

# Radnor Girls Crew Club

## Safety Manual



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## Purpose

The purpose of the RGCC Safety Manual is to ensure a consistent approach to promoting a safe environment for RGCC athletes on and off the water and to provide a standard manner to respond to emergency situations.

## Contact Information

Conshohocken Police Department:	911 (emergency) 610-828-4032 (non-emergency)
Conshohocken Fire Department:	911 (emergency) 610-828-4095 (non-emergency)
Head Coach:	Travis Schilling, 603-266-8212
Assistant Coaches:	Annie Sniffen, 610-952-7207 Joe McCarrie, 215-582-9890 Will Leeser, 904-705-3197
RGCC President:	Meghan Johnson, 484-343-6227
RGCC Vice President:	Sarah Carroll, 610-937-9497
RHS Athletic Director:	Mike Friel, 610-688-8100 (main)
Hines Rowing Center Manager:	Lois Trench-Hines, 610-331-0885

## Safety Training

- A safety review session will be conducted at the start of each season (fall and spring). All coaches, athletes and at least one other RGCC board member (preferably President or Vice President) must attend. The purpose of the safety review meeting is to review the Safety Manual as well as any additional safety-related information (videos, presentations, etc.)

## Responsibilities of Various Parties

Ultimately, it is the coaches (specifically the head coach) who are responsible for ensuring a safe environment for the club's athletes, coaches and others, whether on water or on land. Following are specific responsibilities for various parties.

## Board of Directors/Safety Officer

- The Board of Directors shall provide the coaches and athletes with the facilities, equipment and supplies needed to ensure a safe operating environment.
- No less than annually, the Board shall appoint an officer of the club to serve as the Safety Officer for the current academic year. Among other duties, the Safety Officer shall oversee the review of the Safety Manual and, if necessary, make all appropriate revisions.
- At the beginning of each season, the Safety Officer:
  - Shall ensure that the RGCC Safety Manual is current and accessible to each athlete and parents via the website.
  - Shall ensure that the coaching staff conducts a Safety Review session. The Safety Officer has the authority to cancel rowing activities at any time if it is deemed that policies and procedures are not being followed or if any unsafe condition exists.
  - Shall ensure that the head coach has received an acknowledgement from each athlete and coach that they have read the RGCC Safety Manual before participating in on-the-water rowing activities.

- Shall ensure that the coaching staff has contact information, emergency contact information and permission to treat forms from each coach and athlete.

The Treasurer shall ensure liability insurance is always current and in effect. Liability insurance is provided through the club's USRowing organizational membership, which must be renewed before the end of each calendar year. If for any unforeseen circumstance there is a lapse in coverage, all club activities are to be suspended.

The secretary shall ensure that every athlete has properly submitted all required waivers (including the RGCC waiver and the USRowing waiver) and shall maintain a file including all signed forms.

### Coaches

- The head coach shall ensure that all athletes and coaches have acknowledged reading the RGCC Safety Manual before participating in on-water rowing activities. This acknowledgement may be given verbally at a practice session.
- The coaches shall ensure the RGCC Safety Manual and procedures are followed according to how they are defined in this document.
- The coaches shall ensure all rowing equipment is maintained with safety in mind and that unsafe equipment is prominently marked and removed from use.
- The coaches shall assist any athlete or coach in need of assistance, including calling 9-1-1 or other emergency help as required.
- The coaches shall be responsible for knowing the number of boats on the water during a rowing session, and that all boats have returned to the dock before ending the session.
- The coaches should ensure that a safety bag is loaded on each launch.
- The coaches shall ensure safe conduct of operations during a rowing session and that coxswains are observing the traffic patterns.

- The coaches have the authority to cancel rowing activities at any time if it is deemed that procedures and policies are not being followed or if any unsafe condition exists.
- The coaches shall provide assistance to any capsized boat, even if from another team. Coaches are reminded to stop at a safe distance and offer assistance. Approach with caution and in a controlled manner. Be aware of your prop!

