

# Olentangy Rowing Club Safety and Emergency Response Plan

## Last Revised: March 5th, 2024

### **Scope**

This policy covers the expectations and procedures for Olentangy Rowing Club coaches and athletes during scheduled practices on Alum Creek Reservoir or the indoor facility at 130 East Wilson Bridge Rd using Olentangy Rowing Club equipment. As the program evolves, this policy should be reviewed and updated regularly.

### **Annual Safety Review**

Prior to each on-the-water season, the coaching staff will review this safety policy, and the USRowing Safety Video "Coaches and Administrators" section.

After doing so, the coaching staff will meet to discuss likely scenarios and response procedures (see Appendix 1) and the best evacuation points on the river (see Appendix 2). If there are new coaches on staff for the year they should also be given an on-water tour by the Head Coach to familiarize themselves with the water, and evacuation points, and given an opportunity to train on retrieving an athlete from the water and/or from a boat if needed.

Likely scenarios to be reviewed include, but are not limited to;

- Athlete ejection/immersion, with a focus on cold water and/or injured athletes.
- Boat capsized.
- On-the-water medical emergencies, including cardiac events, seizures, and cold/hot weather emergencies.
- Major boat damage and/or collision.
- Major weather events, including high winds, lightning, and fog.
- 3rd party emergency encounters.

Athletes will watch the USRowing Safety Video prior to each on-the-water season and engage in an ongoing discussion during the season about basic safety protocols.

All athletes must pass an annual swim test consisting of 10 minutes of treading water and swimming 50 yards while observed by the coaching staff and a currently certified lifeguard. Athletes who pass the swim test but are observed to be weak swimmers should be noted by the coaching staff in case of immersion/capsized. Athletes who do not pass the swim test may only participate in Olentangy Rowing Club practices while wearing a PFD.

### **Safety Equipment**

All Olentangy Rowing Club launches/Coaches will be equipped with the following:

- Evacuation Point list including directions for 911 operators.
- Coaches will have all coach contact phone numbers in their cell phones and will have their phones on them at all practices. Coaches will also have HT Radios.

- Coaches must wear a PFD during practice.
- Type II PFDs for everyone in the launch as well as 9+ type IV (throwable) PFDs (seat pad type)
- First Aid Kit
- Whistle or noise maker (air horn)
- 4+ Survival Blankets
- Paddle
- Lights if any part of the practice will be before or after Civil Twilight or in conditions when the lights greatly improve visibility, such as heavy rain or flat light.

All Olentangy Rowing Club Crews will be equipped with a safety whistle, and all coxswains must wear a survival suit or type II PFD during practice while under the 4 oar rules (see point 4 under Water Practice Protocols). Lights will be used if any part of the practice will be before or after Civil Twilight or in conditions when the lights greatly improve visibility, such as heavy rain or flat light.

It is the responsibility of the coaching staff to ensure that all equipment is in usable order, and the responsibility of the athletes to inform the coaching staff promptly of any damage or failure that needs to be addressed.

### **Water Practice Protocols**

1. Prior to each practice, the coaching staff will prepare a practice plan for their group and discuss with each other their plans for the day. Coaches will discuss which coach is overseeing each boat, and their intended direction/area for practice. Radios may be used to facilitate communication during practice but should not be relied upon for emergency contact with EMS.
2. Prior to each practice, the coaching staff will be aware of the forecast weather, lake flow, and water temperature. Due care will be given to any issued advisories, including but not limited to Small Craft Advisories, Wind Storm Advisory, and Lightning Storm Advisory. <https://www.lrh-wc.usace.army.mil/wm/?basin/sci/acs>
3. As the launches are brought over for practice coaches will confirm that conditions are safe for the skill level and boat class planned for practice, and alter plans or cancel practice if needed. Any coach is empowered to keep their group off the water if they are not comfortable with the conditions.
4. No small boats (singles, pairs) will practice if the combined air & water temperature is under 90 degrees Fahrenheit, except in the case where one coaching launch is attending to one boat. This is referred to as the “4-oar rule”.
5. All on-the-water practice is prohibited if the combined air and water temperature is below 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
6. Coaches need to take care not to overload launches with passengers; launches must retain rescue capacity during practice.
7. Coaches are responsible for keeping all boats they are responsible for in view and whenever possible within hailing distance. Megaphones are strongly encouraged to

