

PIERMONT ROWING CLUB SAFETY MANUAL (updated March 4, 2023)

General Rules

All PRC members are expected to use common sense and to use the corral and launch areas as well as the shells in a safe manner and with full consideration of the needs of other members and users of the Piermont launch area and Hudson River.

Key club rules:

1. **Rowing Hours:** PRC rowing hours are dawn to dusk. No boats should launch before first light, and all shells must be off the river by dark. PRC rowers are not permitted to use club shells when there are white caps or rough, turbulent water and/or foggy conditions (limited visibility).
2. **Swimming:** By signing the safety waiver each PRC member has indicated to the Board and other members that he/she is a capable swimmer and able to swim a minimum of a 1/4 mile. Please note that PRC is relying upon the veracity of this statement. Rowers not able to swim this distance are putting themselves and other rowers at risk.
3. **Sign-out each boat for every row:** All rowers MUST use the “PRC Scheduler” to sign-out a Club shell for use on the day before the row, or if a weekly shell then same morning/afternoon for following successive weekly row – being mindful to share use of shells with other similarly situated weekly rowers.
4. **Flipped Shell:** It is crucial that every PRC rower understand the protocol regarding how to manage a flipped shell (see No. 18, below).
5. **Safety Check:** All rowers must conduct a safety check of the shell and oars before each row. Once the shell is in the water, check that seats, slides, and oarlocks are functioning properly. Check tightness of rigger bolts, rigger pins, and seat slides. Decide on the rowing seat for each member of the crew and adjust the foot-stretcher and heel height position. Ensure that there is a whistle in the shell.
6. **Personal flotation device (PFD):** PRC and its Board strongly recommend that PRC members wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD while rowing in cold weather.
7. **Cell phones:** PRC and its Board strongly recommend that PRC members bring their own cell phones in a waterproof cell container, and that they store the Piermont Police Department number (845-359-0240) in the phone’s contacts. If there is no response at this number call 911.
8. **Tops/t-shirts/Jackets/Hats:** PRC asks everyone to wear fluorescent yellow, green, or orange shirts & hats so that they are visible to other boaters. In colder weather dress in layers (cotton is not recommended – purchase cold weather synthetic substitutes).
9. **Charts/Forecasts:** PRC members are encouraged, before each row, to consult the sunrise/sunset chart, wind and rain forecasts, and tide chart to be aware of the conditions they may encounter while on the water.

10. Rowing under the Bridge: When rowing under the bridge, stay clear of piers and proceed slowly. Look in both directions for possible bridge maintenance barges. Do not cross under bridge when visibility is impaired.

11. Follow the right of way rules: Flow pattern - All rowers must be aware of and follow the flow pattern below and posted at the club and on the website.

When heading north from PRC Harbor - stay 150 yards off the shoreline.

When heading back south to the corral from Mario Cuomo/Tappan Zee Bridge - stay closer to the shoreline (but be mindful of low tide and stay a minimum of 75 yards out).

When heading east alongside the pier - stay a minimum of 75 yards off the pier shoreline as there are a series of above- and below-water rock pilings. Be mindful of the "Navigation Channel" and buoys marking the channel.

When heading south toward Sneden's Landing - Be cautious making the turn around the end of the Pier as the water is turbulent there. There are underwater pilings and nautical debris at the southern portion of the Pier. Farther south be on the lookout for Moby (pilings); and if heading to Sneden's be mindful that at low tide the area near the reeds is rather shallow. At the end of the Tallman Preserve and before Bill Murray's Green House there is a section past the gas pipe white sign where a strip of land with rock and wood pilings projects into the river. Once again, on the return from Sneden's be cautious in making the turn at the end of the Pier.

12. Darkness/Weather: Club members are not permitted to row in club equipment in darkness. Be mindful of the twilight times, especially in Fall. Never row in icy, foggy, excessively windy or unsafe conditions. If there is any doubt, don't go out! Personal safety is paramount and supersedes the safety of equipment.