#### Athletes: Rowers and Coxswains

- Every athlete shall familiarize herself with all of the contents of the RGCC Safety Manual, the RGCC Handbook and any additional rules, safety guidelines and notices that the club provides.
- Every athlete shall follow all of the club rules and Schuylkill River traffic patterns at all times.
- Every athlete shall follow the instructions of the club coaching staff and coxswains.
- Every athlete should consult a physician about engaging in any form of exercise, including rowing.
- Every athlete shall 1) disclose in her registration forms any and all conditions known at that time, 2) notify the coaches of any and all conditions known at *any* time, or 3) if she has any medical condition that could impair her ability to row or that requires special attention.
- Any athlete with special medical/health conditions who has been cleared to row shall take appropriate precautions (e.g., medications or devices) in the boat while rowing (e.g., asthma inhalers).
- Every athlete *must* pass the RGCC swim test (swim two lengths of a 25-yard pool and tread water for five minutes while fully clothed).
- Every athlete should inform the session coach of any unsafe condition or unsafe equipment she observes. If the athlete is uncomfortable informing the session coach, she should notify the Head Coach or a member of the Board of Directors.
- Every athlete is encouraged to share any safety suggestions she may have with the Board of Directors.

- Athletes who anticipate either rowing indoors or on the water during the year should attend the seasonal safety meeting.
- Every athlete shall ensure that rowing sessions do not commence or continue without a launch. No safety launch, no rowing! No crew/shell should be on the water without a safety launch close by. (A coach sitting in the coxswain's seat does not count as a safety launch.)
- Athletes should not change in their cars or in the parking lot.
- Athletes should not remain alone in the boathouse or parking lot, particularly after dark. Always be aware of your surroundings.

### Coxswains

- Coxswains should always direct the crew, the shell and others around the shell from the moment the shell is lifted from the rack or trailer until it is returned to the rack or trailer in a safe manner.
- Coxswains should ensure bow and stern ports/hatches are secure before launching.
- Coxswains should ensure that a properly outfitted cox kit is in the boat when it leaves the dock.
- Coxswains should ensure that heel tie-downs are in place and the heel of shoes cannot be raised more than three inches.
- Coxswains are to follow the traffic pattern at all times. The coxswain is responsible for being aware of, and avoiding, other traffic which may not be following the traffic pattern on the river.
- When rowing at facilities other than the Schuylkill River, coxswains should become thoroughly familiar with and adhere to the local traffic patterns and safety procedures.

### Crews

- Crews should not talk while the boat is moving. Doing so makes it harder to hear commands and distracts the coxswain from her primary job -- the safe guidance of the boat.
- Crews shall notify the coxswain immediately if they see a hazard or possible collision that they believe the coxswain does not see, or if the coxswain is in violation of adhering to the standard traffic pattern without explaining to the crew her intentions. An emergency supersedes the rule for a crew member not to speak in a moving boat.
- Crews shall inform the coxswain or a coach if they believe they hear thunder or see lightning.

#### Permission to Treat Form:

At all times, print-ready Radnor High School *Permission to Treat* Forms (PTFs) will be available to all athletes via the RGCC website. Athletes are required to provide a PTF for each season. No athlete will be permitted to participate in any practice (or race) without first providing a signed, current copy of the PTF as part of the registration packet. It is the responsibility of the Head Coach to ensure that the PTFs are readily accessible and stored in a secure location (e.g., a locker or locked car). Each season, the Head Coach should brief the coaching staff on known medical conditions of RGCC athletes that may require coach intervention or treatment (e.g., asthma, diabetes, epilepsy).

#### Safety Guidelines:

##### *On the Water*

- No rower or coxswain should ever leave a flotation device to swim to shore.
- Before entering the boat, ensure that all outboard oars are on the water.
- Rowers shall comply with instructions given by the coxswain or coaches.



