



OARCA Safety Requirements and Recommendations

Coastal rowing is an exciting and challenging sport that allows rowers to explore our beautiful coastline and experience the open water environment. Conditions on the ocean can be variable and unpredictable which contributes to fun, but also exposes you to risks. OARCA encourages rowers to take personal responsibility for their safety and that of the equipment, including acquiring the knowledge, skills and experience to assess risks and make wise decisions. Understand your skill and fitness level, experience and tolerance for risk. Please row within your limits and follow the OARCA Safety Requirements and Recommendations.

REQUIREMENTS

Rowers are required to comply with the [Small Vessel Regulations](#) (note 1) and [Collision Regulations](#). OARCA strongly encourages all rowers to be familiar with these regulations and how they apply to coastal rowing.

You MUST complete the OARCA sign out form and have the following safety equipment when you go out. No exceptions.

1. PFD (1 per person). PFDs must be Canadian-approved. Inflatable PFDs must be worn (not merely carried). Those under 16 must wear a PFD that is inherently buoyant (not inflatable).
2. Sound-signaling device (e.g., pealess whistle).
3. Watertight flashlight if out before sunrise, after sunset or when visibility is restricted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Carry the following safety equipment and know how to use it:
 - 15m buoyant heaving line,
 - VHF radio and/or cell phone,
 - safety kit including a first aid kit and emergency blanket,
 - Transport Canada approved safety flares,
 - watertight flashlight (*note that carrying a flashlight is REQUIRED if you are out in conditions of limited visibility*).
2. Provide a responsible person with a [Float Plan](#), including your planned route and return time. The person you've left the float plan with has the responsibility to notify authorities if you're overdue. The OARCA sign out form can be used as a float plan.
3. Plan your row by reviewing local tides, currents, marine weather conditions and nautical charts for the area.

4. Be familiar with local hazards including: submerged rocks, deadheads, floating logs, and areas of strong current that could create standing waves or whirlpools.
5. Be familiar with the location of safe beaches. There are many accessible beaches north and south of the Tulista boat ramp and on local islands.
6. Take particular care when launching and landing your boat to prevent injuries from slips and falls and damage to the equipment. Respect and take care around other boaters and pedestrians on the launching ramp.
7. Watch for commercial maritime traffic including ferries, commercial fishboats and tugboats. Never row between a tug and its tow.
8. Avoid rowing in conditions where visibility is restricted (e.g., fog, low light). Rowers choosing to row before sunrise or after sunset are encouraged to exhibit navigation lights (white sternlight and red and green sidelights, or an all-around white light as outlined in the [Small Vessel Regulations](#)).
9. Be comfortable [self-rescuing](#) and doing an assisted rescue.
10. Be familiar with the risks of [cold water immersion](#), including how to reduce risks and delay the onset of [hypothermia](#) and how to recognize and treat hypothermia. *Note moderate-severe hypothermia is considered a medical emergency.*

BEST PRACTICES

11. Row with a buddy or group. If rowers have different skill levels and/or strengths, consider mixing crews to balance out strengths.
12. Confirm and test the chosen form of communication between boats in case buddy pairs or members of the group get separated.
13. Dress for weather and water conditions. Bring spare dry clothing in a waterproof bag.
14. Be seen: wear bright colours.
15. Designate a “crew captain”. The crew captain is responsible for:
 - Understanding each rower’s skill and fitness level, and tolerance for risk.
 - Completing the float plan and leaving it with a responsible person.
 - Completing an equipment and rower safety check.
 - Completing a Dynamic Risk Assessment before launching. See <https://safety.rowingcanada.org/en/#/module-02>

In addition to understanding and complying with the Safety Rules, each rower is responsible for letting the crew captain know if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable and knowing how to call for help using the VHF radio and/or cell phone.

Useful resources

[Canada's Safe Boating Guide](#)

[Small Vessel Regulations](#)

[Collision Regulations](#)

[RCA Safety Requirements & Safety Guidelines](#)

[World Rowing: Coastal Rowing](#)

[Canadian Tide and Current Stations](#)

[Environment Canada Marine Weather](#)

[Windy - weather prediction app](#)

[Cold Water Bootcamp](#)

<https://oceanriver.com/kayaking-preparedness-know-before-you-go/>

<https://www.ourhomehas6wheels.com/> - includes local knowledge and routes.

Note 1: Safety equipment that rowers are required to carry is specified in [Small Vessel Regulations Part 2 Safety Equipment for Pleasure Craft, SubPart 5, Section 222](#)

Note 2: Guided Excursions are non-competitive outdoor recreational activities or excursions led by a person in charge, during which participants use a human-powered vessel. Guided excursions might include, for example, training sessions or tours organized by OARCA, LearntoRows, and Come Try days, where boats are not accompanied by a safety launch. There are separate, more extensive requirements for [Guided Excursions](#). OARCA members leading a Guided Excursion must be familiar with and comply with these regulations.