

# **The John Steve Carbonell Catilo Safety Manual for T.C. Williams High School Crew and Alexandria Crew Boosters Rowing Programs**

This manual establishes the safety and security procedures governing the conduct of the T.C. Williams High School Crew program, and other programs sponsored or sanctioned by T.C. Williams Crew or the Alexandria Crew Boosters Club, Inc. (ACB).

This manual honors the memory of John Steve Carbonell Catilo, a member of the T.C. Williams Crew in high school, who returned to coach for ACB Summer Crew while attending the University of Virginia. On the morning of June 25, 2004, John Steve was coaching a novice eight when he was suddenly thrown from the launch into the river. He was not wearing a personal flotation device or using a kill switch and lanyard. John Steve was an experienced rower and coach, and a strong swimmer. His tragic death serves as a lesson to all coaches and others in launches that they should wear PFDs and use lanyards at all times when on the water.

As with any other physical activity, there are risks involved in rowing. The sport also carries some special risks because it is conducted on the water. Safety is therefore paramount. The safety rules and procedures in this manual are based on long experience and sound practice. They involve everyone in the program – rowers, coaches, parents and boosters, and even spectators who may be in the Boathouse or on the dock. The continued safe conduct of all rowing programs in Alexandria is everyone’s responsibility.

Throughout this document, the term “rower” applies to any rower or coxswain who is a member of the T.C. Williams High School Crew Team or a participant in an ACB sanctioned rowing program. The term “Boathouse” refers to the Dee Campbell Rowing Center, a facility of Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS).

## **1. ACCOUNTABILITY**

1.1 The **head coaches** for the men’s and women’s teams are the highest authority at the Boathouse, during training on the Potomac. They will ensure that coaches and rowers are properly trained, and that they observe all safety rules and procedures at all times. The head coach or his designee will secure the facility after practice and ensure all students have left the facility.

1.2 **Coaches** and program directors will be alert to safety infractions or unsafe practices, and make corrections as appropriate.

1.3 **Rowers** are responsible for their own safe behavior. They are expected to learn and understand the safety rules and procedures, conduct themselves safely at all times, and to be alert to unsafe conditions or conduct.

1.4 There will be a **safety committee** consisting of two coaches, rowers, a member of Alexandria Crew Boosters and a representative of the T.C. Williams Athletic Director. This committee will meet before the start of each rowing season to review the safety plan and update it as required. The Committee may conduct periodic inspections of the Boathouse and equipment during the rowing season to ensure compliance with safety rules and procedures, and shall ensure that any necessary corrective action is completed. The committee will make recommendations to improve the safety of the program and the

facility, and communicate them to the T.C. Williams Athletic Department, the coaching staff, and the ACB Board of Directors.

## **2. USE OF THE BOATHOUSE AND EQUIPMENT**

2.1 Use of the Boathouse and equipment shall be restricted to members of the following groups, in approved programs under the supervision of a coach:

- The T.C. Williams Crew Team, during the spring rowing season
- Alexandria Community Rowing (ACR), during the ACR season
- Other youth or adult rowing programs sanctioned by Alexandria Crew Boosters, such as ODBC crew, fall crew, summer crew, and winter conditioning.

No one else is authorized to use the Boathouse without express permission of one of the T.C. Williams head coaches or an officer of Alexandria Crew Boosters. Individual or unsupervised workouts are not permitted at any time. Student rowers are not permitted in the Boathouse outside of program hours except for activities sanctioned by ACPS or Alexandria Crew Boosters.

2.2 A dockmaster and/or an assistant coach shall be on the premises of the Boathouse during program hours to stay in contact via two-way radio with all boats on the water, and to provide supervision of athletes not on the water. ACPS shall provide that staff person during the high school regular season and ACB shall provide that person during ACB program hours.

2.3 ACPS shall provide a safety bulletin board that shall be maintained in the Boathouse for posting safety rules, safety notices and emergency information.

2.4 ACPS shall provide and maintain first aid kits in the boat bays and workout room. Coaching staff shall inspect the kits monthly and restock as necessary.

