn in any seat of any boat that already has a set of shoes.**
  - water bottles, gloves, tape, sun glasses, sun screen, extra clothing and hats are in the boat, if needed

**Best Practices: Weather**

- WEATHER CONDITIONS - be aware of them.
  - Always check the weather report before going out using one of the official TRRA Apps.
  - Watch for gathering clouds, changes in wind speed and direction, temperature changes, other boats returning home and debris.
  - **Do not row in whitecaps under any circumstances.** Paddlers should exercise extreme caution.
- If sudden winds come up, return to the boathouse if the trip is safe (look for the calmest water), or take the boat to the nearest suitable shore and wait for the winds to die down.
- Try to minimize equipment damage, but remember that you are more valuable than your boat.
- FOG: Do not row or paddle in fog, unless your visibility is at least 100 yards.
  - Be sure to have land reference points in front and at least one shore in sight.
  - If fog sets in while you are on the water, move slowly and be prepared to stop quickly.
  - Follow the shore back to the boathouse, as far as possible.
  - In situations of poor visibility, use your sound-making device (horn, whistle) to advise other boats of your location. Use the following signals:

Type of Boat	Signal
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Shells, Kayaks, Outrigger Canoes & Dragon Boats	1 prolonged blast followed by 2 short blasts at 2' intervals
Safety Launches in Motion	1 long blast every two minutes
Safety Launches stopped in the water	2 long blasts (with 2 seconds between blasts) every two minutes.

- **Lightning:** Do not row or paddle in an electrical storm.
  - If you are on the water and see lightning, hear thunder, or notice your hair standing on end with static electricity, head for the nearest shore.
  - If the storm is not yet upon you, stay close to the shore and quickly return to the boathouse.
  - If the storm is upon you, take the boat ashore and wait for the storm to pass.
  - Wait at least 30 minutes or more after hearing thunder before launching boats.
- **Waves** are generated by winds, tides, currents or wakes from passing boats.
  - When turning in waves, take particular care. Spend as little time as possible perpendicular to the current or wind direction, since the boat is very vulnerable in this position. Keep the boat absolutely level through the turn. If need be, use half the crew to set the boat level and the rest to turn.
  - Paddlers should turn their boats into the wake and keep paddling at a steady pace.
  - Rowers: If wakes are lower than the gunwale and widely spaced, continue to row without course adjustment.
  - Deep and closely spaced wakes that are lower than the gunwale may be taken at a 90 degree angle.
  - If approaching wakes are higher than the gunwale, the shell should be turned parallel to the wake to avoid having parts of the shell unsupported by the water (shells can split under these conditions).
    - Rowers should stop rowing and lean away from the approaching wake, lifting the gunwale on the wake side slightly.

**APPENDICES**

**A. SAFETY MATRIX**

Click the link below for the current Safety Matrix:

- [TRRA Rowing Safety Matrix](#)
- [TRRA Paddling Safety Matrix](#)

**B. RIVERMAPS**

Click here for the current River Maps: **LINKS COMING SOON.**

**RIVER DIAGRAM OF RECOMMENDED LOCATIONS TO BEACH WATERCRAFT**

- Heinz Field, 100 Art Rooney Avenue, Pgh, PA 15212 (40.4448 Lat, -80.0147

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Long)

- Sharpsburg Island Marina (Allegheny River at Sharpsburg), 110 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Sharpsburg, PA 15215 (40.4933 Lat, -79.9295 Long)
- Newport Marina (Ohio River at West End Bridge), 929 W North Ave, Pgh, PA 15233 (Approx. 40.4503 Lat, -80.0305 Long)
- Southside Riverfront Park, Pittsburgh, PA 15203 (40.4324Lat, -79.9750 Long)
- South Shore Riverfront Park, 2701 S Water St, Pgh, PA 15203 (40.4293 Lat, -79.9647 Long)

**C. INCIDENT REPORT FORM**

Click here for the current Incident Report Form: [Incident Report Form](#)

**D. EQUIPMENT DAMAGE/MAINTENANCE**

Click here for the current Equipment Damage Form: **LINKS COMING SOON.**

**E. ZONE 5 APPLICATION LETTER**

Click here for the current Letter: [Zone 5 Application Letter](#)

**F. Safety Violations And Penalties**

Click here for the current document: [Safety Violations & Penalties](#)

**G. Dragon Boat Safety Rules & Guidelines for Emergency Situations**

Click here for the current document: [Dragon Boat Rules & Guidelines](#)