



# **VERMONT ROWING**

## **Emergency Action Plan**

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## **Introduction and Rationale**

Vermont Rowing is a co-ed club crew team established in 1986 at the University of Vermont (UVM). The team typically hosts approximately sixty dedicated student athletes each year. Through the fall and spring seasons, Vermont Rowing practices out of a boathouse situated on the Lamoille River. Located twenty minutes north of Burlington, the Lamoille provides eight thousand meters of accessible water emptying out into Lake Champlain. During winter seasons, the team functions out of the gymnasium in Mann Hall on UVM's Trinity Campus.

All sports pose risk of injury or emergency, however, being a water sport, rowing has added dangers. This risk includes additional hazards such as hypothermia and drowning in combination with longer emergency response times. This is not an uncommon issue for rowing programs across the country. A boat is a moving target in an area inaccessible by the most common emergency response vehicles, making for a complex situation in the event of an injury. This is particularly true for Vermont Rowing as the team practices on the Lamoille River in Milton, Vermont with large areas along the water without residential or commercial properties. Beyond injury there are other emergent situations that can arise due to weather or equipment breakage. Such as unpredicted storms or severe boat damage.

Due to recent tragedies in the collegiate rowing community Vermont Rowing aims to increase the safety of all members and coaches. For these reasons, the team is adopting the preventative actions and emergency procedures outlined in this plan.

## **Emergency Equipment**

### **Coach's Launch**

A coach is present at every on-water practice. The team has three small outboard motor boats used by coaches during these practices. These boats can be used to transport rowers if a rowing shell becomes unrowable. Coaches also carry life vests in each launch in the event they are needed.

### **Survival suits**

Vermont Rowing has several flotation suits, also known as survival suits, in a variety of sizes. These are multilayer, neoprene, full body suits worn by coxswains or rowers in the launch. Survival suits can be used as flotation devices if the wearer were to fall in the water. There are also reflective trims and patches on these suits.

### **Life-vests**

Life vests, also known as personal flotation devices (PFDs), are important for any water sport. Vermont Rowing has Type II and Type V life vests as well as Type IV PFDs.



Type II vests are intended for near shore use. However, these vests are not guaranteed to revert the wearer to faceup in the water. For proper use the wearer should place their head through the slit in the life vest so the device rests on the wearers shoulders. The black strap can then be pulled until a snug fit is reached.

Type V vests are created for special uses. The type used by Vermont Rowing are intended for rowing and clip around the waist of the wearer. When needed, a tab can be pulled to inflate the vest.



Vermont Rowing also utilizes Type IV personal floatation devices. These PFDs are in the 'square style' and can be thrown to a person in distress in the water. If needed these PFDs can also be worn on the users back with their arms through the straps.

Life vests and PFDs are carried in each launch during practice. In addition to this, all small boats will be required to carry Type V devices for each rower in the boat.

### **Oars**

Oars with wooden handles can be used as a flotation device. However, oars with adjustable handles are not recommended for this use. Water can enter this type of oar through the joint of the handle causing it to fill with water and sink. These should not be used as flotation devices.

### **First Aid Kit**

Vermont Rowing owns a basic first aid kit. Included in this kit are bandaids, gauze, tape, tweezers, alcohol wipes, and triangular bandages. The first aid kit is kept on land in the shed at the boathouse. However, coaches might also have tape, bandaids, or other equipment in launches during practice.

### **AED**

Vermont Rowing is in the process of exploring options to obtain an automated external defibrillator (AED).

## **Preventative Measures**

### **Social Distancing Practices**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the University of Vermont has instituted social distancing practices to limit virus spread. As a part of these regulations, masks must be worn by anyone at the Vermont Rowing boathouse and while in boats with others. Social distancing of six feet must also be followed at the boathouse. As of now the use of boats with more than four rowers and a coxswain are prohibited due to distancing and gathering restrictions. Students are also expected to comply with UVM's Green and Gold Promise and all testing requirements associated with the agreement. Racing has been put on hold until further notice. At this time, vaccination status does not change any of these requirements.

