**FRCC safety summary for paddlers**

Please listen to your coach and follow their instructions. They will do everything possible to keep you safe while you are paddling.

**Deciding whether or not to paddle**

The coach or lead of a group is responsible for the safety of all the paddlers within their group. They will decide whether or not their group should go out on the water, considering the following:

* their own confidence and ability in the prevailing conditions
* ability & stability of each paddler in their boat.
* river conditions (see below for note on flow conditions)
* water temperature
* weather conditions
* light conditions
* type of session planned
* group dynamics

**Seniors paddling in non-coached sessions should decide whether or not to paddle considering the above factors, and it is strongly recommended that you paddle in groups of no fewer than 3.**

**Buoyancy Aids**

You should always wear a buoyancy aid (BA) unless your coach permits you not to wear one. If your coach says you must wear a BA then please do so, without argument, or you will be excluded from the session.

* ALL paddlers must wear BAs when the Environment Agency is displaying RED boards
* Juniors in division 7 or slower must always wear BAs
* For juniors inmarathon division 1-6, the club must have written consent from their parents that coaches may make the decision as to whether BAs are worn
* If you have a history of illness which could reduce your ability to self-rescue/be rescued in the event of a capsize (e.g. epilepsy), you must always wear a BA.
* All juniors must wear BAs on the club timetrial

**Seniors paddling in non-coached sessions must wear a BA when the Environment Agency red boards are showing. Also it is recommended that BA’s are worn when yellow boards are showing, when paddling in the dark or in cold/windy conditions.**

**Use of club equipment outside of club sessions**

If you wish to use club equipment outside of designated club sessions (i.e. those advertised on the club training schedule), you must first **ask for permission** from the Kayak Captain, Lead Coach or Water Safety Officer.

**River conditions**

Your coach will take these into account when making decisions about the session. **For seniors in non-coached sessions, the club recommends that you check the prevailing conditions.**

There are 2 systems that warn us of fast flow:

***'Boards':*** The Environment Agency's board system has 3 levels: no stream warning, yellow boards (stream increasing/decreasing) and red board (strong stream). The cover all of the navigable Thames - the sections of interest to us are mainly Osney-Iffley and Iffley-Sandford.

***'Flags':*** The University rowing clubs' flag system has 5 levels from slowest to fastest flow: Green - Blue - Amber - Red - Doom. The Isis flag covers Folly bridge to Iffley lock; the Godstow flag covers Godstow lock to Rainbow bridge.

Some things to remember:

* The Isis stretch (Folly to Iffley) is often much slower running than upstream of Folly or below Iffley.
* The Cherwell is not a managed river so reacts more quickly to increased rainfall than the Thames.
* Obstacles such as bridge pillars and islands restrict the flow of the river and so can make the flow 'swirlier' and therefore trickier than on open stretches.