



DRAGON FLYERS

SAFETY POLICY

This safety policy has been developed using ISO 31000:2009 (Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines). This document is an internationally agreed standard for risk management and is embraced by Australia. A risk assessment has been undertaken on the sport of dragon boating, from a Dragon Flyers perspective, and to the best of my knowledge all hazards have been mitigated by appropriate controls. The risk register is available from the Club's safety officer if anyone is interested in viewing it.

Accidents in Dragon Boats can and do happen. While the likelihood could be minimal the consequences can be severe¹. Accordingly it is very important that we, as club members, reduce the risk of accidents to as low as reasonably practicable. Accordingly the annexes contain a list of safety requirements that are to be adhered to by members of the Dragon Flyers Dragon Boat Club. They are based on the safety requirements of AusDBF and CDBA.

Safety is everyone's responsibility; not just the Club officials (coaches etc). Club members should at times take the appropriate action to eliminate, where practicable, a hazard to prevent an injury to their fellow paddlers or themselves when we are formed as a dragon boat team. If a member has taken corrective action on a hazard that had the potential to cause an injury, the Club's safety officer is to be advised. He/she will record the event in the Club's risk/hazard register. This register will contain the following information:

- Date that the hazard identified;
- Name of person reporting hazard;
- Names of people affected;
- Any injury incurred;
- Severity of injury;
- Action taken to eliminate/reduce the hazard; and
- If hazard reported to CDBA.

The Club Committee will review this register when it meets.

With respect to paddling, club members are free to voice a concern if they believe that the coach or sweep is taking an unnecessary risk. The Coach or sweep is obliged to listen to the concern and should aim to address it before heading out onto the water. But if the coach decides to proceed with an activity, despite the paddler's concern, the paddler is free to withdraw from the activity as he/she sees fit – **without detriment**. Clearly if there are a number of people expressing the same concern, the coach or sweep is to seek the advice of another coach or in his/her absence another sweep and the team Captain. This does not absolve the coach or sweep of his/her responsibilities.

¹ Risk is the likelihood of something occurring and its consequences if it occurred

All Club members (old and new) are to read this guideline and advise the Safety Officer when they have done so.

Kevin Taylor
President
Dragon Flyers

17 August 2010

Annexes

- A. Before going onto the Water
- B. Putting Boats in/out of Water
- C. Getting in and out of the Boat
- D. Pre paddling Safety Requirements
- E. General Safety Requirements
- F. Responsibilities of Sweeps

ANNEX A**BEFORE GETTING ONTO THE WATER**

- Each site has its own unique conditions that need to be assessed for risk to paddlers before paddlers get into the boat. Many sites are far from clean and the entry into the water may have dangers (e.g. broken glass and sometimes syringes).
- The CDBA Container is to be well lit by torches or in built lighting before paddlers move in or around it.
- A Life jacket (or personal flotation device – PFD) is to be worn:
 - if a paddler cannot swim;
 - if a paddler cannot swim more than 50m with clothes on;
 - when boat lights are required (that is paddling in the dark).
 - at all times in the winter months. The Head coach will advise the start and end dates which usually accords with the CDBA's advice. But he/she may choose to go earlier or finish later than the CDBA's advice.
- All paddlers are to stretch and warm up before and after training and racing
- All paddlers are to ensure that they are dressed appropriately for the conditions.
- During dark hours or periods of reduced visibility navigation lights are to be fitted.
- First aid kits are to be placed into the boats.
- An emergency kit comprising of the following is to be placed in the boat:
 - 15 metres of rope
 - A torch
 - Thermal blankets x 2
- A weather check for the Canberra Lakes is to be undertaken. If a small boat alert is current boats are not to proceed outside Lotus Bay unless the coaches and sweeps collectively agree that the danger has passed.

ANNEX B

PUTTING BOAT IN/OUT THE WATER

- Safe lifting technique (bend at the knees, not at the back) when lifting and carrying the boats.
- Boats are not to be lifted above the hip of a person without the proper technical assistance.
- Make sure enough people are there to carry the boat (min 16). Ask other teams for help if needed.
 - If 16 people are not available a roller is to be used
- Lower the boat slowly when putting it down.
- One person is to hold the front of the boat to steady it (not weight bearing), pointing the back of the boat into the water.
- People with an existing injury are not to lift the boat if their injury is likely to be affected.
- Paddlers are to take extreme care to not be crushed between boats or between the boat and storage cradles. This can be done by looking out for each other as well as being vigilant.
- At night the launch/recovery areas must be illuminated by light (albeit torches).

