

Where's Your Risk Assessment?

SAFETY BULLETIN

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As a club leader, you have a duty of care to your club members and patrons.

You must ensure you have robust risk assessments, procedures and policies in place for both your commercial and non-commercial club-based activities.

Why?

In 2022, the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) published a report into a commercial paddle-boarding incident which resulted in the tragic loss of four lives in Wales.

The MAIB identified several factors that led to the incident including:

- The leaders' planning and preparation for the tour was inadequate and overlooked the extreme hazard posed by the weir.
- Clothing, buoyancy aid and leash wearing by participants did not follow recognised guidance.
- The leaders did not have the training, experience or qualifications to lead the tour.

What does this mean for you?

As a leader in human powered vessel (HPV) activities, such as rowing, paddle-boarding, sailing, kayaking etc., you have specific obligations to ensure you and your patrons remain safe when enjoying the river. These include commercial and non-commercial activities. They are the same as they have always been but, considering the MAIB's recommendations, we are reminding you of what **you** must do as both a club for routine activities and before any event you manage.

At the Port of London Authority (PLA), we do everything within our legal powers to prevent any navigational safety incident occurring within our jurisdiction.

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Whilst there are specific requirements in place for the organisers of events on the Thames, we would encourage the same principles of risk assessment to be applied for all other activities that your club runs or manages.

Risk Assessments for activities taking place on the river should consider, as a minimum:

- Collisions (with fellow competitors and other river users),
- Contact (i.e. piers, buoys, moored vessels, etc),
- Grounding
- Mechanical breakdown/failure
- Failure of safety cover
- Man Overboard
- Weather considerations including Ebb tide flag status.
- Abandonment protocols in case of incident, emergency or unsuitable conditions
- Evidence of insurance cover
- Environmental impacts on the river, river species and designated habitats sites.
- Minimisation of litter and use of sustainable materials.
- Consideration for the need for safety cover and appropriate checks carried out on Safety Boat(s) suitability.
 - Use of Personal flotation devices

Further details of the specific requirements for Events under Byelaw 9 are set out in our [Event Organiser Guide](#).

What are we doing for you?

We continue to evaluate our HPV related policies, risk assessments and procedures. In addition, we are in the process of reviewing and improving safety procedures and signage at Richmond Lock and Weir.

We also continue to provide resources on how to have an enjoyable and safe experience on the river. [The Tideway Code](#) is our essential publication for HPV use on the tidal Thames and we strongly encourage HPV users to familiarise themselves with it. The Tideway Code contains advice that will help you organise a safe event including restrictions, environmental dangers and how to plan an activity.

Further Guidance is also available from [British Rowing](#), [Paddle UK](#), [RYA](#) and our dedicated websites: [Active Thames](#) and [Port of London Authority](#).

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