

The Winter Dress Code for Hampton Roads Rowing Club

Coxes first

You are the person most at risk in the boat because the faster the boat goes, the greater the Wind Chill factor, you can be on the verge of Hypothermia so know the signs – losing focus, tunnel vision, not able to take command, no longer shivering. Do not put yourself at risk, YOU are always more important than the training so when you feel the first nip in your toes or fingers, take action. Tell the Coach and the crew.

You must have a Life Jacket or PFD on and have it properly fastened. You cannot wear long or heavy boots – you don't want to get pulled down if you land in the water.

Read all the various Safety Policies and documents available; FISA, CARA, ARA.

Have your mobile phone with you but it's only to be used for safety purposes, (absolutely no other calls) and keep it in a waterproof container that can be anchored in the boat. Make sure all your clothes are waterproof and warm. Invest in really good ski wear and check that the clothes are viable for below freezing temperatures -its better to be too hot than cold, you are the Master of your Craft and must be alert and proactive at all times and in all situations. You can buy sachets of hand and feet warmers and put them in your socks and mitts. Keep your hands in the boat and dry and protect your face and eyes from the wind chill. Bow loaders are colder than stern loaders so make sure you have carpet, felt, wool or a good insulator under you

So, use your common sense, good judgment and leadership qualities and-

1. Do not take any risks or chances. When in doubt refuse to go out
2. At the boathouse, get your crew warm before they lift the boat out. If they are not properly dressed, take a strong line and get the Coach/Club Officials to back you. Avoid having your crew hanging around inactive – they can go warm up on the ergs.
3. Have a bag to put in water bottles, extra kit and all the other paraphernalia that's needed
4. Make sure your Cox box, speakers and rudder are in perfect working order. If not, get them fixed properly now.
5. Make sure your crew have checked the equipment especially Heel restraints, bow ball, hatch covers, buoyancy chambers, top nuts and such.
6. Fill in the Risk Assessment Form, be aware of weather advisories and check wind Chill.
7. Sign out on the Board – put the direction you'll be traveling in and any special notes that are needed

8. Make sure you know where the Safety Launch is going to be, what the training is and what special precautions or actions may be needed
9. From Hands On until the boat is back in the boathouse, keep your crew warm and involved.
10. Get on the water quickly and get all the crew rowing as soon as you can.
11. Get them all well warmed up before you stop quickly to take off kit and make sure they stow stuff well. You can use the extra kit to stash around you but make sure it would not impede you if you had to get out quickly.
12. Avoid exercises where they'll soak each other, where the boat is badly off balanced or crew members sit out for a long time
13. Be aware that shallow water will cool down quicker and heat up quicker than the main channel, so there is more likelihood of solid/iced matter near the bank, on the inside of bends, under bridges etc
14. Follow the Rules of the Water and keep alert for other users
15. Keep your crew moving but remember they still have to hydrate so either have very quick stops or drop out pairs
16. Know and understand the training for that outing. Ask for clarification, discuss exactly where each piece will start, make sure you can follow the training pattern safely in the circulation pattern you have.
17. Know how far the different aspects of the training will take you and where and how you have to turn the boat along the route.
18. Know your own physical limitations and turn back immediately if you feel concern.
19. Keep in touch with the Safety Boat so know the cell phone number of the person in charge there. Let them know if you have a problem or are deviating from the expected and agreed pattern of the outing.
20. Know the Safe Houses along the rowing route where you could land your crew in an emergency
21. When in doubt don't go out. If conditions change or there is a problem, turn back, shorten an outing, and keep your athletes safe. In Safety matters you can always over rule the Coach but tell the Coach what you're doing.
22. Take extra care coming into the dock when you and your athletes' concentration may be waning.
23. Take care getting out of the boat and warm up toes, feet etc on the dock while the rowers don all kit and get the oars out. If you're getting cold, tell the crew/coach and go immediately into the boathouse to warm, someone else can get the boat in. Make sure the boat is cleaned and dried well, be sparing with the water if there is a danger of ice forming on the ground, etc.

Coaches/ Launch Drivers/Passengers

At all times, the Launch is a Safety Boat first and foremost so make sure you have on board a full Launch Kit, adequate life jackets for all the crews, lights, whistle, ladder, tools, thermal blankets, oar, ropes etc and a working cell phone.

Know the Emergency Contact Numbers and your coxes numbers.

Know your crews, what their limitations are, and support the coxes. They are most at risk so keep talking to them and getting eye contact. Watch for signs of inattention or confusion in case they are borderline hypothermic. Keep an eye on the smaller, thinner less fit or less experienced rowers. These people may not be generating or retaining enough body warmth.

