



Environment Check

Rowing is an outdoor sport and must be done with an appreciation for the elements. As such it is important you know before your outing what the weather is supposed to be doing, that you can evaluate any unexpected changes in the weather, and that you know and obey the rules set out for your safety.

Hazards of the environment

Wind – blowing boats of-course leading to collisions
Fog/Snow – reduced visibility – perhaps leading to collisions
Rain – hypothermia and swamping
Waves – swamping and reduced control

It is important to remember that novice crews and coxswains are not able to deal with the same weather conditions as their experienced counterparts, and that coaches dealing with novices should take every precaution to ensure their crew are comfortable with and capable in the conditions. If there is doubt, productive land training sessions should be had instead.

Checking the expected weather

The Crew Area on www.pcbc.co.uk can link you directly to hour by hour weather reports for The Isis, Abingdon and Wallingford. Use these prior to outings to a) assess whether an outing is appropriate and b) if it is, what clothing will you require as either a rowers, cox or coach.

Reading the weather.

Wind can pick up unexpectedly. On the boat house stretch look out for flags and tress. These will give you and idea of both the strength and direction of the wind. Coxswains and coaches need to be aware of the direction of the wind, as cross winds will make steering and landing more difficult than a headwind.

Waves – usually pick up with winds gusting along the river. Although less of a problem on the Isis, frothy white tips on the waves, (called white horses) mean trouble ahead.

Wind / Rain / Storms. Prior to boating a simple look at the sky may pay off dividends. Often storms and rain can be spotted from a distance. Taking 5 seconds to assess the approaching weather could save your life, but more often than not will allow you to grab the right kit and adjust your outing plan to make the most of what the environment will let you do. Eg if you had a double outing planned but it looks like bad weather is on it's way, you might choose to adjust the outing to a single, longer session – to get off the water quicker and avoid the bad weather as it comes in.

Rules

The Isis has a flag system run by OURCs.

Green Flag – any cox can steer
Blue Flag – experienced coxswains and above
Amber Flag – senior coxswains only
Red Flag – no outings

These represent a minimum safety consideration. A green flag does not necessarily mean it is safe for a novice cox to be steering. Coaches and coxswains should make a decision before each outing about the conditions. Coxswains are always free to express concerns over their ability to cope in any conditions.