



UML BELLEGARDE BOATHOUSE : SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The location of the Boathouse presents several safety challenges, particularly in the spring—varying flow rates, debris, pleasure and power boats, etc. This safety manual establishes the policies and procedures governing the conduct of all tenants of UML Boathouse. It is drawn from the expertise and experience of programs throughout the United States—i.e. Coast Guard navigation rules, US Rowing recommendations and other club programs that share a similar profile and interest level.

Failure to comply with the procedures in this plan will result in follow-up and disciplinary sanctions with the individuals or groups involved.

Having a Safe Mind Set

- All user groups must display a commitment to the safety of their participants/coaches at all times.
- PFDs are required for launch operators.
- Safe operator training is required prior to using a launch.
- It is highly recommended that weather and water conditions be monitored at all times and unsafe conditions be avoided.
- Safety lights are required for all boats/rowers on the water within a ½ hour of sunrise and sunset.
- It is strongly recommended that all rowers and launch operators pass a swim test and watch the US Rowing Safety Video.
- Compliance with all local and Federal boating regulations is required.

Accountability

Coaches will ensure that their staff and rowers are properly trained, and that they observe all safety rules and procedures at all times. The head coach or designee will secure the facility after practice and ensure all students have left the facility.

Rowers are responsible for their own safe behavior and are expected to learn safety rules and procedures, to conduct themselves safely at all times, and to be alerted to unsafe conditions and conduct.

All rowers and coaches must sign a statement acknowledging that they have reviewed and understand the boathouse safety policies.

Use of Boathouse and Equipment

Use of the Boathouse shall be restricted to members of approved programs. Individual or unsupervised workouts of anyone under 18 are not permitted at any time. Student rowers are not permitted in the Boathouse outside of program hours except for activities approved by the Boathouse Coordinator.

A bulletin board will be mounted in a prominent place in the boathouse with posting of safety rules, notices, updates and emergency numbers and procedures. Rowers and coaches will check this board prior to launching.

Each program shall use their own equipment. Any sharing of equipment must be documented and confirmed by all parties involved.

Each program shall store rowing equipment in their designated area. Approval for additional space shall come from the Boathouse Coordinator.

Bay doors are to be closed and locked when departing. Turn Boathouse lights off.

Aisles will be kept free of obstacles at all times.

Launches will be locked up and secured in the designated areas. Coaches are responsible for the removal of water from launches in the event of rain storms.

All launches must maintain the following safety equipment in the launch at all times:

- PFD's for all rowers being coached
- Paddle
- Safety line
- Water bailer
- Emergency kit and blankets
- Air horn, whistle or other warning device
- Cell phone or other emergency communication equipment

It is highly recommended that coxswains shall wear PFD's and carry a whistle or any other emergency communication device.

Gas storage will be in the designated locker and returned to the storage cabinet after each use.

A First Aid kit will be maintained in the Boathouse and inspected regularly.

Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in or around the boathouse.

External storage of trailers, launches, etc is prohibited unless there is written permission from the Boathouse Coordinator.

Personal Flotation Devices

Inflatable PFDs must be inspected and maintained as instructed in the owner's manual.

Coaches are required to wear PFD when on the water.

PROCEDURES AND RECORDKEEPING

Coaches shall conduct a safety orientation for all rowers and coxswains at the beginning of the season, including the US Rowing Safety video. Topics will include:

- Rescue procedures on the water, including the donning of PFD's
- Signs and symptoms of hypothermia
- Recognition of unsafe water conditions
- Proper navigation rules, boat handling, and water hazards due to varying water levels
- Launching and docking procedures
- Boathouse safety policies

All rowers must complete a swimming test, demonstrating the ability to tread water, to put on a PFD while treading water, and to swim a designated distance. Certificate of completion of the swim test will be kept on file, at the Boathouse, for as long as the rower is a member of the program.

Anyone injured during a rowing activity or on the Boathouse grounds will report the injury to the coach, safety director or Boathouse Director. A formal incident report must be submitted to the Boathouse Coordinator.

Weather and Water Conditions

Rowing is not permitted during hazardous conditions that ultimately pose a serious threat to rowers' safety. This includes high winds, strong currents, storm clouds, thunder, lightning or fog, or air freezing air temperatures. The Boathouse Director shall discuss these conditions with the Head Coaches and shall have ultimate authority to determine whether boats may or may not go on the water.

Thunderstorms/ Lightning: No rowing allowed if a thunderstorm warning exists for the immediate area. If a watch or warning is in the region but outside the immediate vicinity, rowing is restricted to the 2000 meter course area. Dock immediately at the first sign of lightning

If you are on the water during thunder/lightening storm, get off the water IMMEDIATELY and seek shelter in an open area.

(It is highly recommended that all coaches discuss and review Thunder/Lightening Evacuation Procedures at the beginning of the year. <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/myths.htm> is also a helpful website to discuss lightning safety issues.

30 minutes is the minimum wait time, post lightening/thunder storms, before rowing activity is allowed to resume.

High Winds: Novice boats will not launch in high wind conditions, defined as causing "white caps" on the water.

Fog: Rowing in fog is highly dangerous and only allowed if the Rourke Bridge is visible from the docks.

