

**ST. CATHARINES ROWING CLUB**  
**COLD WATER ON-WATER SAFETY CODE**

Organization Name	St. Catharines Rowing Club
Document Title	SCRC COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code
Approved by	SCRC Board of Directors
Effective Date	January 6, 2026
Review Date	Annually

Background

Rowing Canada Aviron, in its publication “Rowing Safely RCA Safety Requirements and Safety Guidelines”(April 29, 2022), requires that all member rowing clubs have an on-water “Safety Code” and a designated “Safety Advisor”. This is the St. Catharines Rowing Club’s (SCRC) On-Water Safety Code for *COLD WATER* Rowing. The SCRC Head Coach is the club’s Safety Advisor.

Safe enjoyment of the sport is the aim of the St. Catharines Rowing Club and personal safety is of paramount importance. Rowing is an outdoor water sport that carries inherent risks of personal injury and death either from a collision, or from drowning as a result of falling into the water. All risks, especially hypothermia, are heightened in COLD WATER conditions.

**This COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code is in effect when the temperature of the water in Martindale Pond is less than 11 degrees Celsius.**

The SCRC WARM WATER On-Water Safety Code for when the water temperature is 11 °C or greater can be found in a separate document.

The following are the rules that must be followed to comply with the COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code. The consequences of failing to comply with the rules are outlined at the end of the Code.

Policy Statement

**SWIM TEST AND SAFETY TRAINING**

- When Cold Water rules are in effect, *all* participants of the club’s on-water activities shall be able to swim. Non-swimmers will not be allowed to row or coxie. Details of the swimming ability requirements can be found in the SCRC Swim Test and “Ability to Swim/Attestation Form”.
- Each year all rowers, coxswains, coaches and safety boat drivers are to review the six (6) RCA on-line education modules “Rowing Safely” <https://safety.rowingcanada.org/en/#/> as part of the club’s membership registration process.

**LAUNCHES**

- Coach boats and safety boats, for the purposes of on-water coaching and safety, shall be regarded as the same type of vessel. They are referred to herein as “launches”.
- Each launch operator must ensure the launch under their control is in a well-maintained, serviceable and safe condition. Operators must report any mechanical/operational issues with a motor or launch immediately to the Club Captain.
- When in a launch, the first responsibility of the driver is safety for all. Any time there is an emergency with any club, any person, or any equipment, launch drivers are obligated to respond to someone in distress. In an emergency, any

coach from any club can use SCRC equipment to render assistance. In an emergency, safety comes first; the Club colours we wear do not restrict us from assisting a rower from another club who is in danger.

- There shall be a maximum of two persons on board a launch when being operated as a coach boat or safety boat. The exception to this is during an on-water rescue.
- The following must be carried on board each launch:
  - Launch drivers are to have with them their Pleasure Craft Operator Card (PCOC). (The Head Coach shall keep a copy of the PCOC on file);
  - Each person on board shall wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) or a floater suit of appropriate size. If a person on board is less than 16 years of age, the PFD shall be inherently buoyant;
  - Paddle;
  - Plastic or metal bailer with an opening of at least 65 cm<sup>2</sup> and a capacity of at least 750 ml;
  - 15 m buoyant heaving line;
  - Watertight flashlight;
  - Pealess whistle;
  - Reboarding device;
  - Navigation lights, if operated before sunrise or after sunset, or in periods of restricted visibility; and
  - Nine (9) PFD's for rowers on the water.
- Each launch driver shall affix the 'kill switch' to their person when operating the launch.

## **ROWING SHELLS**

- Prior to launching, rowing shells are to be checked by the user(s) to ensure that the shell meets the RCA Rules of Racing equipment requirements, that the hull and riggers are sound and any steering mechanism is functional. Crews must report any mechanical/operational issues to their coach or to the Head Coach immediately.
- The following equipment must be carried on board:
  - A pealess whistle; and
  - A white light if the shell is operated after sunset or before sunrise or in periods of restricted visibility.
- Coxswains are encouraged to wear a PFD or a floater suit where practicable. (A PFD for a coxswain less than 16 years of age must be inherently buoyant.)

## **COLD WATER COURSE OPERATION RULES**

- No crews are allowed on the water without a supervising launch. The maximum ratio of shells per launch is 6:1. The shells may not be more than 500 m from the supervising launch. It is not enough for rowers to simply be within 500

meters of any launch. Crews need confirmation from the launch driver before leaving the dock that their row will be monitored. The supervising launch may be from another SCRC program, High School or from another club (Brock, Ridley, Ridley Grad).

