

Duluth Rowing Club

Safety Policies

(Revised 4/5/2021)

The Duluth Rowing Club (DRC) is concerned for the safety of all our rowers as well as other people who may happen to be on the water with our club members. The following safety policies apply to all rowers, including those using their own boats. If you are not adhering to these policies, you may lose your rowing privileges. Rowers with their own boats who do not follow these policies are doing so at their own risk.

Cold Water Policy

Early and late season conditions in Duluth can be very dangerous, particularly if you are rowing a single and encounter a problem, such as heavy fog or high waves. DRC equipment will only be used routinely when water temperatures are at or above 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperature will be posted on the clubhouse white board and updated as needed.

A) If water is below 45 degrees Fahrenheit, all club-owned boats must adhere to the 4 oars policy. The boats must be signed out in the club logbook. The logbook will be periodically checked for accuracy; if it is determined someone is not recording his or her use of the logbook, a warning will be issued. If the situation persists, he/she may lose their club privileges.

B) When the water temperature is between 45 and 55 degrees, club-owned boats must stay in groups of 2 or more and must remain within 250 meters of all other boats in their group. The boats must be signed out in the club logbook, listing all other boats in the group. The logbook will be periodically checked for accuracy; if it is determined someone is not recording his or her use of the club-owned boats a warning will be issued. If the situation persists, he/she may lose their club privileges. Owners of private equipment are strongly encouraged to follow the above guidelines and are expected to make responsible and mature decisions in an effort to promote safe and responsible rowing for all club members. Your behavior should reflect good judgment and adherence to these safety policies. These guidelines establish a minimum safety standard. All rowers are encouraged to use extreme caution in any conditions that pose a risk of hypothermia. Remember: Use the buddy system whenever possible, and make sure someone knows when you are going on the water and intend to go off the water. If you have a cell phone, you may want to consider bringing it in a waterproof bag in the event of an emergency.

Lake Superior Rowing

It will be assumed that the temperature of Lake Superior is not warmer than the bay temperature. It will also be assumed that the water temperature of Lake Superior never gets above 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Rowing of club equipment on the lake will follow the same rules as for rowing on the bay. Because launches are not available on the lake rowing when the water is less than 45 degrees Fahrenheit is not allowed. Rowers on the lake should stay within 150 meters of the shoreline.

Low Light Policy

All boats rowing after sunset or before sunrise are required by Minnesota law to display a white light that is visible from a distance of at least two miles. If you do not have a light, be sure to ask one of the DRC coaches or the Commodore if you have any questions about what kind of light to buy.

Sunset and sunrise times are to be determined by checking a weather website for updated times. If rower/rowers are fined for not following the Minnesota state law, it is the responsibility of the rower/rowers to pay any or all fines not the Duluth Rowing Club.

Owners of private equipment are strongly encouraged to follow the above guidelines and are expected to make responsible and mature decisions in an effort to promote safe and responsible rowing for all club members.

These guidelines establish a minimum safety standard. All rowers are encouraged to use extreme caution in low-light conditions, including those that exist due to weather conditions.

Special Precautions for Duluth Harbor

Because of the nature of the Duluth Harbor as a working harbor the DRC members and visiting rowers must take extra precautions to avoid hazards, such as encounters with ore boats, unexpectedly high waves, other large craft, and buoys. Vigilance is critical, particularly when the harbor is busy. If you are unfamiliar with these conditions, do not attempt to go out alone. Even if you are experienced, you are encouraged to go out with others whenever possible.

Additional DRC Safety Policies

1. All rowers and coxswains must be able to swim.
2. Oars are an emergency flotation device.
3. Rowers must understand rowing terminology.
4. All rowers and coxswains must know traffic patterns for rowing on the bay or on the lake side.
5. Everyone MUST sign in and out of the logbook for every row. The logbook will be periodically checked for accuracy; if it is determined someone is not recording his or her use of the club boats/launches, a warning will be issued. If the situation persists, he/she may lose their club privileges.
6. Rowing through the Duluth and Superior entries is prohibited unless approved by the coach or other Board-authorized agent.
7. Each person is 100% accountable and responsible for the equipment they use.
8. Familiarize yourself with the water environment – look for deadheads, sandbars, buoys, etc. Warn others if there is hidden obstacles on the course.
9. Rowers in multi-person shells should always keep quiet and listen to the coxswain.
10. If sudden wind or lightning storm should occur, head for the boathouse or nearest shore. Rowing is not allowed for 30 minutes after lightning has been seen or heard.
11. Do not row in fog unless your visibility to shore is at least 100 yards.

12. If the shell swamps or is damaged while rowing, carefully get out and try to swim the boat to shore. Always stay with the boat, it will float. Do not get back in the shell until it has been emptied of water and you are standing in knee deep water except in life threatening emergencies.

13. Rowing across the bay without authorization or partner is prohibited unless coach approval.

14. Anyone using one of the DRC coaching launches must wear an approved PFD and properly use the motor kill switch safety lanyard. If you need to use a launch and are unfamiliar with its operation, ask the commodore for instruction.

15. All rowers must wear approved PFDs until June 1st and in the fall when water temperature drops below 45 degrees.

A note about these policies: These policies are intended for the safety of all DRC members, friends, family, and visitors. By adhering to these policies, you will also be increasing the safety of the other commercial and recreation users of the Duluth waterways.