

SAFETY BULLETIN No.1 of 2013

ROWERS NOT LOOKING OUT POOR SITUATION AWARENESS

There have recently been a number of serious incidents involving rowed vessels on the tidal Thames, which have included vessels making contact with bridges, navigational marks and other fixed objects, resulting in vessels capsizing, incurring damage and crews entering the water.

There have been 8 incidents of this nature over the past eight months resulting in 57 persons entering the water and it is very fortunate that no fatalities have resulted from these incidents. This is an adverse trend which gives us great concern.



These incidents cannot go on at this rate because statistically fatalities will result.

DO NOT LET IT BE YOU!

The majority of these incidents have been a result of three distinct causes, which we would like you to consider:-

- **Keep a Proper Lookout** – In most incidents reported to the PLA; crews not maintaining an effective lookout is a primary cause of rowing boats making contact with fixed objects and having collisions with other vessels. The PLA's 'Rowing on the Tideway Code of Practice' recommends that crews check over their shoulder every 5 strokes and this may need to be reduced at busy times or around known fixed objects.
- **Maintain Situational Awareness** – In a number of incidents it has been noted that crews have not been mindful of the known fixed objects around them and have inadvertently contacted these objects during outings. We recommend that rowing clubs ensure members are familiar with the geography of the river and that crews unfamiliar with the tidal Thames are made aware of pinch points, notable fixed objects and the rowing rules before taking to the water. We also recommend that novice crews are escorted by coaching launches until fully familiar with the challenges of navigating the tidal Thames.

- **Understand the Tidal Conditions** – The tidal Thames is a fast flowing river with strong tidal sets and currents and incidents have shown that in some cases novice and schools crews have not been familiar with these tidal sets and have been swept onto objects causing vessels to capsize and crews to enter the water. We encourage clubs and schools to ensure that inexperienced crews have sufficient mix of experienced members who have a good understanding of tidal set and flow in order to keep everyone safe.

We request recipients give these Bulletins wide promulgation within their organisations including posting on notice boards to heighten everyone’s awareness in order that all can enjoy their activities on the water in safety.

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**DAVID PHILLIPS
CHIEF HARBOUR MASTER**



Telephone calls, VHF radio traffic, CCTV and radar traffic images may be recorded in the VTS Centres at Gravesend and Woolwich.

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