

YCRC rules and guidance on rowing in the dark and in low visibility

Rowing in the dark

For the avoidance of doubt:

Club rule 8.19

With the permission of a Rowing Officer, members may go on the water after sunset or before sunrise but must carry lights in accordance with the Navigation Bye Laws. Boating after dark must not take place at all when the river level is at or above the 14th step down from the road, counting the road as step 1, or when the level is rising. Members must not go beyond the limits of the street lighting along the river and must wear light clothing above the waist.

Club rule 8.19

Members using private boats should also abide by rule 8.19 for their own personal safety.

So, in practice what does this mean?

- Permission to row in the dark **must** be sought from the men's, women's or club captain
 - This will only be granted to the most experienced crews and coxs
 - This will be limited to club eights and fours
- Crews **should** report to the same captain on departure and on safe return (note must also not be a member of the crew)
- Irrespective of any permission granted the following river conditions **must** be met
 - River level conditions stated in the rules **must** still be met (no night rowing if river level is 1.33m or greater on the Viking recorder (2 steps covered, river to level of 3rd step from towpath) and/or the river level is rising (debris risk)
 - The river **must** be clear of any large floating debris or reported obstructions
 - The weather conditions and state of the river **should** be reviewed before taking to the water, which may mean shortening the section rowed to more sheltered areas of the river. Wind against the direction of river flow can create choppy conditions in walled sections of the Ouse
 - The river must not be in the process of freezing, or sheets of ice present (outings in zero or sub-zero conditions pose additional risks and should only be undertaken with extreme care and caution by the most experienced crews)
- A bright continuous white LED light **must** be fitted to both the bows and stern of the boat. These should deliver a wide spread of light readily visible at distance (a single LED bulb is insufficient). The lights used **must** be capable of providing adequate light to illuminate both sides of the bank at the upstream limit of night rowing when spinning to aid boat handling (there is more limited clearance to spin eights here).

- Rowing **must** only take place between
 - Upstream limit - The final lighted section just downstream of Clifton Road bridge (inner ring road),
 - Downstream limit – Millenium footbridge
- At least the bow rower **must** wear a white top ideally with light reflective elements (fluorescent tops are not equivalent in the dark and do not meet this requirement). All rowers in the boat should wear white outer layers both to maximise visibility in low light and for their own personal safety to aid recovery in any emergency situation.
- During the outing
 - Side by side racing/pacing **must not** be practiced
 - Care must be taken to watch for other river users who may not be well lit
 - kayakers etc., especially individual paddlers (can often be present around Skeldergate bridge for example)
 - University crews (possibly with launches) (pleased direct any complaints on visibility or unsafe practices (e.g., excessive wash at night) via captains)
- In case of incident (the following issues **should** be discussed with all crew and all new crew members made aware)
 - All rowers **must** be competent swimmers (the extensive walled sections of the Ouse within the city limits make extraction difficult in places)
 - In case of incident the crew **must** stay with the boat for buoyancy support and to try to direct this to shallow water/safety
 - The cox **should** carry a mobile phone in a waterproof case to provide emergency communications
 - All crew members **must** be aware of accessible extraction points for emergency vehicles
 - Clifton bridge slipway off Water End Road
 - Marygate (St Johns RC Steps)
 - York City Rowing Club
 - Slipway at Radisson Hotel (North Street)
 - Slipway at Blue Bridge,
 - Maple Grove (Millenium bridge)
 - All crew members **must** be aware of hypothermia symptoms and remedy
 - All crew members **should** have a spare change of kit – especially as air temperatures drop towards freezing

Rowing in mist and fog

Foggy conditions pose a similar range of risks and in some cases greater risks of collision than night rowing. It is not always easy to estimate the severity of conditions affecting visibility from the boathouse. The density of fog can increase significantly outside the city limits. Fog and mist can also occur in dense patches along the length of the river in conditions that otherwise provide good visibility. If its possible to see clear blue sky above

then the fog is likely to be patchier in nature and to lift as temperatures rise. If its dull and grey with low visibility, then fog is likely to be universally dense and slow to lift if at all.

Rowing in foggy conditions is likely to involve some subjective judgement about safety conditions. However, if conditions are found to worsen crews should curtail outings and return to the boathouse.

The captains retain the right to call off any rowing sessions if they deem conditions to be too poor for all crews or crews of lower competence.

No boat should be out on the river if the visibility at the boathouse means that you cannot see the opposite bank or Lendal Bridge clearly (visibility <100m (equivalent to 5 lengths of an eight)).

In conditions of otherwise low visibility (visibility of minimum 100m)

- white lights **must** be fitted as for night rowing
- bow **must** wear a fluorescent top and ideally all crew members to increase visibility.
- The river conditions for night rowing **must** be met
- Side by side racing **is not permitted**
- Race rate pieces **are not permitted**. Outings should be limited to technical and low-rate steady state pieces to reduce risks of collision.
- In case of incident – all crew members and coxes should be aware of the requirements and recommendations made for night rowing and follow these.

No specific limits are placed on the stretch of river that can be used (to ease river congestion and reduce collision risk).

YCRC Club Captain
12 November 2023