No rower should row against his/her better judgment. If conditions are questionable no one should ever 'pressure' another rower to row.

In case of an approaching thunderstorm, get off the water as soon as practical. Never launch a shell if you see lightning. In addition, according to U.S. Rowing guidelines, rowers must wait 30 minutes after lightning has been sighted to launch.

Should unsafe conditions occur while on the water, get to the nearest accessible shoreline. If necessary, leave the shell upside down above the high-tide line - it can be collected later.

During low tide conditions it is especially critical for the crew to familiarize themselves with the course. The bow must be fully aware of the location of all known dangerous rock protrusions and partially visible obstructions.

13. Cold Water Policy: It is the policy of U.S. Rowing that combined water and air temperature should be equal to or above 100 degrees for safe rowing.

14. **Proper oars:** Use the oars assigned to the type of shell you are rowing. (It is frustrating to be searching for the proper oars only to find other rowers have taken the first set that came to hand.)

15. **Carrying Club Equipment:**

Blades: When handling blades carry a maximum of two sets at a time. Carry them securely in your hands or on shoulders with the blade end forward. To avoid chipping the tips, don't pile blades on the wooden walkway at the park. Place them in pairs and with the blade tip facing up and best to have the oar blades extending off the walkway edge to prevent scratching and scraping of the blade paint.

Shells: The bow person is in charge on land and water. The bow will give preparation instructions followed by execution instructions. Other crew members must avoid distracting comments and/or contradictory commands.

Shells are not heavy. A 1X weighs about 50 lbs rigged; a quad about 128-140 or 30 plus lbs per person, but they are unwieldy. Quads and doubles should be carried by those who are rowing it - extra people should not be needed and may only make an unwieldy shell more complicated to handle.

All rowers, at all times, must be extremely cautious on the ramp and inspect it prior to its use. Be cautious of and remove debris; and be cautious of mold, moss, moisture, ice, and water which can all make the ramp slippery. Be also cautious of the height difference between the ramp and the beach front/water as there is a large 'step down'. The ramp-way is especially prone to changed conditions after a storm (which can cause loss of dirt and beachfront, making the difference from the ramp and river bottom greater than normal).

Carry quads upside down (guts down) on shoulders with two people at each end of the cockpit area. It is best that rowers carry the shell with one hand on each side of the shell rather than with both hands on one side of the gunnels - if there is a slip by one rower then that side will be unsupported.

Carry a double on its side, on shoulders with each person just outside the cockpit area. Singles may be carried further out toward the bow and stern. Never support the weight of a shell from just the bow and stern tips.

Quads should be lifted or lowered with a firm grip on the gunwales. (Wing rigger shells may be lifted or lowered with a grip on the wing centre-section mounts (flanges) if preferred.)

Singles and doubles should be lifted and lowered with one hand holding the upper part and one hand fully under the shell; doubles should be lifted and lowered with both hands on the gunnels – inside the cockpit area.

Slings: Position slings to balance and safely support the shell:

- 4x just forward and astern of riggers 1 and 4
- 1x and 2x slightly forward and astern of the cockpit
- Check that the fin, rudder and impeller (if equipped) will not catch on the sling.

16. **Launching and returning:** The bow person is in charge of the shell's launch and return.

Shells should be placed into the water parallel to the shoreline upon launching and at a minimum 5 feet from the water's edge/shoreline and with a minimum of 18 inches of water.

Be mindful of low tide - there must be enough water to float the shell and clear the skeg. Bring the shell out further into the water before boarding (there must be sufficient water under the shell even if that means walking a long distance to deeper water).

When returning from a row, stop the shell at least 5 feet from the shoreline and pull it parallel to the shoreline (bow pointing South). Do not beach the bow; this will not only scratch the bow, but can also cause serious structural problems to the shell. Dismount at least three to five feet from the edge of the shoreline.

Keep the shell away from the 'sand/mud/beach' area at all times.