Make sure your coxes and rowers are properly dressed and ready for the demands of the outing. Be particularly wary of new people, substitutes etc filling in for a session. Change the training and goals of the session to suit.

Limit YOUR talking time on the water so the athletes don't get cold Keep them moving.

Be conscious of poor technique or unusual behaviour – could be a sign that your athlete is struggling with conditions.

Avoid loading the launch with extra people. You may need that space for a cox or rower. If you pull the cox out, replace them with a competent and warmly dressed rower and proceed back at a safe speed – remember wind chill.

Always be aware of wake especially around inexperienced crews, scullers and coxes. Bring a thermos flask with a hot drink so you can keep yourself and the coxes warm. Wear warm and waterproof clothing and a Life Jacket or PFD, float coat, survival suit etc properly fastened. Be aware of your own limitations and set a good example.

Watch out for hazards for the boats.

Be careful coming back into the dock, watch for signs of cold etc from the cox. Take care getting out of the launch you.

Get the equipment away quickly and safely. Don't let people waste time.

Rowers next

Now that so many of you have stocked up your wardrobe with the correct rowing specific clothes, this is really a matter of common sense but remember

1. You must be warm- limit the time standing waiting for others, don't keep people waiting for you, warm up on the erg, be better time keepers, be more organized, pull harder.
2. You must stay dry- don't splash so clean catches, tap your oar down, balance the boat off the water
3. You must be able to row safely- don't get caught in at the finish, don't wash out, FOCUS all the time, move down a level of boat so you're in a less tippy

boat, don't sub in boats of a standard too high, don't sub in if you've not been doing the training.

4. You must not interfere with others rowing safely- FOCUS all the time, DO NOT TALK in the boat, ever.
5. You must be able to survive in a swamping or capsize situation. When the water is below 10 degrees Celsius or 50 degrees Fahrenheit you have limited survival time so stay in the boat.
6. Make sure you know where the safety launch is and that you are in sight of it.
7. Know the piers and jetties that you could land at if there was a sudden emergency.

If you have ANY reservations about the conditions, equipment, crew, DO NOT GO OUT. Feel free to wear a life jacket or to have one or a buoyancy aid near you in the boat. You have to be able to swim a minimum of 50 meters in rowing clothing but if your swimming isn't strong, go to the Pool and improve it now and stay off the water until you can swim well.

So, no hooded tops hanging loose – the hood could choke you when water filled,

No full length front zips- you graze your thumbs so you shorten your stroke

No bulky jackets- shortens your stroke and increases the chances of you getting caught by the oar and thrown out the boat,

No baggy fleeces – hold on to water and get cold and heavy.

No gloves – use pogies, mitts so you can feel the oar.

The well dressed rower will be wearing

- layers of materials like wool, polypropylene, anything that “wicks” is best so go for words like Gortex, Thermal, Polartec, Hely Hansen etc. Cotton is not good
- close fitting tops – to trap air and keep sweat from freezing.
- several pairs of socks- not cotton ones, have them big enough to be able to wiggle your toes and long enough to cover ankles and lower shins
- thermal tights under tracksuit bottoms – no bare skin, loses heat really quickly
- a hat – the colder it is, the more heat you lose from the head, cover the ears but make sure you can still hear
- pogies to keep your fingers warm – slid them off when you're warm
- long sleeved tops – must cover your wrists so the ones with the thumb holes are excellent
- turtle or polo neck styles to cover your neck,
- long- backed tops to cover your lower back – Mind the Gap,
- Rowing Splashtop- sit on the backflap –or tuck it up so it doesn't get caught in your slide tracks.

- When you get back into the dock, put back on all your dry kit to keep warm, you will cool down really quickly, keep extra kit at the boathouse or in your car so you can always change completely after an outing. Have a warm drink available and somewhere warm to sit.

Scullers

Be more cautious than anyone else. When in doubt don't go out. When the water temperatures are 50 degrees F/10 degrees C, take stock of your skills and your steering. If you are not experienced, are worried about falling in, have not done the Capsize Drill, or have hit or nearly hit obstacles, be safe and stay off the water.

You can move down a level in the boats and take a more sturdy and easier balanced boat or go out in a crew boat especially the coxed quad but don't endanger others if your skill or fitness is not as high as theirs.

Don't go out alone, have a buddy to escort you, stay near the launch or in sight of people, make sure you know who else is out and where they are and when they are coming back. Know your own limitations and err on the side of sensible.

Be properly dressed, (see above,) keep moving and turn back in good time.

Be careful with your hands – especially finger tips- and make sure they stay warm – pogies will help but you must be able to feel the sculls so you don't catch crabs or increase your chances of dunking.