- Rowers typically should keep at least one hand on the oar while on the water.
- After docking, do not pull an outboard oar in until everyone is out of the boat.
- Oarlocks shall remain locked until everyone is out of the shell.
- All shells must be equipped with a bow ball.
- All shells that row in darkness shall have fixed, flashing lights bow and stern.
- If a shell has lost a skeg while on the water, return to the dock immediately.
- Novice rowers and crews shall be accompanied by a launch at all times.
- Each coaching launch shall be equipped with a cell phone.
- Each launch shall be clearly marked in 3" high letters with RGCC.
- Launches shall be equipped with nine approved life jackets and one for each person in the launch.
- Launches shall be equipped with all equipment required by the US Coast Guard and the PA Fishing & Boat Commission, including red and green lights fore and a white light aft if operated during non-daylight hours. The Coast Guard requires the Commonwealth of PA registration sticker, the state-issued number in 3" high letters affixed to each side of the forward part of the boat, lifejackets, a sound-producing device for emergencies (horn, whistle, siren), navigation lights, and three hand-held red flares. In addition, each launch should carry an anchor with line affixed to the boat, a paddle, and a safety throw line (preferably with a hook for easy attachment to a shell).
- All launches shall be maintained and operated in accordance with local safety laws and regulations.
- All motor boats shall have 360 degrees of visibility.
- All motor boat drivers shall keep their wake to a minimum when passing other boats and shall proceed past neighboring boathouse slips at idling speeds with no wake.

- No motors brought to the river shall be in excess of 25 HP.
- Rowing is prohibited when the flow on the USGS website exceeds 18,000 cubic feet per second.
- Novices are cautioned NOT to row when the flow exceeds 8,000 cubic feet per second.
- All rowers *must* know how to swim.
- No athlete under the age of 14 shall be permitted to row unescorted.
- Coaches, rowers and coxswains must be aware of weather forecasts and should never row in dangerous conditions.
- Coaches should know the swimming abilities of all rowers.
- Swimming is NOT permitted off the docks.
- Coaches should be trained in first aid.
- Rowers of high school age are prohibited from rowing on the water from Thanksgiving Day until the third Saturday of the following February.

### *Land Training*

- All RGCC-organized land-based training requires the presence of at least one coach unless it is a practice organized by the captains (i.e., “captain’s practice”).
- A first aid kit shall be readily accessible during all land-based training activities.
- Athletes shall not engage in dangerous horseplay.

### Emergency Response

Medical emergencies include breathing cessation, severe bleeding, concussion with loss of consciousness, suspected neck or spinal injury, fracture, dislocation, eye or face injury, heat-related illness, and any other injury or illness resulting in poor vital signs such as decreased blood pressure, weak pulse, or signs of shock. In the event of a medical emergency, the following procedure must be followed:

1. The coach shall call 9-1-1.

2. The coach shall retrieve the appropriate PTF and have it available for the arrival of the Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
3. The coach shall not ride in the EMS vehicle unless there are other coaches that can remain with the team.
4. The parent/emergency contact on file shall be contacted/notified as soon as practicable.
5. The club President and Vice President shall be notified as soon as practicable.

A report identifying the potential cause of the emergency and details of the response shall be submitted to the Board and Hines Rowing Center within three days of the occurrence.

Violations:

Violations of the RGCC Safety Manual shall be reported to the RGCC Board of Directors by any athlete or coach noticing such violation. The RGCC Board of Directors will investigate the violation and determine how to remediate.

## **Appendix A: Weather-Related Health Emergencies**

### *Hypothermia*

Hypothermia is a condition that occurs when the temperature of the human body is lowered to a dangerous point due to exposure to cold and/or wet conditions. Cold temperatures and wet conditions work together to pull heat away from the body lowering the body's core temperature. Even in mild conditions, the addition of rain or submersion in cold water can sufficiently reduce body warmth to trigger hypothermic conditions in the body. A person's condition can degrade rapidly, impairing breathing and coordination, and make it impossible to swim or keep one's head above water. Emergency action needs to be taken no matter what the level of hypothermia.

### *Early Hypothermia*

Symptoms: Rapid shivering, numbness, loss of strength and coordination, semi-consciousness.