2.5 ACPS shall provide and maintain fire extinguishers located as required by the City of Alexandria.

2.6 ACPS shall provide approved gasoline containers, and gas storage lockers for storage of gasoline when not in use in a launch. Coaching staff is responsible for ensuring gas containers are returned to the storage cabinet after each use.

## **3. PROCEDURES AND RECORDKEEPING**

3.1 All rowers shall receive a copy of the *Crew Safety Guide* at the beginning of the season.

3.2 Before being admitted to the team or an ACB sanctioned rowing program, every rower shall complete a swimming test, demonstrating the ability to tread water for 2 minutes and swim 100 meters. The swim test must be witnessed by a parent or coach. Certificates of completion of the swim test will be kept on file for as long as the rower is a member of the team. ACPS coaching staff shall maintain this file.

3.3 Every rower shall have a current Virginia High School League (VHSL) physical examination, in accordance with T.C. Williams High School requirements for student athletes. This requirement applies as well to rowers in off-season programs who do not attend Alexandria City Public Schools.

3.4 Each rower shall sign a form each year acknowledging receipt of the *Crew Safety Guide*. Coaches shall sign the form indicating that a rower has received safety training. These forms will be kept on file throughout the season.

#### **4. SAFETY TRAINING**

4.1 All coaches shall have completed an approved safety course as required by DC Harbor Police before the beginning of the rowing season, and documentation shall be maintained in the Boathouse. Certifications shall be kept on file at the Athletic Director's office and at the Boathouse.

4.2 Coaches shall conduct a safety briefing for all rowers at the beginning of each season, including the US Rowing safety video. Topics will include:

- a. Safety rules and procedures
- b. Rescue procedures in the water, including practice in donning a personal flotation device.
- c. Recognition of unsafe water conditions
- d. Proper navigation rules and boat handling (coxswains)
- e. Safe handling of boats, oars and launches on land
- f. Hypothermia

4.3 Coxswain training shall be conducted at the start of the season, and periodically as necessary throughout the season. This training may include:

- a. Recognition of dangerous water and weather conditions
- b. Safe navigation, including hazards on the Potomac, commercial and sport boat traffic, submerged hazards and floating objects.
- c. Recognition of landmarks useful in reporting one's position on the Potomac.
- d. Traffic patterns for crews using the Alexandria Boathouse, and traffic patterns and regulations for other clubs rowing on the Potomac.
- e. Emergency rescue procedures
- f. Emergency communications
- g. Any training required by the DC Harbor Police for operators of boats on the Potomac as applicable to crew.

#### **5. SAFETY ON THE WATER**

##### **5.1 General**

- a. All crews shall be accompanied by a coach in a launch. Launches shall be driven only by coaches holding an approved boating safety course certificate, and whose competence in driving a launch has been verified by a head coach or program director. All persons in a launch shall wear an approved personal flotation device at all times while on the water. No rowing shells or sculls should be more than 250 meters from a coach's launch.
- b. No more than four people are allowed in a launch unless it is involved in a rescue.
- c. A coach under 21 years old shall not operate a launch alone.
- d. Coaches shall use kill switches at all times while operating launches, except in instances when this increases risk to the coach or crew such as during rescue operations.

- e. Launches shall carry the following equipment:
  - Approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) for each occupant of the launch and all rowers being coached.
  - One Coast Guard approved Type IV throwable PFD with line attached.
  - Paddle
  - Anchor
  - Water bailer
  - Emergency line (min. 50 ft)
  - Emergency space blankets
  - Air horn or other warning device
  - Radio or other emergency communications equipment.
- f. All coxswains shall wear an approved personal flotation device, and carry a whistle, air horn or other emergency communications device.
- g. Coaches shall ensure that an accurate roster of each crew on the water is posted in the Boathouse before launching, including all occupants of launches accompanying the crews.