increase hailing distance. In the event a boat is planning to exceed hailing distance, coaches should clearly communicate expectations with coxswains (where to stop, when to stop, etc).

8. At the conclusion of practice, coaches must ensure that all crews under their supervision safely return to the dock before leaving the dock/launches.

### **Indoor Practice Protocols**

1. The Erg Room must remain locked when there is no practice occurring. Work can only take place if a coach is present.
2. Due care will be given to any weather advisories and road conditions for when athletes arrive and leave the erg room.
3. When doing activities, give every athlete an appropriate amount of space. Extra caution should be given when ergs are in the upright position so that they aren't knocked over.

### **Emergency Response**

During all emergency response scenarios, the coach responding must ensure that they protect themselves, their launch, and their ability to respond to the crisis and contact 911 as needed.

While the coaching staff will discuss likely emergencies and "best practice" response scenarios (Appendix 1), each situation is different and it will be up to the coach on the scene to react and use their best judgment according to training and circumstances.

The safety and health of the athletes will always take priority over the recovery of any equipment. If equipment must be left behind to evacuate athletes that equipment shall not be retrieved until all athletes are in a safe location.

If the situation demands the evacuation of an individual athlete (cardiac event, seizure, etc), the remaining athletes and crews should be given clear directions based on the situation on how to proceed to safety. This may involve going to shore, proceeding back to the dock, or waiting in a safe position until another coach can assist.

If EMS must transport an athlete or athletes, a coach should accompany them if possible but crews must not be left unsupervised on the water. If deemed necessary, the responding coach may elect to send a physically well (and trusted) athlete along with EMS with contact information to establish communication with the head coach and other coaches.

After the resolution of any emergency situation - even one safely handled internally with no lasting concerns - the coaching staff should also conduct an internal review of the response and determine what, if any, improvements could be made in future scenarios.

In the event of encountering a 3rd party emergency on the river, coaches should attempt to render aid if possible, while keeping in mind that the safety of Olentangy Rowing Club athletes

and coaches is our first responsibility. It is entirely appropriate to stop practice to contact emergency responders and stay on the scene until professional help arrives.

## **Appendix 1- Likely Scenarios & Best Practice Response**

The following are meant to be probable best practices, however, coaches must be adaptable with the primary goal of protecting athlete safety.

- ❖ Athlete ejection/immersion, with a focus on cold water and/or injured athletes.
  - The coach's priority is to get the athlete(s) who are in the water, out of the water as soon as possible.
  - If multiple athletes are in the water PFDs should be distributed to all before any rescue. If possible, athletes should be instructed to stay with their boat and hold on for floatation.
  - Once athletes are out of the water and in the launch or in their boat, coaches should evaluate for injury/cold water immersion concerns. If athlete(s) are uninjured and temperatures are warm enough they may be returned to the boat to continue practice. If injured or potentially hypothermic, the focus must be on treating or evacuating the athlete(s).
    - For hypothermia, immediately call 911 and move to the nearest evacuation point. The use of an emergency blanket wrapped around the body can retain heat.
  
