

Mercy Crew Inc. Safety Policy 2009

Mercy Crew Inc. supports the crew team from Our Lady of Mercy High School. The team members are restricted to grades 8-12 and must be currently enrolled at Our Lady of Mercy High School. Mercy Crew Inc. rows out of the boat house owned and operated by Genesee Waterways Center (GWC) and leases equipment from GWC for the athletes' use. As such, Mercy Crew Inc., the athletes and the coaches that it contracts agree to abide by the safety policies of GWC.

The members of the crew team vary in age and experience. Novices and 8th graders are not the physical or technical equivalent of a senior who has rowed for 3 or 4 years. To protect the students, Mercy Crew Inc. has written its own safety policy as an addendum to the policies of GWC.

Spring season conditions are typically the most hazardous due to cold river temperatures, faster current, debris floating in the river, and inclement weather. Wind, river debris, and fast current all contribute to increased risk of swamping or capsizing a shell. Cold river temperatures do not contribute to an increased risk of capsizing but do subject rowers to a hazardous situation of cold water exposure which reduces ability for self rescue and survival.

When water temperatures are under 40 degrees survival times are 50% less than in water over 50 degrees. Therefore USRowing recommends extra caution in water less than 50 degrees. The GWC safety policy includes the USRowing recommendations.

Additional Mercy Crew Inc. policies for cold water.

- 1) When the water is less than 40 degrees, no novices may row in a boat comprised only of novices. A novice may be seated in a boat of senior or junior level rowers, but not a freshman boat.
- 2) Only boats with 8 oars are allowed on the water when less than 40 degrees (4x or 8+)
- 3) During cold water conditions coaches must be within 100 yard of boats. Boats should row closer to shore. Maximum 1 boat per coaching launch with water less than 40 degrees, 2 boats per launch with water less than 50 degrees.
- 4) Families may purchase PFD's suitable for rowing for their daughters. At the end of their high school career, these could be donated to Mercy Crew Inc. as a tax deductible gift. A proper PFD is not bulky and does not limit the rowing motion. Coaches will make a recommendation about proper PFD's at the beginning of the season.

- 5) No rowing if river current is at flood stage, over 12,000 cfs flow, as measured by USGS at the Ford Street Bridge. (See web site for link to this site)
- 6) No practice is to be held on the Genesee River if white caps are present. White caps usually occur with sustained winds over 25mph. Coaches may guide their crews to the Erie Canal by staying close to the shore to avoid the wind. If a thunderstorm suddenly approaches, crews should stop and seek shelter from the wind by rowing to shore.
7. Every season, the coaches review current safety information with the team. Topics discussed are what to do in emergencies and how to ensure safety during practice. In general, we follow USRowing's safety guidelines (the "Safety Video"), adapted to our local circumstances.
- 8) No singles or doubles allowed on the water until the water temperature is safe to swim in. These boats flip easily. A safe temperature here will be defined here as greater than 60 degrees.
- 9) Experienced Mercy scullers who are GWC members and over age 14 may take out designated GWC boats alone after being certified by the GWC rowing director. Scullers must go out in pairs. Use the buddy system at all times. Rowers under age 18 must have a signed note of consent from their parent or guard presented to the club president.
- 10) Coaches recommendations for clothing are to be followed strictly. An outdoor sport like rowing carries weather related hazards, and proper clothing is essential to protect the athletes from the elements. Remember, in cold and wet conditions cotton holds water and synthetic clothing should be worn. Athletes are strongly discouraged from wearing cotton t shirts and cotton sweats. Underarmor, Lycra, synthetic fleeces and team rain jackets are best.

The logo for Mercy Crew, featuring a stylized rowing oar and the text "Mercy Crew" in a cursive font.