

Rowing NZ Recommended Operating Procedure (ROPs): Weather Conditions

Rowing New Zealand is committed to water safety by offering clubs recommended procedures for operation. Clubs should take these recommendations as guidance and consider the risk of their own training waterways when making decisions on their club procedures. The following list of ROPs is non-exclusive but aimed at assisting clubs in considering their risks depending on the relevant hazards.

Due to the different nature of weather/environmental conditions, it is important that each club assesses the risk within their normal operating environment.

Current/Flow:

Every river is going to have different strength levels of current and flow.

Example of safe procedure:

Coaches based in Whanganui are considering getting their novices on water. In getting to the shed, they assess the current to be at a higher flow rate than normal because of recent rainfall. The coaches consider the risk and mix crews for the morning, putting experienced rowers in the novice boat to limit the risk of the current controlling the boat. The boats are then launched and landed with the bow towards the current, allowing for a more controlled docking.

It is noted that the coach:

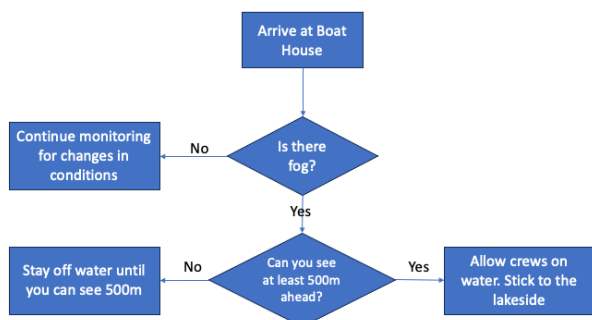
- Checked the weather before getting on the water.
- Ensured the conditions matched the ability level of the rowers.
- Ensured each boat was launched with the required safety equipment.
- Ensured the coach/crew had all required communication equipment.

Fog:

Rowing in fog is a water safety risk due to the significantly reduced visibility, making it challenging for rowers to navigate and for other water users to see them. This increases the risk of collisions, accidents, and timely response to emergencies.

Example of safe procedure:

Lake Karāpiro is prone to fog, particularly through the winter months. In this case, the coach would follow the below chart.



It is noted that the coach:

- Ensured the boats were fitted with appropriate lights.
- Ensured the coach could always see all crews.
- Ensured the coach/crew had all required communication equipment.
- Had the contact details of other water users (e.g., coaches from other clubs). This would be useful in determining the changing conditions of the fog.
- Ensured that the coach/crews could always see 500m ahead.

Lightning:

Lightning is one of the greatest risks while rowing. If boats are on water while lightning strikes, immediately stop rowing and seek shelter off the water.

Returning to training

It is recommended that clubs use the 30/30 lightning rule when considering returning to the water.

The 30/30 Lightning Rule suggests taking shelter if you see lightning and then counting the seconds until you hear thunder. If the time between seeing lightning and hearing thunder is 30 seconds or less, it poses a significant risk, so you should remain in shelter and off water for at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder.

Example of safe procedure:

Coaches in Rotorua are about to launch for a row when they see lightning. They immediately send the boats back to the boathouse and seek shelter while a weather assessment can take place. The coaches use the 30/30 lightning rule and find that there is less than 30 seconds between the thunder and the flash of lightning. The coaches then wait thirty minutes from the last clap of thunder before directing the crews back onto the water. Throughout the session, the coaches continue to listen out for more thunder.

It is noted that the coach:

- Checked the weather before getting on the water.
- Played on the side of caution. If you think you hear thunder, treat it as thunder.
- Ensured the coach/crew had all required communication equipment.
- Ensured each boat was launched with the required safety equipment.

Low Light:

Engaging in rowing during low-light conditions poses a heightened water safety concern as it leads to significantly reduced visibility, making it challenging for rowers to navigate effectively and for other water users to spot them. This heightened risk increases the chances of accidents, collisions, and delays in responding to emergencies. Each club will have a different policy for rowing in the dark. For example, clubs operating in a city environment may have more light sources available than clubs in remote environments.

Example of safe procedure:

Coaches in Wellington arrive at the boathouse early in the morning to find the streetlights of the city still on. They wait until the streetlights have turned off and it is light enough to safely navigate the harbour before allowing the crews on the water. The coaches turn on the lights in the safety boat and ensure that appropriate lighting is on the rowing boats.

It is noted that the coach:

- Ensured boats were fitted with appropriate lights.
- Ensured each boat was launched with the required safety equipment.
- Ensured they could always see all crews.
- Ensured the coach/crew had all required communication equipment.
- Had the contact details of other water users (e.g., coaches from other clubs). This is useful if a crew is unable to be located.

Swell/Wake:

It is important that clubs assess the risk of swell and wake within their normal operating environment, based on the amount of shelter and risk of other water users.

Example of safe procedure:

Dunedin is known for high on-water activity. Before getting on the water, the coaches read the wind forecast to ensure that the weather conditions would be within the ability level of the rowers. The coaches then check their safety boat to ensure that the required equipment is on hand. Once the crews have launched, the coaches continue to assess the weather conditions and keep all crews out of the shipping lanes. If a high wake comes towards the crews, the coaches direct the crews to turn their boat parallel to the wake, limiting the risk of boat breakage.

It is noted that the coach:

- Checked the weather before getting on the water.
- Ensured each boat was launched with the required safety equipment.
- Stayed within the local rowing zones and had knowledge of the high traffic areas.
- Ensured the coach/crew have all required communication equipment.
- If the wind strength grew, kept the crews in shelter and closer to the land.