

WHITewater ONTARIO

Safety & Risk Management Policy

This policy applies to Whitewater Ontario (“W/O”) members and clubs conducting on-water activities. It is intended to alert event organizers and participants of important safety practices to minimize and manage the risk of accidents.

The procedures outlined in Part 1 must be followed at all W/O sanctioned events/trips and all W/O sanctioned club events/trips. Failure to follow the procedures could result in the insurance company rejecting a coverage claim.

The procedures outlined in Part 2 are recommended for W/O sanctioned events/trips and should be applied as appropriate according to the judgment of Event/Trip Leaders (“Leaders” or “Guides”).

Part ~~1~~A: Mandatory Safety Practices

1. When ~~in a kayak/canoe while~~ on open water, every paddler must:
 - a. Wear a lifejacket or personal floatation device (PFD).
 - b. While on moving water Class 3 or higher, wear a helmet of appropriate size.
 - c. Carry a sound signaling device (pea-less whistle or air horn).
 - d. Carry a buoyant heaving line (throw bag) at least 15 meters (50 feet) long.
 - e. Carry a bailing device or manual bilge pump (water bottles, sponges, or non-vented helmets qualify as bailing devices).
 - f. Carry a watertight flashlight or navigation lights (between sundown & sunrise).
 - g. Carry a magnetic compass if watercraft is navigating out of sight of navigation markers.
 - h. In cold water (less than 15°C), wear appropriate wetsuits or drysuits.
 - i. Ensure all items carried in the watercraft are securely stowed, and will not interfere with the participants ability to safely paddle or exit the boat.
 - ~~d.~~j. Have equipment that is safe, appropriate for the paddler and the current weather & water conditions.

Items a. & c. are required according to Transport Canada, Safe Boating Guide—TP 511E (2011), “Minimum Safety Requirements”

2. Trip Leaders, or a designate in the group, must:

~~a. Carry a safety throw rope, and be competent in its use;~~

a. Have a waterproof first aid kit on the river ~~or in that~~ meets the requirements of the Small Vessel Regulations (SOR/2010-91) Paragraph 8.

b. On any excursion on cold-water (less than 15°C), have an appropriate plan and/or equipment to rewarm any participant. These could include:

- Ensuring all participants wear appropriate wetsuits or drysuits
- Carrying extra dry-clothing in a waterproof container
- Carrying fire-making materials & a portable shelter (emergency blanket)
- Staying close to an accessible heated building

c. Perform a safety-briefing to all participants before the start including (but not limited to):

- Safe paddling practices
- Basic rescue procedures
- Location of First-Aid Kit(s) and Emergency Gear
- Local & Weather Hazards
- Paddling Signals
- Time for questions

Some, or all, of the Safety Briefing sections may not be required when all of the participants are known by the Trip-Leader to be familiar with the information.

d. Leave a float-plan with a responsible person who can share the information with the authorities in the event the group does not check-in on time including (but not limited to):

- Names of all participants
- Participants & Leaders skill levels
- Description of boats and other equipment
- Description of other vehicles
- Put-in & take-out locations
- Time of departure & expected return

When not possible to provide a full float plan, the information shall be left in a location on shore ~~(within a vehicle located at the put in/take out,~~ known to the responsible person, that is acceptable) accessible to search & rescue authorities. Websites & other on-line resources may be used to fulfill these requirements.

These requirements listed under Section 1 & 2 are required according to Transport Canada, Small Vessel Regulations (SOR/2010-91). These items are not deemed mandatory for Paddling/Rolling training activities undertaken in a Pool, whereby Certified, On-Duty, Lifeguards are present. Unless the activities undertaken present an increased level of risk/injury, e.g. Kayak Polo, for which the appropriate level of PPE shall be assessed by the Trip Leader.

3. River trips shall adhere to the following guidelines

- a. River trips shall be conducted with no less than 3 paddlers ~~(non-W/O members may count towards this number)~~. For river trips in areas considered to be remote or isolated (>1 hour required to contact Emergency Services), river trips shall be conducted with no less than 4 paddlers.
 - ~~b.~~ The ratio of Novice-Participants (participants who would be considered to require coaching and/or instruction on a given river trip) to Trip Leaders shall not exceed 86:1 ~~(non-W/O members shall not count towards this number)~~
- ~~4. River trips in areas considered to be isolated or remote (> 1 hr required to contact Emergency Services)~~
- ~~a. Remote river trips shall be conducted with no less than 4 paddlers (non-W/O members may count towards this number)~~
 - ~~b. A first aid kit must be carried on the river by a Trip Leader or designate~~
 - ~~c.b. Ensure a responsible individual not on the river trip is aware of the trip details, expected return or contact time, and necessary response in the event of non-contact~~
- 5.4. Trip Leaders shall adhere to the requirements laid out in the “Trip Leaders Roles and Responsibilities”
- ~~6.5.~~ Rivers / Rapids shall be free and clear of any known Ice-Shelves, Strainers, or any other abnormal/adverse hazards which present a direct hazard to paddlers to be considered Sanctioned.
- 7.6. Rivers / Rapids which are considered to be Class 5 or higher cannot be sanctioned and shall be excluded from the scope of sanctioning for any River Trip or Event.

Part 2B: Recommended Safety Practices

1. It is recommended that all paddlers:
 - a. Be able to swim with a life jacket and be familiar with safe practices when swimming in rapids (e.g. feet first, do not attempt to stand due to risk of entrapment or river obstacles).
 - b. Have flotation devices in their boat.
 - c. Bring an appropriate means of re-hydration while on the river.
2. It is recommended that Trip Leaders, or designates in the group:
 - a. Wear a safety boat harness tow system when running a river.
 - b. Have at least one Leader or participant experienced in First Aid and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
 - c. Have at least one Leader or participant experienced in swift water rescue techniques.
3. It is strongly recommended that a Trip Leader, or designate in the group, while paddling in a Remote or Isolated location (> 1 hr required to contact Emergency Services):
 - a. Carry a Pin-Kit (Z-Drag) and be competent in its use.
 - b. Carry a Spare Paddle.
 - c. Carry a Survival Kit for a potential long-term (Overnight) stay in the wild.

d. Carry a satellite SOS beacon.