

SAFETY
BULLETIN

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

As we slowly move through the colder winter weeks, the weather has taken the expected turn for the worse. The reduced daylight hours and increased tidal flow is making the Thames a more hazardous place for experienced and inexperienced Rowers and Coxes alike.

In recent weeks, we have seen a significant increase in reportable incidents coming from the rowing community.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO BE SAFER?

Know the conditions - Evaluate all the factors including weather, water conditions, visibility and the skill health and experience of the crew.

Make use of PLA Tidal Flags - The PLA provide guidance on Fluvial Flow rates in the form of a flag-based system. The next page explains what these flags mean

08/12/2023

Port of London Authority
London River House, Royal Pier Road,
Gravesend, Kent DA12 2BG

MICHAEL SPICE
Assistant Harbour Master

EXPIRY DATE: 30/04/2024

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With each flag warning, the following advice will be issued, which all recreational craft users should consider carefully before venturing onto the tidal Thames:

RED	Extreme Caution – EBB TIDE Very Strong Fluvial Flows Fluvial flows are very strong. Conditions are difficult and dangerous. All man-powered vessels are advised not to go afloat on the ebb tide.
YELLOW	Caution – EBB TIDE Strong Fluvial Flows All river users of man-powered vessels should navigate with extreme caution and consider whether it is safe for them to go afloat on the ebb tide. PLA advise man-powered vessels - in particular schools, novices, junior crews - or those that do not usually use the tidal Thames not to go afloat on the ebb tide.
GREEN	Average Fluvial Flows All river users to navigate with caution and maintain a proper look out.
BLACK	Caution - Low Fluvial Flows Tidal flow is lower than usual. River users should expect lower than predicted tides especially around low water.

Conduct a dynamic risk assessment - do not rely on one piece of data for assuming the river is a safe place to be. Draw on all your knowledge and experience to ascertain if it is safe to go afloat. Before every session, look at the river and assess the conditions. Don't make decisions to go afloat on single pieces of data.

Carry a mobile phone or VHF on your person - when afloat, ensure you carry a suitable communication device on your person that is easily accessible in an emergency. The safety and well-being of everyone on board should always be the priority. If you get into any difficulty, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

“IF IN DOUBT, DON'T GO OUT”