- ❖ Boat capsize.
  - Small boat (single/pair/double) capsize can be treated similarly to athlete immersion above.
  - Big boat capsize can often require additional assistance. All athletes should be instructed to remain with the boat and lifejackets should be distributed before retrieval from the water can begin.
  - Once all athletes are accounted for and have life jackets the coach should begin evacuating athletes to the launch (taking care not to overload the launch) and, if needed, to the nearest shoreline.
    - Coaches need to take care not to overload the capacity of their launch.
  - In extreme conditions (cold/multiple boat capsize/etc) EMS should be contacted for evacuation assistance. Coaches must be clear on the number of athletes involved.
  - All athletes must be safe on shore before beginning to ferry athletes back to the boatyard or evacuation point, and all athletes must be safe (including in a stable condition if athlete showed symptoms of extreme cold) or transported by EMS (if needed) before any equipment retrieval occurs.
  
- ❖ On-the-water medical emergencies, including cardiac events, seizures, and cold/hot weather emergencies.
  - In the case of a major medical emergency EMS should be contacted as soon as possible.

- The responding coach must make a judgment on the scene if it's better to remain in place while EMS responds or to attempt to move the athlete(s) and meet EMS at an evacuation point.
  - If needed, the athlete(s) may be moved to the launch and transported to an evacuation point. Coaches may elect to bring along another athlete as an aid and/or to send along with an athlete being transported to EMS.
  - Remaining crews/athletes should be instructed to either shelter in place or proceed safely back to the boatyard.
- ❖ Major boat damage and/or collision.
- The first priority is attending any athletes involved - they must be evaluated for injury and/or extracted from the water (see above).
  - Assuming all athletes are well, evaluate boat damage and ensure the boats are safe to proceed back to the boatyard. Generally speaking, boats that are seriously damaged should not proceed with practice.
  - If boats are not safely rowable proceed with athlete evacuation per the 'capsize' protocol above.
    - While on the water, collided boats may need to stay impacted together to avoid further damage or increased risk to athletes. Collided boats can be moved together with coaching launches and separated once all athletes are safely removed.
  - If a 3rd party (non-Olentangy Rowing Club boat) was involved in the collision, coaches should document registration numbers and, if possible, contact information (name, address, phone number). If a 3rd party is involved and the accident includes an injury requiring treatment *beyond first aid*, damages over \$1000 (estimated), or the complete loss of a vessel, a boat accident report must be filed with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources within 5 days. If an accident results in the death of a person or a missing person, the same report must be filed within 24 hours.
- ❖ Major weather events, including high winds, lighting, and fog.
- In the event of major weather changes from the forecast, coaches must use their best judgment to protect the safety of the athletes.
  - In sudden high winds, boats should proceed directly into or away from the wind to the dock and/or nearest safe shoreline to evacuate. Avoid working across the wind to prevent swamping of the boat.
  - In the event of nearby lightning (determined by the coach's judgment), crews should evacuate to the nearest shoreline and get out of the water. If lightning is seen/thunder is heard some distance away, crews should proceed back to the dock directly, and evacuate to the nearest shoreline if it gets closer.
    - The use of a cell phone lightning detector app can help facilitate making decisions in these situations.

- If fog rises unexpectedly, crews should proceed slowly back to the dock, following the shoreline. Keep all crews together and in view of each other and the launch.
- ❖ 3rd party emergency encounters.
  - If Olentangy Rowing Club coaches encounter a 3rd party during practice experiencing an emergency we should attempt to render aid.
  - The safety of our athletes and coaches should not be compromised in rendering that aid.
  - In many cases, the most appropriate action will be to have the crews stay in place or (if safe) proceed back to the boathouse while the responding coach contacts 911 to summon professional help.

## **Appendix 2- Alum Creek Evacuation Points**

Listed from north to south:

1. [Alum Creek State Park Campground Beach](#)
2. [Alum Creek Maintenance Building](#)
3. [Friends of Alum Creek Dog Park](#)
4. [Alum Creek Marina Kayak Launch](#)
5. [Alum Creek Sailing Association](#) (if inside the cove)
6. [Olentangy Rowing Club Dock](#)
7. [Alum Creek State Park Beach](#)
8. [Alum Creek State Park Galena Boat Ramp](#) (if in the southeastern corner of the reservoir).