Action: Maintain open airway. Transfer to a warm environment as soon as possible. Remove wet clothing. Use blankets to help warm the individual. Warm torso area and head first. Seek medical attention.

### *Profound Hypothermia*

Symptoms: Person will be pale, stiff, and cold, unresponsive to stimuli and possibly unconscious. Little or no cardiac or respiratory activity will be present.

Action: Keep the person in a horizontal position, move or manipulate as gently as possible to prevent further heat loss, but DO NOT attempt to re-warm. Maintain open airway, and activate EMS procedures. Call for emergency help immediately.

### *Heat-Related Emergencies*

Higher temperatures and high humidity can lead to heat-related illnesses that coaches and rowers need to keep in mind. As humidity rises, the

body's ability to cool off through sweating is diminished since evaporation is limited. The best way to avoid heat-related injuries is to practice at cooler times of the day: early morning or late afternoon. The body needs time to acclimate to increased temperatures. Intake of fluids is also key and should be encouraged. Dehydration further impairs the body's ability to cool off.

There are two major heat-related illnesses to be aware of: *heat exhaustion* and *heat stroke*.

### *Heat Exhaustion*

Early Symptoms: Heavy sweating, cramps, fatigue, weakness, malaise, mild decrease in performance.

Action: Rest and fluid replacement. If there is a mild temperature elevation, an ice pack may be used to help cool the body to normal temperatures. Several days rest may be necessary, and rehydration is a priority.

### *Heat Stroke*

Early Symptoms: Confusion, nausea, vomiting, seizures. The victim loses consciousness. Body temperature rises as high as 106 degrees. Skin is dry and clammy.

Action: Get medical help immediately! Lower body temperature by immersing in water, maintain horizontal position of victim. Stop treatment when the victim is conscious.

## **Appendix B: Guidelines for Emergency Care for Specific Injuries/Illnesses**

### *Specific Injuries/Illnesses*

#### Spinal Injury

1. Check the airway, breathing and circulation, and administer CPR as needed.
2. Have someone else call Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
3. Support cervical spine by immobilizing the victim on a flat surface and providing lateral head support (positioning hands on side of head if cervical collar is not available) to keep head in midline. Do not leave this position until instructed to do so by the EMS crew.
4. Have someone else prevent or treat for shock while you maintain your position at the head.
5. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE THE ATHLETE** unless the athlete is in danger as a result of her location. (IF the athlete must be moved, proper backboard and cervical support **MUST** be used.)
6. Reassure the athlete to stay calm, and remain with her until EMS arrives.

#### Major Fractures

1. Activate EMS
2. Treat athlete for shock
3. Apply basic first aid
4. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REDUCE FRACTURE**
5. Splint, making sure the athlete continues to have a distal pulse (foot or wrist) and sensation
6. Transport athlete to the hospital

#### Major Joint Dislocations

1. Activate EMS
2. Treat athlete for shock
3. Apply basic first aid

4. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REDUCE FRACTURE
5. Splint, making sure the athlete continues to have a distal pulse (foot or wrist) and sensation
6. Transport athlete to the hospital

### Heat Illness

1. Remove athlete from heat
2. Remove excess clothing
3. Determine severity of the illness
4. Monitor ABCs (Airway, Breathing, Circulation)
5. Attempt to cool the body
6. Stay with athlete at all times
7. Activate EMS

### Cardiac Problems

1. Activate EMS
2. Check ABCs (Airway, Breathing, Circulation), and administer CPR as needed
3. Treat for shock
4. Put athlete in a comfortable position

### Any Other Emergency Situations

1. Activate EMS
2. Check athlete's ABCs (Airway, Breathing, Circulation)
3. Apply basic first aid
4. Prevent and/or treat for shock

### ***Recognition and Treatment of Shock***

1. Shock can develop when the heart pump fails to work properly, causing a reduction in the pressure of the circulating blood (i.e., heart attack) or as a result of a reduction in the volume of fluid circulating around the body (i.e., external or internal bleeding or loss of other bodily fluids through severe diarrhea, vomiting, or burns).

