

Raft Race – risk assessment

This document should be read by all divers of Totnes Sub-aqua Club, and will be made available to all club members via an annual distribution and on the club website.

This Risk Assessment is intended to cover the risks that apply to safety divers who attend a Raft Race meeting. Such divers are there as safety support staff and not as active participants in the race itself. The standard open water Risk Assessment also applies – as appropriate.

Divers may be unfamiliar with rescue procedures in a raft race. All divers must have received appropriate rescue training and must wear appropriate equipment.

The race itself takes place on the river Dart between Buckfastleigh and Totnes. The course is around 8-9 miles long and takes place in the autumn. The rafts will typically be created from rubber tyres, but other materials could be used. Contestants should be able to swim and should have adequate thermal protection. The river water is quite cold and depending on the weather the water depth could vary. The race will not take place if the organisers deem the water conditions to be unsuitable and unsafe. Totnes divers attend as safety support and work together with members of the canoe club (who provide a more mobile role) and St Johns Ambulance. The primary role of the divers is to assist on the three weirs that contestants need to negotiate. Divers also need to watch out for hypothermia or any other sign that contestants might be heading for a problem and advise the contestant appropriately.

On each weir there will be a group of divers – typically 4 to 6 divers. A mobile phone should be available and contact with the race organisers or their proxy is important in case of accident.

| Hazard | Risk of | Evaluation | Controls | Immediate measures to deal with situation |
|--|--|------------|---|---|
| Swallowing River Water | Swallowing river water that contains bacteria or other sources that may cause gastric disorders | Medium | Divers to be aware that swallowing river water can induce gastric disorders | Reactions to swallowed water take time to develop. |
| Leptospirosis (Weil's disease) | Injury to diver | Low | Avoid drinking river water. Cover up any open wounds. | If divers develop flu-like symptoms after exposure to water they should consult their GP. |
| Encountering another vessel in the river | Diver injured when encountering another vessel - especially when the vessel is unfamiliar with divers in the water (eg. ferry boats) | Low | Divers briefed on the likelihood of encountering such vessels and to take appropriate evasive action (eg. whistle, SMB) | Retrieve diver and administer appropriate first aid. Handover to St Johns |

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----|---|---|
| Slipping down a weir or uneven riverbed | Losing footing and slipping down a weir. Risk of damaged limbs. Small risk of drowning. | Low | Ensure divers are aware of the nature of the weirs. Divers to have mask and snorkel to hand. | Retrieve diver and administer appropriate first aid. Handover to St Johns |
| Being accidentally struck by a rescued casualty or by a panicking contestant. | Losing footing and slipping. Risk of injury - including drowning. | Low | Ensure divers have received rescue training and that there is a risk of being accidentally struck by a panicking casualty. Rescue should be attended by 2 or more divers. | Retrieve diver and administer appropriate first aid. Handover to St Johns |
| Hypothermia | Standing in cold river water for any length of time can induce hypothermia even in well clad divers | Low | Ensure divers have appropriate suits. Wet suited divers should not remain overlong in the river. Ensure divers stay active and move in and out of water as necessary. Hot drinks and food are useful. | Retrieve diver and treat for hypothermia. Handover to St Johns |