

RIVER TYNE ROWING CLUBS

SAFETY CODE

Revised 11 June 2010

This safety code is specific to the River Tyne between Redheugh Bridge and Wylam and should be read and operated in conjunction with:

British Rowing's "Row Safe: a guide to good practice in rowing"

Port of Tyne Authority's Guidelines for Recreational River Users
(includes a summary of the requirements for small boats set out in the International Regulations for preventing Collisions at Sea.)

These documents are accessible online.

We want everyone at our clubs to enjoy rowing on the Tyne and to be able to cope with its challenges. The Tyne is a great stretch of river for our sport but we have to respect its moods and other users and learn how to deal with the risks in an informed and sensible manner. With the sport increasing in popularity and many more rowing boats on the Tyne, our safety code is in everyone's best interests and must be observed.

This code has been jointly updated by the following rowing clubs based at Newburn and Ryton in 2009-10.

Tyne Rowing Club

Tyne United Rowing Club

Durham University BC

Durham Colleges Rowing

Newcastle University BC

Northumbria University BC

I certify that our club endorses the revised Tyne Code and map, and will promote its use and observance among our members.

Signed.....

Date.....

Name.....

Position.....

Club.....

1. INTRODUCTION

All clubs, rowers and coaches are expected to conform to the British Rowing “**Row Safe: a guide to good practice in rowing**”, a copy of which should be displayed in each of the premises. Please read it and act accordingly. Clubs should make every effort to ensure new, prospective and existing members, visitors and guests are aware of the code and its contents.

- At all times rowers should remain calm and courteous to all other river users and show due consideration. Remember that your outing is no more important than that of any other crew or boat also on the river.
- All clubs must ensure that their members, guests, visiting clubs or crews using their facilities are fully conversant with the safe rowing practices and club procedures on our stretch of the river Tyne.
- Leave details of your outing in the clubhouse with a list of names, route, distance, date and time. If you encounter difficulties while you are out, this information will help your club get you and your boat back safely.

2. DIRECTION OF ROWING

All crews must observe the navigation rules and pass port to port, or in rowing terms stroke side to stroke side. The rules are:

- Crews travelling downstream from west to east (from Wylam and Newburn to Scotswood or beyond) must keep to the south bank, on the Gateshead side of the river.
- Crews travelling upstream from east to west (from Scotswood to Newburn or Wylam) must keep to the north bank on the Newcastle side of the river.

As conditions are never the same from day to day the direction rule must be strictly observed during all training outings. Under no circumstances should any crew that is training disregard the direction rule particularly on the bends. Don't cut corners and remember that the River Tyne is very narrow in certain places at low tide.

Boats should keep as close as possible to the bank and overtaking craft should pass on the outside (toward the centre of the river) not the inside, when it is safe to do so and in accordance with the International regulations.

The only time these rules are relaxed is during a recognised competition.

3. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OUTINGS

- Outings should not commence in adverse conditions that include strong winds, flood conditions, ice floes, lightning, excessive drift wood, strong tides and/or currents, particularly after heavy rain. Tide and/or current running against a strong wind means there will be waves and increased risk of capsizing or swamping. When you see breaking waves on the Tyne (“white horses”), consider cancelling your outing.
- Conditions can change rapidly and outings should be terminated as soon as possible if conditions deteriorate.
- Conditions can also change as a result of the changes in the tides. Check tide times and the weather forecast. Conditions can deteriorate quickly, but they can also calm down if you wait for the tide to turn.
- Whenever possible, check conditions at Scotswood in advance of your outing.
- Do not row when there is ice forming or when there is thick fog or mist.
- Most crews will boat and land facing west into the prevailing wind and current. At busy times, and particularly when there are lots of small boats, care is needed to avoid blocking the arches of Newburn Bridge.
- All rowing boats are advised to use the centre arches of all the bridges, particularly Newburn Bridge, where there are landing steps close to the bridge on both sides of the river.
- All launches and powerboats must cut their wash when passing other crews and be particularly mindful of the reflected wash from the vertical wall sections of the river. The effect of wash for boats at the landing steps and slipway can be damaging to boats and dangerous for anyone attempting to boat and land.
- Coxed boats should make allowances for coxless boats that may be training in the same area, particularly on the bends and shout a warning if necessary.
- Stationary and turning crews should keep a lookout for other crews and either move out of their way or shout a warning in sufficient time for the other crew to take avoiding action.
- Don't try to turn a boat under or close to Newburn Bridge. Beginners should always stay well clear of Newburn Bridge and the currents there. All boats should avoid turning in the stretch between Tyne/Tyne United and Newcastle University steps.