No racing allowed in the fog. If fog settles in while on the water, keep a land reference on one side and return to the dock. Make noise frequently with a sound device to warn other boats.

Water Temperature: When the water temperature is below 50 degrees, the risk of hypothermia is significant. No groups with less than four oars may launch unless under the direct supervision of a coach in a launch.

In the spring season, all crews and safety launches shall not row downstream beyond the Sampas Pavilion. This is particularly important when the safety lines are not in place.

Dock Operations

Launching: Rowing is only permitted when the docks have been properly installed and shall cease when the docks are removed.

Wet Launching is strictly prohibited (Refer to Appendix A).

Launching time shall be kept to a minimum and must clear 50 yards through Rourke Bridge before attempting to turn downstream.

Recovery: All shells shall travel 100 yards pass the docks, establish clearance from upstream traffic, turn and proceed upstream to the docks. Line up single file if multiple shells are waiting for dock space. Docking time must be kept to a minimum.

No member may get in the water without the explicit permission of the Boathouse Director. There will be no swimming, no throwing in of coxswains, any horseplay, etc.

Gates to dock must be closed and locked when unattended.

Appendix A: Wet Launching

Wet launching refers to walking the boat into the water without a fixed landing/ docking aid. As the name implies, the rowers take off their socks and shoes, roll up their pants/ tights, etc and walk into the water carrying the boat until it is deep enough to set the boat into the water.

The risk of wet launching includes: Cuts and scrapes due to slippery surfaces, submerged debris; slipping and falling into the water due to uneven and unpredictable surface area.

While this practice is not uncommon in warm water and air temperature, it poses a dangerous and unnecessary risk to the safety and welfare of the rower, especially in the spring when the water temperature is well below 50 degrees.

Wet launching is strictly prohibited at the UML Boathouse for the simple reason that the boat ramp is too short to allow a sixty foot shell to be placed parallel to the shore. Furthermore, the ramp is slippery and full of debris that will inevitably result in cuts and injuries to the rower.

Appendix B: River Debris/ High Flow Rate

The quantity of debris on the river is particularly high in the spring, especially when the river flow is high and swift.

A rise in the river level brings more debris (wood, fallen trees, etc) as it is lifted with the "tide" and carried downstream. The most debris is typically found in the first few days of rainfall, when the river level rises.

Increased flow rate means that that a disabled boat or launch, ejected rower, capsized boat, etc is carried downstream faster, increasing time in the water and risk of hypothermia, exhaustion, etc.

When these conditions exist, rowing shall be limited and determined by the UMass Lowell Head Women's Rowing Coach in consultation with the Boathouse Director.

Appendix C: 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. A person's condition can deteriorate rapidly, impairing breathing and coordination.

Early Hypothermia: Rapid shivering, numbness, and loss of strength and coordination, semi-consciousness

Action: Transfer to warm area as soon as possible. Remove wet clothing. Use blankets to help warm individuals. Warm the torso area first. Seek medical attention.

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

Action: Move or manipulate as gently as possible. Prevent further heat loss but DO NOT attempt to re-warm. Call for emergency help immediately!

Appendix D: Capsize Procedures and Person Overboard

All crew members should be fully aware and trained of what actions need to take place when crews swamp, flip, or capsizes. In any of these events, THE CREW SHALL REMAIN WITH THE SHELL AT ALL TIMES. At no time should any crew member leave the boat to swim to shore.

Emergency Capsize Procedures:

Account for all rowers and issue the PFD's

Calm the rowers and assure them that the boat and oars are floatation devices. If the boat appears to sink below the surface, remove the oars from the oar lock and roll the boat so that the bottom is facing the water which traps the air and increases buoyancy.

Have athletes climb on top of the shell as they wait for rescue

Call fellow coaches for help

Do not overload a launch. Remove the athletes from the shell and take them to shore if no other coaching launch is available to assist.

Coaches should not abandon their own crew to assist another coach with rescue. Have crews row to emergency scene and dock near shore, then proceed to help.

Man Overboard Procedures:

The boat should stop rowing immediately

Stop practice and steer to the victim and then turn off motor

Toss the victim a PFD and safety line

Do not get into the water unless there is no alternative

Pull the victim into launch and dress in warm, dry clothes if possible.

Appendix E: Launch Safety

This check list is to be reviewed at the beginning of each season (August and March) with all launch operators.

Launch Prep

Log Out / Keys
PFD's and paddle
Anchor and safety rope
Cell Phone or portable radios
First aid/ warm clothes/ spare food water kit
Tool Kit/ Spare Lights

Launch Start Up

Gas
Keys/ ignition
Bow/ Stern Light Check

Traffic Pattern/ Water Safety

Traffic Pattern on Merrimack River
Launch Wakes
Inclement Weather, especially fog, thunder and lightening
"Man overboard" Water Rescue
Incident Report

Docking

Cleat Ties and Lock up
Return of Gas, PFD's and Launch Keys
Logging in, Maintenance Log

Appendix F: Boathouse Orientation

All new boathouse users must be trained on the following items by their tenant group leaders.

- Alarm Arming and Disarming
- Boathouse Emergency Action Plan
- Safety Policies and Procedures
- Approved facility usage
- Storage of First Aid Kit, AED & Emergency Phone

Please sign below acknowledging that you have reviewed the boathouse safety policies.

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