- The launch operator and the crew(s) he/she is responsible for shall have discussed the training plan that the crew(s) will be using. Unless the launch driver has given his/her consent to be responsible for the crew(s), it is not enough for rowers to be within 500 m of any launch in their general vicinity.
- All crews must sign out and in using the clothespin rack system on the dock.
- All crews and scullers will follow the traffic pattern as outlined on the motor shed. There shall be no rowing above the starting gates.
- No crews shall launch before ninety (90) minutes before sunrise.
- In the months of November to February inclusive, no crews shall launch before the start of morning nautical twilight.
- All crews shall be off the water by sunset.
- Nautical twilight, sunrise and sunset times will be posted on the notice board each month by the Head Coach.

#### **ADVERSE WEATHER**

- Crews should not launch if fog reduces visibility to less than 500 metres.
- If the density of fog increases when crews are already on the water, and the visibility drops to less than 250 metres, crews shall end their practice and slowly make their way back to the main dock.
- If at any time crews or launch drivers see lightning, crews are to immediately head back to the dock or the nearest shelter area.

#### **TEMPERATURE GUIDE FOR WINTER ROWING**

- Athletes will not go on the water to row when the air temperature falls below either absolute temperature or “feels like” temperature:
  - Absolute temperature minimum shall be -4 degrees Celsius.
  - “Feels like” (wind chill) temperature minimum shall be -5 degrees Celsius.
  - Coaches shall use the Environment Canada local forecast website <https://weather.gc.ca/en/location/index.html?coords=43.160,-79.245> for a reliable, consistent reference for temperature.
- Ready access to a warm area such as Bay 11 (workshop, parts room) or the Neil Campbell Training Center must be available.

- Athletes must be dressed appropriately for the cold weather conditions; wearing warm layers, water-repellant outer layers during precipitation, and in possession of additional dry clothing.
- Experienced crews/athletes may be permitted to access the water when less experienced crews/athletes are not permitted. This is at the coaches' discretion.
- Athletes and coaches have the right to refuse to go on the water if they consider the conditions to be unsafe, too cold/windy.
- The decision to deny access to the water for practice can be made by the Head Coach, the Junior Lead Coach, or the designated "Coach in Charge".

## **EMERGENCY**

In any emergency, call 911 and follow the instructions posted on the Emergency Action Plan.

## **COMMUNICATION**

- The COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code will be reviewed annually and posted prominently at the rowing club by the Head Coach.
- The COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code will be required reading by athletes and coaches during the high school and Club's membership/registration process.
- The Head Coach will review the COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code with all coaches prior to crews going on the water.
- Coaches will review the COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code with their athletes when the Head Coach declares the COLD WATER On-Water Safety Code to be in effect.

## **MONITORING AND PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

- Adherence to the Club's COLD WATER On Water Safety Code is the duty and responsibility of every SCRC coach and athlete. Failure to follow the rules outlined in this safety code could result in disciplinary action and/or suspension of club privileges, at the discretion of the Head Coach. Final interpretation and enforcement of the rules is the responsibility of the Head Coach, and if needed, in consultation with the Rowing Committee.
- The Head Coach shall have the final say in matters related to rowing times, safety, equipment maintenance and usage. If the Head Coach is not present, the Junior Lead Coach, or other individual so designated by the Head Coach will assume this responsibility.
- The Head Coach shall employ the following progressive disciplinary steps when rowers and coaches are non-compliant with the COLD WATER On Water Safety Code:
  - First Offense – Conversation and Reminder – This conversation should seek to determine what the athlete/coach believes the rules to be and the steps they have taken to follow them. If the athlete's/coach's interpretation of the rule(s) is incorrect, the Head Coach will clarify and reinforce the rule(s) to the individual(s).

- Second Offense – Formal Oral Caution – The Head Coach will investigate the offence, and if warranted, will give the offender(s) a formal oral caution.
- Third Offense – Formal Written Warning – The Head Coach will investigate the offence, and if warranted, will give the offender(s) a formal written warning.
- Fourth Offense – Suspension of Club Privileges – The Head Coach will investigate the offence, and if warranted, will suspend the rowing privileges of the offender(s) for a period of time to be determined by the Head Coach.
- Ongoing Concerns – Termination of Membership – The Head Coach will investigate the ongoing offences, and if warranted, recommend to the SCRC Board of Directors to terminate the membership of the offender(s).

Attachments

N/A

Links to Other Documents

Safe Sport  
Policy  
SCRC Warm  
Water On-  
Water Safety  
Code

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Revised and Approved by the Board of Directors January 6, 2026. To be reviewed annually.