ANNEX C**GETTING IN AND OUT OF THE BOAT**

At all times (both night and day) when loading or unloading the boat the following precautions need to be taken:

- Decide seating positions before getting into the boat.
- Paddlers load and unload the boat from the front in single file.
- Paddlers must avoid stepping onto the buoyancy chamber at the front of the Boat
- The boat must be steadied from the front.
- Avoid erratic movements when boarding or getting out of the boat.
- There is to be no pushing or pulling of the boat while people in it are not seated.
- When paddlers are seated the blades of their paddles must be placed on the water (brace stroke).
- The sweep should enter the boat first and leave it last.
- The strokes and drummer should enter the boat last and leave it first.
- At night the paddler's pathway is to be illuminated by torches.
- Paddlers are to wear footwear (closed heels) when getting into and out of the boat.

ANNEX D

PRE PADDLING SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

- When the full team is in the boat, the sweep will call for a head count. This starts with the drummer or the right stroke, number off down the boat. One may include one's name with the number; this helps in identifying your buddy. A head count is to occur every time the boat is loaded (eg after a break ashore).
- All paddlers should take note of their buddy (and introduce themselves) who will be the person sitting next to them. This is the person you will look out for if the boat capsizes. Your buddy's safety depends on you. The drummer is to marry up with the strokes and the sweep is to marry up with the last two paddlers in the boat.
- The boat should always be balanced left and right and trimmed fore and aft within 10 metres of the shore and before heading out for training or a race.
- Paddlers are not to lock or tie themselves (or others) into their seats.

ANNEX E**GENERAL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

- Paddlers must be disciplined to listen and obey the sweep's commands.
- Paddlers who suffer from asthma must bring their medication with them on the boat.
- Teams must not train during lightening storms.
- Members who have a medical problem should advise the Coach of their problem along with a medical plan in the event that their problem is exacerbated on the water.
 - It is the responsibility of the club member to equip themselves with all appropriate medication and any necessary items required to assist them with a medical emergency.
 - A basic first aid kit will be carried at all times in the boat.
- Alcohol and/or illicit drugs are not permitted on boats.
- Paddlers under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs will not be permitted to board a boat.
- When more than one boat from the Club is on the water, boats are to remain within 200 metres of each other during winter and night time training. This allows a boat to come to the rescue of paddlers within a reasonable amount of time.
 - Coaches should ensure that their training plan accommodates this requirement
- When the sweep calls 'Stop the boat', "Dig it in" or "Hold water", all the paddlers must dig their paddles into the water to stop the boat. Ideally one should use one's body to assist. That is the handle of the paddle is placed across the chest while the blade is in the water.
 - This must be practiced so that a team is able to stop boat in a short distance.

Winter Paddling

- In winter paddlers:
 - must wear appropriate clothing to ensure they do not suffer hypothermia. The wearing of water absorbent clothes must be minimised (such as heavy jumpers). Rather the focus should be on skins or lycra (for warmth) and wet weather gear (for protection).
 - wear the appropriate gloves and booties;
 - wear a beanie or ball cap; and
 - should bring warm clothes to change into after training.
- Two emergency thermal blankets and a first aid kit are located in the Dragon Flyers' trunk in the shed.
- 'On water' training during the winter should be undertaken as close to the shoreline as possible. However sweeps are to be cognisant of rule of the road requirements.
- Care needs to be taken when paddling in the cold. It is the coaches' responsibility to ensure that paddlers do not get overly cold and suffer from hypothermia.
- The coach should train the team for as long as they can keep warm.

Paddling in the heat

- In summer paddlers:
 - must ensure that they do not wear clothing that is going to cause their body to overheat;
 - should apply block out (+30 spf);
 - should wear a light shirt or singlet; and
 - should wear a cap or visor.
- In both winter and summer paddlers are encouraged to wear eye protection such as sunglasses to protect their eyes from the sun and flying objects.

Small Boat Alerts

- **Small Boat alerts** are issued for a reason. They warn that the paddling conditions on the Lake will decrease within the specified period. It also means that the likelihood of a boat sinking increases significantly. Accordingly no Dragon Flyers Boat is to proceed out of Lotus Bay when a **small boat alert** has been issued and is current. And coaches and sweeps must ensure that no boat is to leave the shore if the conditions are adverse.
 - The only exception to this rule is when the weather is benign despite a small boat alert. If this is the case the coaches and sweeps are undertake a risk assessment to determine if it is safe to proceed onto the water. If the decision is made that it is safe to proceed, boats must stay within close proximity of Lotus Bay and the shoreline, rule of the road permitting. **Additionally PFDs are to be worn.**
- In the event that there is no small boat alert but there are strong winds present and the sea state is marginal on the Lake, boats are not to leave Lotus Bay. When paddling in Lotus Bay in these conditions paddlers are to wear PFDs.

