

SAFETY BULLETIN No.1 of 2014

WARNING! – VERY HIGH FLUVIAL FLOWS

In recent weeks there have been a number of incidents involving man-powered vessels on the tideway in the strong Fluvial Flows. These were as a result of inexperienced crews misjudging the severe strength of the ebb tide in particular and being swept onto moorings and piers.

It has been fortunate that none of these incidents have resulted in fatalities. In an earlier incident 9 persons had to be rescued from the water, fortunately the incident had been witnessed by the RNLI who self launched. Their rowing eight was driven under boat moorings and broken in half by the strength of the tide. In the most recent incident as shown in the photograph to the side of this text, the crew were rescued and the boat towed clear before the situation worsened.



Investigations are on going into these recent incidents in which fluvial flow rates and limited experience in such conditions appear to have been significant factors.

All organisations are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that their rowing and/or paddling activities are undertaken safely.

We strongly advise all recreational clubs, in particular School's and those with Novice and Junior crews conduct a thorough review of their risk assessments as a matter of urgency.

The risk assessment should not only identify mitigation measures to cope with deteriorating weather conditions but also increasing fluvial flow rates. Such mitigation should include identifying those conditions and flow rates with particular reference to the experience of the crews, at which it is declared by the organisation that going afloat on the river is not to be undertaken.

We welcome feed back from any organisation that has such a declaration in place either to ourselves or the Thames Regional Rowing Council in order to identify best practice so that, such practice may be passed on for the benefit of other river users.

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Port of London Authority
London River House
Royal Pier Road
Gravesend, Kent DA12 2BG

**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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