

## SAFETY ALERT 01/25

# Buoyancy Compartment Hatch Covers

### **What happened?**

At a regatta during a pre-boating check by an umpire a single scull was found to be missing the hatch cover for one of its buoyancy compartments. The hatch cover had been replaced by strips of electrical insulating tape.

### **Why did it happen?**

Failure to appreciate the function of a hatch cover.

### **What action was taken?**

The boat was not permitted to be used until a proper hatch cover had been fitted.

### **What can others learn from this?**

The buoyancy compartments on any boat are intended to be air and water tight. Not only should the hatch cover prevent water entering directly but it should also prevent air escaping. Should the boat suffer damage whilst afloat that allows water to leak in to the compartment then the trapped volume of air will limit the amount of water ingress by becoming pressurised until the pressure within the compartment is equal to the external water pressure.

For this to work the hatch covers should be airtight and they are normally fitted with a sealing arrangement (typically an 'O' ring or flat rubber seal). If the seal is missing or the cover is replaced by tape then in the event of water ingress the air volume will not become pressurised (any tape will be lifted off the hatch by the internal pressure within the compartment), the boat will lose buoyancy and either sink or not be able to support the weight of the crew.