### **USRowing Safety Video**

USRowing, the national governing body of rowing in the United States, has produced a rowing specific safety video in conjunction with the United States Coast Guard. The video is forty-two minutes long and all rowers should be familiar with ideas addressed in it. Several safety topics are discussed in the video both on-water and around a boathouse. Some of these topics include collisions on the water, getting into an overturned boat, and many other important safety concepts to know before going on the water. This video can be found on the USRowing website, [https://usrowing.org/sports/2016/6/19/1138\\_132107067295656159.aspx](https://usrowing.org/sports/2016/6/19/1138_132107067295656159.aspx).

### **Swim Test**

Each Vermont Rowing athlete must complete a swim test annually. The swim test will follow the recommended USRowing guidelines of treading water for at least ten minutes as well as swimming an assigned number of laps. This test will be conducted at the UVM Forbush Natatorium and be overseen by a team coach and lifeguard. The purpose of the swim test is for athletes to demonstrate their ability to help themselves in the event they end up in the water. Help might not be immediately available and all rowers and coxswains should be prepared to swim to shore or tread water in an emergency. If a rower is unable to swim or is a weak swimmer, coaches will take note as to be aware in the event of an emergency. One's ability to swim is not a deterrent for Vermont Rowing team membership.

### **Flip Test**

Flip tests will be conducted for any rower planning on sculling without a coach present. A flip test is a simulated capsizing of a small boat, typically a one person single scull. During this process, a rower must safely get themselves from the water into an overturned boat. These tests will either be conducted on the Lamoille River or in the UVM Forbush Natatorium if timing allows. Each test will be observed by a coach.

## **Weather**

Weather is an important factor in deciding if an on-water practice session can take place. There are several weather conditions for which rowing on the water is not safe. Hypothermia can occur in water below 80°F and becomes very dangerous when below 50°F. USRowing recommends a launch is kept within 100 yards of all boats if air temperature is below 40°F or water temperature is below 50°F. In these conditions, coxswains should also wear survival suits in low temperatures. Extra layers or heavy clothing are not necessarily better as too many can weight a coxswain down and contribute to drowning. Boats should not be taken out if thunder and lightning is forecast for the time of practice. If a storm begins while on the water, seek shelter as natural water and carbon fiber, the material rowing boats are constructed of, are electrical conductors. All coaches use lightning detection apps on their phones to track lightning strikes in near proximity to the Vermont Rowing boathouse. After lightning detection, thirty minutes without a strike must pass before rowing can begin.

Weather is at times unpredictable and forecasts can become unreliable. There are several weather events that can cause harm if a person is on a body of water. Boats should not be taken out during a thunder or electrical storm. Lightning can be an extremely dangerous combination with water. Many injuries can be caused, such as neurological symptoms, muscle injuries, or burns. If on water while a thunder or electrical storm begins boats should be brought to shore immediately. If the Vermont Rowing boathouse is nearby that is where boats should be docked. However, it is more important to seek shelter than get back to the Vermont Rowing dock.

Winds should also be evaluated before going out on the water. Strong winds can cause boats to flip or sink more easily. South facing winds above 8 miles per hour makes the Lamoille River unrowable. In any other direction, winds above 12 miles per hour create unrowable conditions. Rowing should not take place if there are visible whitecaps on the water.

Fog obstructs visibility, increasing the potential for collisions. It is advised that boats do not go out if visibility is less than 100 yards. Additionally, when rowing in fog or with limited sunlight, bow and stern lights should be used. Stern lights should be white and bow lights should be red.