2. The initial signs of shock include:
  - a. Rapid pulse
  - b. Pale, grey skin, especially inside the lips. If pressure is applied to a fingernail or earlobe, it will not regain its color immediately.
  - c. Sweating and cold, clammy skin (sweat does not evaporate).
3. As shock develops, the following symptoms may appear:
  - a. Weakness and ginniness
  - b. Nausea, and sometimes, vomiting
  - c. Thirst
  - d. Rapid, shallow breathing
  - e. A weak pulse
  - f. Restless, anxiety and aggressiveness
  - g. "Air hunger" (yawning or gasping for air)
  - h. Unconscious
  - i. Heart cessation
4. Treatment for shock include:
  - Do NOT let the victim move unnecessarily, eat, drink, or smoke.
  - Do NOT leave the victim unattended. Reassure them constantly.
  - Treat any cause of shock which can be remedied (such as external bleeding).
  - Lay the victim down, keeping the head low.
  - Raise and support the victim's legs (be careful if suspecting a fracture).
  - Loosen tight clothing, braces, straps or belts, in order to reduce constriction at the neck, chest and waist.
  - Insulate the victim from cold, both above and below.
  - Activate EMS.
  - Check and record breathing, pulse and level of response. Be prepared to resuscitate the victim if necessary.

## **Appendix C: Capsize & Person Overboard Procedures**



*Note:* It is the responsibility of any coach to provide assistance to any capsized boat -- even if from another sport or a pleasure boat. Coaches are reminded to stop at a safe distance and offer assistance. Approach with caution and in a controlled manner. Be aware of your prop!

All crew members should be fully aware of what actions to take when a crew swamps, flips or capsizes.

**IMPORTANT: If rowers egress from a swamped boat,  
STAY WITH THE BOAT!**

*Shell Damaged and Not Sinking*

- Immediate command: "Weigh Enough!"
- Make adjustments and signal launch for assistance.

*Shell Swamped*

A shell is swamped when the interior water reaches the gunwales. If rowers stay in the boat, the floatation ends (bow and stern) may cause the boat to break apart.

- If the shell is swamped or taking excessive water, with rescue imminent:
  - Immediate command: "Weigh Enough!"
  - Coxswain directs rowers to untie, signals launch and unloads rowers by pairs -- starting in the middle of the boat -- as soon as possible in order to avoid damage to the boat.
  - Pairs should form "buddies" and keep a watch on each other. The coxswain should buddy with the stern pair.
  - Until otherwise directed by the coach in the launch,  
**STAY WITH THE BOAT!!**
- If rescue is not imminent, take the following steps:

- Remove oars or place them parallel to the shell. The bow four should move to the bow of the boat and the stern four with the coxswain should move to the stern of the boat. (It is dangerous to roll a shell when near the riggers.)
- Attempt to roll the boat in order to form a more stable floatation platform so that rowers can either lie on top of the hull or buddies can hold each other across the hull.
- DO NOT attempt to roll the boat if rescue is on the way. However, be aware that body heat loss occurs as much as 25 times faster in the water.
- The launch should shuttle rowers to the nearest shore. Be careful not to overload the launch.

In any of these events, the crew should remain with the shell! The shell will float (an important reason to close bow and stern ports before going on the water). Furthermore, the oars will act as floatation devices. If for some reason the shell sinks below the surface, the shell should be rolled so the bottom is facing the sky, as this traps air underneath the shell and increases buoyancy. At no time should any crew member leave the boat to swim to shore! A short swim can be far longer than it appears due to currents, wind, water temperature, or personal fatigue.

**Stay calm.** The first thing that should be done in a team boat is for the coxswain or bow person to get a headcount to make sure that all rowers are accounted for. The crew, while holding onto the shell, should attempt to get the attention of other crews, or coaches, on the water. Wave and make as much noise as is necessary to attract attention. If no crews or launches are on the water nearby, attracting the attention of people on shore is the next step.