17. Foot Stretchers: Please remember not to tie/Velcro your shoes too tightly, and that the heel cup is tied to the foot stretcher with no more than 2.5" string length. This is crucial, especially in singles and doubles, so that you can quickly free your feet from the shoes if the shell flips.

18. Flipped/Swamped Shell:

Flipped Shell: If you are in a shell that flips, remain calm, stay with shell, and attempt to swim with it to the shoreline. If a lifejacket is available PUT IT ON, as you don't know how long you will be in the water or how your body will respond. Keep as much of your body out of the water as possible. The shell will float even if swamped and each oar will float (if possible, undo the oars, assemble them together, and use as a flotation device).

Only re-flip a shell when it is safe to do so (see below), otherwise use the shell as a life raft. Remove the oars if possible, or swing them in the oarlocks so that they are parallel to the length of the shell. One or two rowers on each side and holding onto the shell should then swim, kick, and/or single arm stroke the shell near the shore.

Once crew members are at a point where each can safely stand on firm ground, undo the oar lock gate and remove the oars (if not already removed). If possible remove the water and roll it, then lift it overhead and carry it to shore. If necessary, crew members should remove wet clothing and obtain dry warm clothes as quickly as possible.

If you are rowing and witness another shell flipping, approach the flipped shell to provide assistance, but do not attempt an on-the-water, shell-to-shell water rescue, since it is likely that both crews will end up in the water. By bringing your "buddy" shell near the flipped boat, you can provide assistance and make sure all crew members are safe. Once you establish that there are no immediate injuries, you should, if practical, return to the PRC launch area as quickly as possible and contact Piermont Water Rescue (845-359-0240). If you need to stay with the flipped shell, stay near the rowers in the water as they swim the shell into the shoreline. Use common sense and adapt to the water conditions. Once back at the Corral, assemble dry clothes/blankets/towels for the wet rowers.

Swamped Shell: A shell is swamped when water inside the vessel reaches the gunnels. It is crucial that rowers not remain in a swamped shell as the rowers' weight may cause the shell to break apart. If a boat

begins taking on water, rowers should attempt to bring the shell close enough inland to a point where the crew can safely disembark. Rowers in the middle of the shell should disembark first in order to avoid additional damage to the shell. See flipped shell, above, for further procedures.

19. **Wakes/Waves:** It is possible to split a shell if the wake is higher than the gunnels. When approaching a wake this high, turn the shell so that it is at a 45 deg angle to the wake (with one rower “setting” the shell), so that no part of the shell is unsupported by the water.

Turning in waves is tricky; rowers should allow plenty of room, energy, and time to do so safely. It is safest to have one rower setting the boat while others negotiate the turn.

If it appears that your row may involve a change in wind conditions, be sure to bring a whistle, PFD, and cell phone.

20. **Singles:** When rowing a single use the buddy system, making sure that at least one other single rower is with you.

21. **Long Rows:** Before a long row drink plenty of water, and bring plenty of water with you on the row. Heat exhaustion and dehydration are real dangers. A wet hat and/or a wet scarf around the neck can help reduce elevated body temperature. Use sunscreen (recommended not only for long rows but for all rows).

22. **Warm-ups:** PRC strongly encourages warm-up and stretching exercises prior to and after rowing and a warm-up and cooling down on the water to reduce risk of strain or other personal injury.

23. **Hypothermia:** Make sure you read and understand the hypothermia onset information posted at the information board. IT IS NOT AN EXAGGERATION!

24. **Wiping Down Shells:** After each row, PRC members should use the hose and/or wipe down their shell with a wet sponge after placing it on the rack. For the longevity of the fleet it is important to remove the river scum after each row and to wash mud and dirt off all of the hardware. Open the portals.

25. **Reporting Damage:** When equipment is damaged, major or minor, on or off the water, the incident must be reported. Please provide Denise Friedland (845-300-3100) with the name of the boat, the location of the damage, how it occurred, and the date and time that it was observed. If the damage renders the shell unfit to row, it is your obligation to tag that shell or equipment with a “DO NOT ROW” sign to prevent anyone else from taking it out until it is repaired.