## **Water Level**

Like any body of water, the Lamoille River has a fluctuating water level. The nearest National Weather Service data collection point on the river is in East Georgia. This site is a relative estimate for flooding in the area of the river used by Vermont Rowing as there is a large distance between the two locations. If the water level is recorded or projected to be above eight feet, small boats (singles, doubles, or pairs) should not be taken out. The same is true for all other boats if the hydrograph records or predicts water levels above nine feet. There is a dam upriver from the Vermont Rowing boathouse that can be opened or closed without notification. It is always best to

use both data and visual assessment to determine if the river is at a safe water level. Hydrograph data can be found at <https://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=btv&gage=geov1>.

## **Procedures**

### **Person overboard**

One of the most prominent hazards of rowing is the potential to fall into the water. This can be falling out of a racing shell, coach's launch, or off of a dock. Conditions could make it difficult for even the most avid swimmers to travel to safety. Vermont Rowing carries personal flotation devices in each coaching launch during practices, these can be thrown or handed to any athlete who displays distress in the water. As mentioned previously, all small boats are required to have a flotation device for each rower in the boat.

### **Hypothermia**

As the team practices in cold temperatures, hypothermia is an added consideration if a rower enters the water. Air temperatures can be extremely cold during the months when Vermont Rowing practices. However, air temperature does not depict water temperature. After thawing in the spring, the water of the Lamoille River can be much colder than the air temperature.

The body can lose heat twenty-five times faster when in water than in a typical environment. The average body temperature of a human is 98.6°F and a temperature below 95°F is considered a medical emergency. The CDC cites symptoms of hypothermia as: i) shivering, ii) confusion, iii) slurred speech, iv) exhaustion, and v) drowsiness. If hypothermia is suspected, 911 should be called immediately, activating the emergency response system. While awaiting medical attention, the athlete should be removed from the water as quickly as possible. All wet clothing should be removed as this can cause added heat loss. They should then be wrapped in warm, dry clothing or blankets.

Hypothermia can also induce cardiac arrest. If this is the case the person will be unresponsive, pulseless, and not breathing. CPR, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, should be started immediately by someone trained and certified in the process. Per University of Vermont Club Sports regulations, each team must have at least two members certified in CPR, first-aid, or an equivalent course.

### **Heat Related Illness**

Heat related illness is another plausible ailment for members of Vermont Rowing, particular in summer months. Heat related illness can range from minor heat rashes to emergent heat stroke. Heat rash and sunburn are mild ailments that can be treated by being removed from heat and comfort treatments in the following days. Heat related illnesses get more serious with heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion has signs and symptoms of i) heavy sweating, ii)

cold and clammy skin, iii) nausea or vomiting, iv) muscle cramps, and v) dizziness or fainting. A person suspected of having heat exhaustion should be brought to a cool place. Cold towels can be placed on their body and they can be given water. If their symptoms persist for a prolonged period of time medical attention should be sought.

Heat stroke symptoms include i) body temperature over 103°F, ii) hot and damp skin, iii) fast and strong pulse, iv) headache and dizziness, v) nausea, vi) confusion, and vii) loss of consciousness. All heat stroke can be considered an emergency and 911 should be called for any person suspected of having heat stroke. While waiting for emergency medical services the athlete should be moved to a cool, shaded place if possible. If available, cool towels can be placed on their body. However, water or other fluids should not be given to them as their altered level of consciousness can interfere with their ability to drink liquids.

To prevent heat related illnesses Vermont Rowing athletes are expected to be adequately hydrated before attending practices. Athletes are also expected to take whatever sun protections they feel is necessary for their health. Throughout practices coaches will monitor all athletes for heat related illnesses and give water breaks to aid in prevention.