## 5.2 Weather and Water Conditions

- a. Rowing is not allowed when the weather conditions such as freezing temperature, high wind, strong current, waves, storm clouds, thunder, lightning or fog indicate a potential hazard to rowers' safety. The head coaches and program directors shall have ultimate authority to determine whether boats may or may not go on the water.
- b. Coaches shall periodically call in their position on the water to provide for general awareness during practice.
- c. Boats must return to the dock at the first sound of thunder, sign of lightning, or if fog sets in. If caught in a sudden storm, boats shall be taken ashore to the nearest safe point and wait for the storm to pass. Boats may return to the water 30 minutes after thunder is last heard or lightning is last seen.
- d. Coaches shall ensure that all rowers are dressed appropriately, especially during hot or cold weather. See Appendix A for more information on weather-related health emergencies.
- e. Shells and launches embarking prior to sunrise must be equipped with bow and stern lights. All boats must be off the water by sunset if not equipped with lights.

## 5.3 Launching and Traffic Patterns

- a. Head coaches shall ensure that all coaches are aware of the traffic patterns for practice.
- b. All boats shall launch from the dock to the north and land at the dock from the south via Oronoco Bay. Northbound boats wishing to enter Oronoco Bay to reach the boathouse shall yield to southbound traffic, and shall cross the southbound traffic lanes only when safe to do so.

- c. After launching, crews shall row to a location designated by the coach, normally 300-400 meters upriver near the channel markers, and wait there until the coach is in the launch and prepared to supervise the crew.
- d. The traffic pattern for Alexandria crews is counter-clockwise. Boats rowing north should cross the river to the DC/Maryland side; boats rowing south should be closer to the Virginia shore.
- e. When rowing south under the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, southbound rowers should pass through the draw span arch, and northbound rowers shall pass through any accessible span east (toward DC/Maryland) of the draw span.
- f. When rowing north, especially under the 14th Street Bridge and beyond, coaches and rowers should follow the traffic patterns established by the Potomac River Safety Committee
- g. Crews participating in regattas shall be governed by the safety rules in the current edition of the *Rules of Rowing* of the United States Rowing Association, and by the rules of the regatta.

## **6. Transportation**

- a. Transportation for rowers to regattas, out-of-town competitions and practices of the T.C. Williams crew program shall be in vehicles provided by ACPS. Transportation to ACB-sponsored regattas, out-of-town competitions and practices may be in vehicles provided by the Alexandria Crew Boosters. Leaving a regatta or competition by any other transportation, including riding with parents, will require written authorization from a parent or guardian and the coach's approval.
- b. Boats shall be transported only on the T.C. Williams boat trailers, towed by ACPS drivers during the high school racing season, and drivers approved by Alexandria Crew Boosters at other times. Drivers shall comply with all motor vehicle laws.

## **7. Emergency Communications**

- a. ACPS shall maintain a telephone in the Boathouse for emergency calls. Emergency telephone numbers will be posted by the telephone.
- b. A two-way radio will be carried in each launch for emergency communications, and to facilitate communication when necessary with commercial river traffic. The dockmaster will also carry a radio at all times during practices when boats are on the water.

This manual is intended only to set forth safety and security procedures governing the conduct of the T.C. Williams High School Crew program and other programs sponsored or sanctioned by T.C. Williams Crew or Alexandria Crew Boosters Inc., and is not intended to establish a general or legal standard of care. The procedures in this Manual may be modified from time to time, without notice, as ACPS or ACB deem appropriate.

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## **Appendix A: Weather-Related Health Emergencies**

### **A1. Hypothermia**

Hypothermia is a condition that occurs when the temperature of the human body is lowered to a dangerous point due to exposure to cold and/or wet conditions. Cold temperatures and wet conditions work together to pull heat away from the body lowering the bodies core temperature. Even in mild conditions, the addition of rain or submersion in cold water and can sufficiently reduce body warmth to trigger hypothermic conditions in the body. A person's condition can degrade rapidly impairing breathing and coordination making it impossible to swim or keep one's head above water. Emergency action needs to be taken no matter what the level of hypothermia.

#### **a. Early Hypothermia**

*Symptoms:* Rapid shivering, numbness, and loss of strength and coordination, semi-consciousness.