If the water and air temperatures are low, then the crew members should move along the shell and huddle together in pairs near the middle of the shell. Efforts should be made to keep as much of the body out of the water

as possible. This can include draping oneself over the top of the hull. A minimum of movement is key to retaining body heat. Constantly check on crew mates and keep up communication.

To recap procedures:

1. Stay calm
2. Stay with the shell
3. Take a headcount
4. Pair up and keep communicating with each other
5. Attract attention of launches, crews, or people on shore
6. If need be, roll the shell over and drape body across the hull (sinking shell or cold conditions)
7. Wait for help

There is one other event that should be addressed that is similar to what was mentioned above: ***man overboard***. A violent crab by an oarsman can throw them out of the boat. In this situation, it is up to the ejected rower to stay below the surface of the water until the shell has passed (this avoids getting hit in the head by a fast moving rigger(s)). The crew should stop rowing and hold water immediately so they can lend assistance. The crew should get the attention of the coaches' launch while the rower treads water. In the event that a launch is not nearby, the crew can back up to the rower in question so the rower can use the shell as a floatation device. It is also feasible to pass an oar to the ejected rower, using the oar as a floatation device. Once removed from the water, the rower should be evaluated to determine if the rower is fit to continue or if a medical emergency is present.

#### **Appendix D: Recovery of a Flipped Shell**

Once all rowers who were involved in a capsized or swamping incident are accounted for and properly taken care of, the next step is to recover the

shell. Not only is this a valuable piece of gear, but it also creates a traffic hazard for other users of the lake/river.

There are very definite steps to go about getting a shell back to the house and out of the water without creating additional damage. First and foremost, slow down and assess the situation. One person needs to be in charge of the operation and give out direction to other helping parties.

Second, identify approximate wind speed and direction, current speed and direction, and other hazards. Once these details are in hand, decide how best to move into position to work on the shell. Move slowly! Start by recovering all gear that has floated away from the shell (e.g., loose oars, coxboxes, speed coaches) because recovery at a later time can be difficult. Clothes from the crew are secondary unless needed for emergency survival. An eight, or possibly even a four, may require two launches and experienced coaches. Determine if the shell is in danger of fully sinking due to damage, then proceed.

Third, if the shell is not already keel down, roll it so it is. Before doing so, remove the oars unless they are acting as floatation for a severely damaged shell. Loop a line through the bow or stroke seat foot stretcher and fasten securely. Alternatively, a line can be attached to the stern- or bow-most riggers (i.e., bow pair). Next, equalize and center the line by looping it around the bow or stern (depending on which foot stretcher you tied off to) and secure. Do this several times. Lead the remaining tow line out and attach to the stern of a launch. At a slow and controlled pace, move the launch away and toward the destination. As the launch gets underway, make sure that the prop is clear of the tow line.

Once the shell is back at the dock, the real work begins. Get as many people along the shell as possible, as this will be heavy work. Make sure that everyone lifts from the legs and not from the lower back. Everyone will lay hands on the shell and lift very slowly so that the dockside gunnel tilts

up and the waterside gunnel tilts toward the water. The idea here is to slowly drain as much water out of the shell as possible before attempting to lift the shell out of the water all the way. The waterside gunnel will still be in contact with the water. As people lift, the keel will be oriented so it is parallel to the dock. Once a significant amount of water has been drained in this manner, the shell can be lifted in a regular fashion. Alternatively, the shell can be placed back in the water and a water pumping device can be used to remove more excess water. The shell will still be heavy with water! Be careful.

The shell must now be lifted overhead. First, open the bow and stern deck ports. Alternating bow and stern, drop one end as low as possible while keeping the other end at heads. This will drain any excess water that is trapped in the boat. People will get wet during this process, so make sure that they have rain gear or extra clothing to change into during cold-weather times. The same basic procedures for towing the shell can be used for moving a slightly swamped shell (gunnels above water) or dry shell as well.