4. BEGINNERS ZONE

- Crews and launches are asked to avoid fast training between Newburn Bridge and the Reigh Burn, which joins the Tyne just downstream of the slipway at Tyne Riverside Country Park. Adult and junior beginners use this area which is within clear view of the clubs and within easy reach in the event of a difficulty or capsize. You can also expect to encounter beginners in canoes and bell-boats, launching from the slipway. Beginners will be less confident about manoeuvring boats and their progress may be unpredictable. This is also the area of the river where boats are landing and leaving the landing steps and slipway: some will need to cross the river here. Experienced crews are asked to respect the needs of learners and avoid intimidating those taking their first nervous strokes in a boat. Launch drivers should take particular care with speed and wash. “Fast training” means you are travelling at a speed that is potentially dangerous to other river users. Please be ready to slow down and stop when necessary.
- Beginners and novices will use the stretch between the White House at Ryton and the downstream end of the straight as they develop skills, usually under instruction from a coach. For novices this area is still only a short distance from the clubs and the banksides are accessible in the event of a problem. All crews tend to do their warm-up and warm-down in this stretch. Competitive crews are advised to plan their training exercises in the less busy sections of the Tyne. The busiest times are at weekends and evenings, but as the sport increases in popularity and clubs expand their membership, more people can be expected on the water at all times, all year round, including weekdays during normal working hours. Crews rowing up to Wylam or down to Scotswood early at weekends are warned to slow down on their return as there will be more novices on the river later in the morning.
- The port of Tyne has defined stretches of the Tyne as “speed zones” for power boat enthusiasts. On all non-designated parts of the Tyne the speed limit is 6 knots. This is about 7 miles per hour or 11 kilometres per hour.
- Remember that there are other water-sports beginners and youngsters on the river: watch for Sea Cadets at Derwenthaugh; water skiers, sailors, dragon boats and canoes at Newburn and since the Tyne is a tidal and therefore open access river, different users can be encountered anywhere and at any time.

5. NEWBURN WATER SKI CLUB SPEED ZONE

- The allocated water ski area extends from the Newburn stream - just downstream of the slipway at Newburn Country Park and some 2.5 kilometres upstream to the Ryton Golf Course bend and includes an event and practise area. A maximum of six power boats are permitted and skiing is for club members only.
- Water skiing is only possible and permitted up to 3 hours either side of high tide. Unlike rowers, the ski club can only use their allocated area and they will normally ski there on summer evenings and at weekends when the tide is high enough. Water-skiers do not ski after dark and rarely during the winter months. Whilst an occasional rowing boat in the area will not be a problem, large numbers of rowing boats will make it impossible for the water skiers to operate safely.
- The Water Ski Club have agreed to display a warning flag affixed to the red and white speed limit sign at Newburn Country Park when their powerboats are on the water. Rowing boats are asked to avoid the waterski area when the ski-club are on the water and respect their members' rights to enjoy their sport at Ryton.

6. ROWING AFTER DARK

- Navigation rules state that boats must show a white light at night, visible through 360 degrees. (A red flashing light denotes a wreck)
- Coaching launches must have, as a minimum, a 360 degree white light at night.
- At night or dusk, all boats must be clearly lit both fore and aft, for the duration of the outing.
- Crews are advised to wear white and/or bright visible kit if rowing in the dark or at dusk.
- Crews planning a night outing should ensure that at least 50% of the crew and the cox is experienced in rowing/sculling and familiar with the Tyne. Everyone should be over 18.
- Think carefully about the need to go out at night – it is more hazardous in the dark and not recommended upstream of the Newburn slipway where there are no buildings or streetlights.

7. OTHER GENERAL ITEMS TO CONSIDER:

- There is a power-boating area downstream from Derwenthough Marina, east of the Scotswood Road Bridge, and a designated jet skis area. This part of the Tyne is wider and conditions are often choppier there.
- Sailing races are held occasionally, launching from Newburn slipway. These are usually on two Sundays per year and warnings are issued to the Water Safety Advisers in advance. As with the skiers, rowers are asked to avoid the Ryton area during the sailing races.
- Any powerboats, jet skis or other craft seen speeding outside their permitted areas and posing a hazard to other river users should be reported to your Water Safety Adviser. Take details and photos if possible. The reports should be passed on to the Port of Tyne Authority for action.
- Crews are recommended to go no further downstream than the Redheugh Bridge unless accompanied by a launch and the launch crew/coach should assess conditions downstream, before allowing crews to proceed.
- If heading downstream (east) of Scotswood Bridge, single scullers are advised to be in a group of at least three for safety.
- There are number of permanent posts, buoys, moored boats, jetties, pontoons and other river hazards, many of which are indicated on maps, which are displayed in the boathouses and attached to these notes. These obstructions are more dangerous at different stages of the tide: for example posts may be just covered by water. The ebb tide is particularly strong past the sea cadets pontoon at Derwenthough.
- Trees and other obstructions can become lodged from time to time. These and any other hazards to navigation should be reported to your Water Safety Adviser who can warn others and alert the Port of Tyne Authority who will try to clear the obstruction.
- At low tides there are extensive mud flats downstream of Newburn Bridge and , especially at the Stella bends, at Lemington Gut and east of Scotswood Bridge. These will not support a person's weight if they are attempting to cross on foot. The mudflats are difficult to see in the dark, at dusk or in rain or mist.
- The river is reduced to a narrow channel in places at low tide. Please do not stop at the Stella bends, between the downstream end of the Newburn Straight and the top of the Blaydon Straight, at or close to low tide.

