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| Title: | Algal Bloom in South Australian Waters |
| Document ID: | C25012 - Algal Bloom in South Australian Waters |
| Audience: | All Clubs and Schools |
| Date: | 10th September 2025 |

Important Safety Advice for Rowing in waterways where the algal is active

Rowing South Australia receives updates from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) regarding the developing algal bloom in South Australian waters.

We encourage members to be alert but not alarmed. SA Health is leading the public health response, and we will continue to monitor their advice closely. The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) is conducting water sampling. The SA water sampling dashboard can be found via this link [South Australian Harmful Algal Bloom - Water Sampling Dashboard](#).

Rowing is an on-water sport—not an “in-water” sport.

This distinction matters because participants are not immersed in the water, which generally reduces exposure. However, in capsized situations or when handling boats, incidental contact can occur.

Implementing equipment checks, hygiene measures, and vigilant supervision significantly reduces exposure risks.

Also, when the algal material is broken up and becomes airborne (e.g., wave action, spray), it can irritate eyes, skin and airways. If affected, move away from exposure and seek fresh air.

Roundtable Summary (10 September 2025)

Rowing SA attended an Aquatic Industry Roundtable on 10/9/2025 hosted by The Hon. Emily Bourke MLC, Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing. Key contributors included:

- Dr Kimberly Humphrey (SA Health),
- Luke Fraser and Chris Beattie (Department of the Premier and Cabinet),
- Professor Mike Steer (SARDI)

Rowing SA provides the following advice to all Clubs and Schools following this meeting and further Government updates. Please ensure that all members are made aware of these updates. Rowing SA continues to plan for the season as scheduled. We will share further advice as official updates are released.

1. Understand the Algal Bloom at West Lakes.

- The harmful algal bloom caused by *Karenia mikimotoi*—first noted off the Fleurieu Peninsula in March 2025—has now reached West Lakes and other waterways which we row on, as confirmed by preliminary water tests (DEW website).

- This bloom is a natural phenomenon, often fuelled by factors like marine heatwaves and large-scale nutrient influx; there is no quick fix—it cannot be diluted or dissipated easily.

2. Current Situation

- EPA testing confirms that West Lakes, Port River, Murray River, Torrens River, Port Pirie Creek is safe and remains suitable for recreational use.
- This bloom has been associated with:
 - Discoloured or foamy water
 - Fish deaths
 - Short-term irritation to skin, eyes, or airways (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath).
- Aquatic sports will share common language and advice across all codes to ensure consistency.
- SLSSA will provide access to their Beach Safe App for use by other State aquatic sporting associations to support risk assessments.
- The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is preparing a ‘Summer Ready’ document to support safe community activities across the warmer months.

3. Best Practices for Rowing Clubs & Schools

- Stay Informed
- Keep checking DEW and SA Health updates for the latest water-quality alerts and guidance.
- Share this information with coaches, students, and families proactively.

4. Maintain Safe Operations

- If water appears discoloured or foamy, treat it as a potential irritant—even though rowing is an on-water sport, accidental contact or splash exposure is possible. Consider modifying sessions or locations until conditions improve.
- Encourage rowers to minimise direct contact with the water (no dipping hands or faces).
- Have first-aid supplies available, including water for rinsing eyes and skin.
- When algal material is broken up and becomes airborne (e.g., wave action, spray), it can irritate eyes, skin and airways. If affected, move away from exposure and seek fresh air.
- Individuals with asthma should carry their Ventolin and have a personal management plan in place. These individuals are at increased risk of irritation.

5. On-Capsize Response (Emergency Preparedness)

Clubs and schools must ensure that all rowers are to have proper instruction in the actions to be taken in the event of a capsize, at least once a year.

In the event of a capsize:

- Help the rower stay calm (if you are close by).
- Rinse any areas of contact with clear water, once ashore.
- Shower if individual has been fully submerged.
- Watch for symptoms of irritation; if any occur, follow the health advice above.
- Rinse skin and eyes thoroughly with clean tap water (tap water is safe to use).
- Seek medical advice if irritation, coughing, or other symptoms persist. Call 000 in an emergency.

- Clean and dry all equipment that has been in contact with lake water.

6. Operational Precautions

- Keep a first aid kit with eyewash and fresh water available at all times.
- Monitor official DEW and SA Health updates and adjust rowing programs accordingly.

Summary Table

| Key Focus | Recommended Actions |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Monitoring | Follow DEW and SA Health for updates; report concerns. |
| Exposure Mitigation | Avoid water contact if discoloured; rinse after any contact. |
| Capsize Plans | Ensure members are instructed; rinse after water contact; monitor health. |
| Rainfall Risks | Consider avoiding water activities 2–3 days after heavy rain. |

Staying informed, vigilant, and prepared ensures that schools and clubs can continue rowing safely distancing themselves from the risks posed by the algal bloom and preserving the nature of rowing as an on-water sport.

Please familiarise yourself with the Algal Bloom and keep updated – by clicking the link to their [website](#).

If you have any questions regarding this advice, please do not hesitate to contact Christine Newberry, Operations Manger at Rowing SA, via the office phone: 08 8242 3288 or via email: cnewberry@rowingsa.asn.au

Warm regards,

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