*Action:* Maintain open airway. Transfer to a warm environment as soon as possible. Remove wet clothing. Use blankets to help warm individual or if available a warm shower. Warm torso area first. Seek medical attention.

#### **b. Profound Hypothermia**

*Symptoms:* Person will be pale, stiff, and cold. Unresponsive to stimuli, and possibly unconscious. Little or no cardiac or respiratory activity will be present.

*Action:* Move or manipulate as gently as possible. Prevent further heat loss, but DO NOT attempt to re-warm. Maintain open airway, and activate EMS procedures. Call for emergency help immediately!

### **A2. Heat-Related Emergencies**

Higher temperatures and high humidity can lead to heat-related illnesses that coaches and rowers need to keep in mind. As humidity rises the bodies ability to cool off through sweating is diminished since evaporation is limited. The best way to avoid heat-related injuries is to practice at cooler times of the day such as early morning or late afternoon. The body needs time to acclimate to increased temperatures. Intake of fluids is also important and should be encouraged. Dehydration further impairs the body's ability to cool off. There are two major related heat illnesses to be aware of: heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

#### **a. Heat Exhaustion**

*Early symptoms:* heavy sweating, cramps, tiredness, weakness, malaise, mild decrease in performance.

*Action:* rest and fluid replacement.

*Advanced Symptoms:* profuse sweating, muscle incoordination, impaired judgement, and emotional changes.

*Action:* If there is mild temperature elevation, an ice pack may be used to help cool the body to normal temperatures. Several days' rest may be necessary and rehydration is a priority.

b. Heat Stroke

*Symptoms:* confusion, nausea, vomiting, and seizures. The victim loses consciousness. Body temperature rises as high as 106. Skin is dry and clammy.

*Action:* Get medical help immediately! Lower body temperature by immersing in water, maintain horizontal position of victim. Stop treatment when victim is conscious.

## Appendix B: Capsize Procedures and Person Overboard

*NOTE: It is the responsibility of any coach boat to provide assistance to any capsized boats even if from another sport, or a pleasure boat. Coaches are reminded to stop at a safe distance and offer assistance. Approach with caution and in a controlled manner. Be aware of your prop!*

All crew members should be fully aware of what actions to take when a crew swamps, flips, or capsizes. In any of these events, the crew should remain with the shell. The shell will float (an important reason to close bow and stern ports before going on the water). Furthermore, the oars will act as flotation devices. If for some reason, the shell sinks below the surface, the shell should be rolled so the bottom is facing the sky, as this traps air underneath the shell and increases buoyancy. At no time should any crew member leave the boat to swim to shore. A short swim can be far longer than it appears due to currents, wind, water temperature, or personal fatigue.

### B.1 Emergency Capsize Procedures

- a. Coaches should calm the rowers, assuring them that the boat has flotation and will not sink.
- b. Issue life vests
- c. Call fellow coaches for help.
- d. Have the rowers extend their oars as best they can to the perpendicular from the hull
- e. Approach the shell carefully between seats 3 and 5 or 4 and 6, and take out the middle four and take them to shore if no other launch is available to assist.
- f. Return to the swamped shell and take out the stern pair and cox, then the bow pair, and take them to shore.
- g. Coaches should not abandon their own crews to assist another coach with a rescue. Have crews row to the emergency scene and stand off nearby or return to the dock, then proceed to help. Do not overload a launch.

### B.2 Man Overboard Procedures

- a. The boat should stop rowing (“weigh enough.”) If the coxswain did not see the incident, another rower should make the call.
- b. The coach should stop the practice with a pre-determined signal and steer to the victim. Remember that the victim may be dazed, and not react rationally.
- c. Toss the victim a life vest.
- d. Approach the victim from downwind/down current as minimum speed.
- e. Shut the motor off.
- f. Reach out to the victim with a hand, paddle or throwing line. Do not get into the water unless there is no alternative.
- g. Have the victim grab the gunwale of the launch, and move to the stern.
- h. Pull the victim into the launch over the transom
- i. Dress the victim in warm, dry clothes if possible. Return the victim to the shell or take to shore, depending on the victim’s physical condition.