If you are responsible for damaging the equipment, then you are also responsible for helping repair it. PRC is a voluntary organization and members must assist in all repairs.

26. **Guest Rules:** PRC permits a “guest” accompanied by a member to row two times only during the season; the member is responsible for making sure the “guest” abides by all PRC rules, is a capable rower, able to swim, and the “guest” must sign both a General Release and Safety Waiver, and must contact Vince O’Brien (845-216-4470 mobile) to arrange for receipt of the signed documents.

27. Final Tasks at End of Row: Make sure the boat is securely tied down on the rack. Put the oars back in the storage area and secure them with the bungee cords. If no other crew is on the river, check that all oars are back in the oar area and tied down, and make sure all shells are tied down and the ropes up on the corral. Make sure the water is turned off.

THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR ON THE HUDSON RIVER:

Debris: The Hudson River, especially after rain storms, can have considerable amounts of floating debris, including wood, logs, branches, bottles, and plastic bags. These sometimes float just under the surface of the water, so bows need to pay considerable attention to spotting them and steering clear.

Deadheads: “Deadheads” or “alligators” are PRC terms for free floating logs that become mired in the Hudson River bottom with one end pointing upwards and sometimes poking through the surface of the water. These can be very difficult to see and can be extremely damaging to shells. They should be reported to other members so that they can be avoided.

Other watercraft: Please remember that we share the river with motorboats, jet skis, canoes, kayaks and other rowing shells. Motorboats are supposed to slow down when approaching a shell, but don’t always do so. If necessary, stop rowing; wait for the motorized craft and ensuing wake to go by.

Rock Piles, Moby, Pilings: Please review the known rock-piles and underwater pilings. These are posted in the sign-up sheet area. They include but are NOT limited to:

- Rock wall directly in front of PRC launch area, which is why all shells MUST keep PRC red buoy on the starboard side going out and on the port side returning.
- Rocks running parallel to Piermont Pier Pilings on South side of Piermont Pier
- Sewer pipe on South side of Piermont Pier near the end of the condos - near the dogleg of the Pier
- “Moby” wooden pilings south of Piermont Pier running 75-100 feet North and south, usually marked with small white buoys at either end but VERY hard to see at high tide
- Rock pilings in front of St John’s R.C. church north of the marinas
- Various rock pilings along the stretch from Toni Morrison’s house to the bridge close to shore

LEARN TO ROW (LTR) and COACHING:

Coach: The Coach is the Captain and is responsible for the activities and rowers at a coaching session, and gives direction to all participants and to the launch driver. All PRC members who are assisting in the coaching program, and all LTR/ Coaching participants including new LTR rowers, must understand that in case of an emergency the Coach has primary responsibility and all participants must follow the Coach’s direction!

LTR, PAR, and LONG ROW: have priority over other member uses.

LTR Participants: All participants (driver/coxswains/bows) must know the number of shells (boats) and rowers participating in that LTR/Coaching session’s row.

LTR Members: LTR/Coaching members should arrive 10 minutes ahead of the scheduled ‘row’ time.

No coach boat: If there is no coach boat on the water, maintain a 'buddy system' with at least two shells staying close together.

Session information: Before launching, LTR/Coaching participants should be informed of:

- of the type of workout or exercises that will be conducted
- of the rowing circuit and where to congregate

KEY DEFINITION:

The shells (or boats) are of two types and reflect the two forms of rowing--- sweep rowing and sculling. **In sweep rowing each rower uses a single oar, in sculling a rower uses two oars.** The word shell is used in reference to the boats used because the hull is only about 1/8"to 1/4" thick.

REMEMBER THAT ALL PRC MEMBERS ARE INVESTED IN EACH OTHER'S SAFETY. ROW CAUTIOUSLY - ROW SAFELY – ROW WITH AWARENESS and ROW – ROW – ROW!

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