

River conditions – stay safe

Always be prepared

Stream conditions might change while you are afloat and can last for days or weeks so it is important you and your boat are prepared by following these guidelines:

- Keep extra ropes on board for more secure mooring.
- Have an anchor, preferably two, which are rigged for immediate use.
- Keep supplies of long-life provisions and plenty of drinking water on board.
- Keep your fuel tanks topped up.
- Empty your toilet holding tanks regularly. It may also be useful to keep a portable chemical toilet on board.
- Keep a fully charged mobile telephone on board if possible.
- Never go afloat or leave a safe mooring without checking the local conditions.

Dealing with changing river conditions

If you find yourself in conditions where the Environment Agency advise you to stop navigating, read this section carefully. Remember, not all conditions will be serious enough to require all the measures suggested below.

- Take the advice to stop. Even the most experienced boater can be caught out so think about those who could be put in danger if they have to help you.
- Moor your boat in a safe place, preferably in a marina or a recognised mooring. Limited space may be available at some locks. Moor against high banks if you can.
- Ensure your mooring lines are fastened to secure fixings such as bollards, rings or even trees. Put out extra lines for additional security and allow enough slack for a further rise in river levels. Do not rely on your own mooring pins / stakes as they might not hold.
- If possible, put extra fendering (e.g. scaffold poles or strong timber posts) between your boat and the bank side to prevent it drifting onto the river bank and becoming caught up when levels drop.
- **Make sure you have a safe exit ashore from your boat.** If not, you should consider returning home or finding alternative accommodation until conditions improve.
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- If you are running low on essential supplies or have other safety concerns and are not able to vacate your boat safely, you should treat this as an emergency and **dial 999** to ask for evacuation.
 - **Please remember your life is more important than your boat.**

The Environment Agency is not an emergency service and we are not able to carry out search and rescue or provide supplies to stranded boats.

Top tips for navigating safely

The river's flow can still make navigation challenging, even if no warning boards are displayed, especially when boards have just been withdrawn or just before they are displayed. We recommend you follow this advice, but remember – it's your decision to take to the water. Make sure you stay within both you and your boat's abilities.

- Keep a good lookout at all times and remember others may not be able to see you.
- Be aware floating debris or underwater obstructions may stop your engine(s) or foul your propeller(s).
- Keep plenty of distance from other boats around you.
- If you stop your boat for any reason you may lose control.
- Other boats may not be able to stop quickly or at all. Those coming downstream are harder to control and have right of way.
- Keep a steady forward course and avoid turning near bridges, bends, lock cuts and weirs.
- When turning, make sure you have plenty of room as the flow could sweep you downstream onto other boats or obstructions such as islands, guard piles or landing stages.
- Large boats (e.g. passenger boats or tugs) need plenty of space to manoeuvre. Stay away from them and be prepared to take avoiding action.
- Take care near bridges. Their restricted headroom / width are especially hazardous when there is a faster flow.
- Before setting off, make sure your entire route is clear of red strong stream warning boards and a mooring is available at your destination.
- If you have any difficulty, we strongly advise you to find a safe mooring at the nearest available location.