### **Removing an athlete from a shell**

Removal of an athlete from a racing shell is an inherently difficult task. The main difficulty is the moving of an athlete from a shell into a coaching launch. The small motor boats used by Vermont Rowing's coaches are higher off of the water than racing shells. This can make lifting a person from a racing shell into a launch very difficult without further injuring the rower or the people assisting. The University of Washington rowing program has created an extensive resource of procedures for extracting athletes out of shells into different types of boats. These can be found on the University of Washington Water Emergency Training website, [www.wateremergencytraining.com/presentations](http://www.wateremergencytraining.com/presentations). In general, oars should be moved out of the way of an approaching motorboat, this can include removing oars from oarlocks for better access, ensuring the boat is as balanced and stable as possible throughout the transition. If the athlete is unresponsive or unable to move themselves into the motorboat for another reason, a rescue strap should be used if it is available. A person can be lifted out of a boat without a strap. If one person is rescuing, the athlete should be lifted from under the arms and pulled into the launch. If there are two rescuers, one should lift from under the arms and the other should hold the ankles and support behind the knees. All coaches and athletes should familiarize themselves with the training videos created by the University of Washington. This will allow them to assist any potential emergency personnel during extraction.

### **Damaged Equipment**

Equipment is breakable and can pose a safety risk if not properly repaired. Any broken equipment should not be used until it has been fixed or inspected for safety. If something breaks,



the head coach and equipment manager should be notified as soon as possible. If equipment becomes damaged while on the water, the nearest coach should be notified. The coach will then make a decision of whether the damage can be repaired on the water, the boat can be rowed back to the Vermont Rowing dock, or an emergency docking must take place. If an emergency docking must take place, the boat should be rowed to the nearest access point identified in this plan.

## Lamoille River Access Points

1. Vermont Rowing Boathouse:  
384 West Milton Rd.  
Milton, VT
2. Farm Access Road at Sandy Turn:  
Across street from  
614-618 West Milton Rd  
Milton, VT
3. Lamoille Cliffs Trailer Park:  
64 Cliffside Park  
Milton, VT
4. Sears Fishing Access Area (Fishing  
Dock past bridge):  
Gravelle Rd  
Milton, VT
5. Brieland's Dock:  
28 Abare Ln  
Milton, VT
6. Boat Slip (Past the Bridge):  
98 Access Rd  
Milton, VT



## Calling 911

When calling 911 the following information should be prepared to give to emergency services.

- Event/situation and condition of athlete(s)
- Your name and phone number
- Any treatment given by witnesses (CPR, bleeding control, etc.)
- Location of athlete and nearest access point

These are the baseline questions asked, be prepared to give more information if needed.

## **Contact Information**

In an emergency situation 911 should be the first contact. For any incident requiring a hospital visit Bailey Finocchio of UVM Student Life should be called. An injury report will also need to be filed with the University of Vermont Student Government Association. The report can be found at <https://thelynxcampuslabs.com/engage/submitter/form/start/223>.

- *Emergency Services*
  - **Emergency Dispatch: 911**
  - United States Coast Guard - Guard Station Burlington: (802)951-6760
  - Milton Fire (Non-emergency): (802)891-8080
  - Milton Rescue (Non-emergency): (802)891-8090
  - Milton Police Department (Non-emergency): (802)893-6171
  - Colchester Rescue (Non-emergency): (802)264-5590
- *Coaching Staff*
  - Head Coach/Program Director - Francis Stripp: (315)323-2285 | fstripp@uvm.edu
  - Assistant Coaches
    - Vicki Edwards-White: (203)581-3186 | victoriaaedwards@gmail.com
    - Berke Tinaz: (518)897-2989 | berke.tinaz@uvm.edu
    - Sam Abbott: (410)703-4555 | sam.f.abbott@gmail.com
    - Yuki McQueeney: (603)686-9397 | yukiko.mcqueeney@uvm.edu
- *University of Vermont Contacts*
  - Assistant Director for Club Sports - Bailey Finocchio: (339) 203-2443 in any instance a hospital visit is needed
    - Office: (802)656-2053 | bfinocch@uvm.edu
  - Associate Director of Student Life - Jerome Budomo: (802)656-4264 | jbudomo@uvm.edu
  - Director of Student Life - Daphne Wells: (802)656-2060 | daphne.wells@uvm.edu
  - University of Vermont Police Services (non-emergency): (802)656-3473

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