Strong Winds

- If a small Boat alert has not been issued but increasing winds are evident and the sea state is increasing the Coach and sweep must undertake a risk assessment about proceeding onto the Lake. If a decision is taken to continue with training, sweeps are to steer the Boat into the waves for the first half of the training session and run with the seas in the second half of the session. And all people on the Boat are to wear PFDs.

Paddling at night

- Boat lights (port/stbd and overtaking) must be used on boats between sunset and sun rise. The lights are to be waterproof and brightly visible.
- Sweeps should be extra observant for other boats.
- At least one high powered torch is to be carried.
- At least two bailing tools are to be carried.
- Boats are to stick as close to the shoreline as possible. However sweeps are to be cognisant of rule of the road requirements.
- Lifejackets are to be worn.

- Boats must have a flashing torch and whistle in the first aid kit to alert rescuers
- Paddlers are encouraged to carry a whistle and cyalume stick (or small torch) with them to attract attention in the event of trouble.

Precautions

- Paddlers are to:
 - take care to avoid infection if they have open wounds or a skin problem;
 - disinfect any open wounds that might occur during training, as soon as possible;
 - try to avoid getting open wounds wet by either covering them with a waterproof dressing or not training until they have healed; and
 - report any head injury to the coach or sweep immediately.
 - The Sweep or Coach will assess the situation and take immediate action if the problem warrants it.

Capsize Drill

- If the boat capsizes, remain calm.
- Make sure YOU are OK, get your head above water. If you come up under the boat, swim under and to the side of the boat, then surface.
- Find your buddy. Call out to them as they might be on the other side of the boat. If you cannot find your buddy, alert the people around you. Then search for your buddy.
- Distribute yourselves around the boat and hold onto it, to stop it from rolling over. Do not dive under the boat to get to the other side, swim around it.
- The sweep or second in charge (usually the coach) will do a head count twice. If people are missing, then search for them.
- Once the Sweep has accounted for all the paddlers he/she must think about the safety of the paddlers and not the boat. As a rule the Sweep must instruct paddlers to swim together (as a group) to the nearest point of land. However if the water conditions allow it he/she may instruct a couple of paddlers to remain with the boat to ensure its presence is known to other boats. BUT the paddlers remaining behind must be volunteers and must be fit and strong swimmers.
- If a capsize occurs in summer the Sweep may assess that it would be better for the paddlers to remain with the Boat instead of swimming to shore because of the presence of motor boats or the like. If this occurs paddlers should carefully turn the boat right side up, and swim it to the nearest accessible bank. The whole team should move with the boat. Paddlers should not swim on ahead or be left behind. Do several head counts as you swim the boat.
- When on shore do another head count. If paddlers are missing ring "000" for the emergency services.
- In winter the Sweep must instruct paddlers to swim for the nearest shoreline regardless of the time of the day. It is important that all paddlers swim together; stronger paddlers helping the weaker ones.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SWEEP

The sweep is the person in command of the boat and he/she has responsibility for the safety of the crew. The sweep is the only person that can issue paddling commands to control the boat. All commands must be obeyed immediately. During a training session the coach can give commands to the paddlers providing that he/she has made suitable arrangements with the sweep beforehand. The sweep must:

- issue commands in a loud and clear voice;
- be aware of boats and swimmers around him/her. All boats should be given a wide birth if possible;
- maintain situational awareness by periodically looking behind him/her to establish if any boats are approaching from behind;
- obey the rules of the road by:
 - keeping the land as close as possible on the right hand side of the boat; in other words boats must proceed around the Lake or body of water in an anti clockwise direction;
 - however during winter night training sessions sweeps are permitted to keep land close to the port side (clockwise direction) providing that boats are well lit and sufficiently displaced from shore to allow other boats to pass port to port (left hand side on left hand side).
 - pass other watercraft (when approaching head on), port to port;
 - give way to all watercraft approaching from the starboard side (the right hand side);
 - give way to other watercraft when overtaking.
- be cognisant of rowing boats; they cannot change course quickly or handle choppy water - rowers do not face the direction they are moving;
- do a head count and appointing a second in charge (an experienced paddler) before on water training;
- be experienced in handling the boat in choppy water. Sweeps must face the boat into the waves during the first half of a training session and have the boat running with the waves during the second half of the training session (ie; in the same direction of the waves) In choppy waters the boat must not be side onto the waves.
- keep paddlers advised of his/her intentions; and
- remind paddlers to lean out and keep paddling when he/she is turning the boat across the waves;
- avoid collisions by sticking to one's lane and stopping the boat if necessary; safety takes priority over winning.