- All steps below the high tide level can be wet, muddy and slippery and are prone to icing in winter and algal growth in summer.
- When there are exceptionally high tides or heavy rainfall, the river can be affected by large quantities of debris such as fallen trees, logs, and large masses of vegetation, which can endanger your boat and affect steering.
- At low tides and dropping tides the river is very shallow in places, with exposed stone and gravel banks upstream (west) of the 'White House' at Ryton. As a general guide, do not start to row upstream of the White House except on a rising tide and complete your outing within 1 hour of high tide. The tidal level marker on the north side of the river opposite the White House must show a minimum of 4 metres height on a rising tide, 4.5 metres on a falling tide for you to have sufficient water to be able to row upstream. (If all of the short set of steps are out of the water just west of the Tyne RC main steps, on a falling tide, then an outing upstream of the White House will not be possible.)
- Do not row upstream of Dial Cottage (George Stephenson's birthplace) and the electricity wires which cross the Tyne at this point. There are shallows and rapids between here and Wylam Bridge.
- Beware overhanging trees and large rocks on the banks upstream of the White House at Ryton.
- Some parts of the Tyne have no means of access for the public on foot or cycle and very few areas are accessible for a vehicle. Steps and access routes are listed in the annex and indicated on the map.
- Downstream of the Newburn straight access to the river Tyne becomes increasingly difficult. Several stretches have high and inaccessible vertical walls. In the event of an accident or grounding, there are very few places to get ashore safely. In addition there are long stretches where there is no public access along the river bank and you will not be seen by a member of the public on the shore if you get into difficulty. Please plan your route bearing this and the capabilities and experience of your crew members in mind.
- If in doubt, please ask advice from those with experience of the river, before starting an outing.

8. REMINDERS

- **CONSIDER OTHERS** (River users, onlookers and wildlife)
- **SAFETY CHECKS** (Check all your equipment before you go out and during the outing and always consider the conditions)
- **SHOUT WARNINGS – LOUDLY!**
- **DON'T TAKE UNNECESSARY RISKS** and please warn others if you think they may be at risk. Set a good example to those who may be less familiar with the sport and the River Tyne. Remember that this is a large tidal river, conditions are very variable, and there are hazards. Know the risks and manage them at an acceptable level.

IF IN DOUBT DON'T GO OUT

**Help keep our sport a safe and successful one and
maintain courtesy and cooperation between all of the
clubs rowing and boating on the River Tyne**

ANNEXE A

ALTERNATIVE STEPS

There are steps at:

- Tyne Rowing Club
- Tyne United Rowing Club
- Newcastle University Rowing Club
- A slipway at Newburn Country Park
- A slipway at Ryton – White House
- A slipway at Tyne Cruising Club, Lemington
- Old Newcastle Royal Grammar School Boathouse by Blaydon Bridge
- Derwenthough Marina

PUBLIC ACCESS ALONG THE RIVER TYNE

- Tyne Riverside Country Park (Newburn Bridge to Wylam Bridge, on both sides of the river. Access on foot to the water possible with care.)
- Tyne Riverside Country Park slipway (Access to the water possible for vehicles)
- South bank of the Newburn “straight” from Newburn Bridge to a point approximately 1.2 kilometres downstream.
- Newburn Riverside Cycleway (North bank from downstream end of the Newburn “straight” to Lemington Point. Limited access to the water at certain points, with care.)
- Scotswood Road (North bank, promenade from Lemington Point to A1/Denton Road junction. No access to the water.)
- Below A695 Scotswood Bridge. (North bank no access to the water)
- Blaydonhaugh Riverside Cycleway (South bank from Patterson Street –vehicle access possible- to Derwenthough Marina.)
- Derwenthough Marina (South bank, access to water for vehicles at slipway.)
- Riverside at Dunston (South bank, from River Derwent to Delta Bank /Mandela Way/Handy Drive.
- Newcastle Business Park and Quayside (North bank promenade from William Armstrong Drive to Newcastle City Centre. No access to the water.)