

# ADULT ROWERS IN SCULLS, DOUBLES OR PAIRS DURING WINTER

## Pre-amble

No matter how good a swimmer you are, sudden unexpected immersion in cold water can cause an initial cold shock that affects muscular co-ordination and impairs the ability to swim, which in turn can quickly lead to hypothermia. Analysis of WRC members who have capsized in the last few years reveals that not all were beginners.

The current club safety rules require permission to be sought from your vice-captain before boating in a scull, double or pair, and there must be at least two boats out together to operate the buddy system.

## Considerations prior to boating

Careful consideration should be given to rowing sculls, doubles or pairs when the weather and/or river conditions are particularly adverse, i.e. wind >15mph: air temperature <5°C (both can be found on any weather app): river flow >50m<sup>3</sup>/s (can be found on [www.gaugemap.co.uk](http://www.gaugemap.co.uk) click on Westy).

Taking a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch is recommended.

Only rowing upstream of the boathouse, minimises the risk of not being seen and going over the dangerous Howley Weir.

Other factors which may influence your decision to row -

- Whether there will be any launches on the water.

Other factors in deciding how far to row upstream -

- On the river upto the Head course, there are many fishing pegs where you could climb out of the water.
- Climbing out of the water is possible on one side or the other for the length of the Head course.
- Beyond the Recycle Centre upto Woolston Weir, it would be very difficult.

## Potential Options after Capsizing

After capsizing, it is considered prudent to stay with the boat for as long as it takes breathing to come under control, before making any decision.

**Option 1** Righting boat and rowing back to clubhouse (this would be very challenging in winter, but not impossible).

**Option 2** Climbing on the upturned boat and waiting to be rescued (this is BR's only recommendation, plus "use your hands to paddle to the shore").

**Option 3** Lay across the boat and use your legs to paddle to the bank and climb up it.

There are several issues you would need to consider with Options 3.

- Would you be able to climb up the bank?
- Who could you phone for help?
- Do you have any footwear?
- Would you be able to access the clubhouse?

- Are you on the clubhouse side of the river?
- How far are you from the clubhouse?
- Is vehicular access possible at your location?

### **Subsequent Options of the Buddy Boat**

Assuming no injuries have occurred -

- Stay on site to offer support and encouragement.
- Row off to find nearest launch.
- Contact nearest launch (this assumes all rowers have the mobile phone number of the launch drivers on the river at that time).

If injuries have been sustained –

- Contact emergency services.

**In conclusion**, if you capsize during winter, your best chance of survival is to be rescued by a launch, but if there is no launch on the water, your survival chances are greatly reduced.

Mike Selway, Club Safety Adviser  
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