

## **Shuswap Association for Rowing and Paddling Dragon Boat Safety Guidelines**

### **People and Prerequisites**

**Waiver:** All adult club members and guests must read these guidelines and sign the club's Shuswap Association for Rowing and Paddling Member Waiver before participating in any club activity.

**Minors:** A parent/guardian of a minor age 14-18 must sign a Shuswap Association for Rowing and Paddling Acknowledgement of Risk and Consent form prior to the minor participating in a club activity. **Swim to Survive:** All people going out in club boats must have sufficient skills and comfort in the water to complete the Swim to Survive test while wearing a PFD: Roll into deep water, tread water one minute, and swim 50 meters.

**Alcohol/Drugs:** No paddler may, prior to entering or while in a club boat, use alcohol or recreational drugs that may affect clear thinking, coordination, and reaction time.

**Health Issues:** Each paddler must inform the steersperson or coach/leader of any physical or health issues or medications that may affect their attention or performance in an emergency. The coach/leader may decline to sit a paddler who, in their sole opinion, may not have the ability to perform the duties associated with safe paddling.

**COVID-19:** While Dragon Boating occurs outdoors, paddlers are in close physical relation to each other, are often breathing hard due to exertion, and include many participants who are seniors. Therefore, there are risks associated with the transmission of COVID-19 or other viruses; some that can be mitigated and some that cannot. Stay home if you are sick, make informed decisions for your health, and practice common preventative behaviours to help keep yourself and others safe.

**Number of Paddlers:** A Dragon Boat may go out with a minimum of 12 paddlers plus steersperson, if they are all experienced, and a minimum of 14 plus steersperson if some are inexperienced.

**Issues Arising from Paddling:** A paddler who has a question or issue related an activity should address it with the boats' coach or steersperson. If not resolved, then present the issue to the Dragon Boat Director. If this is the same person, then present to the President.

### **Environment**

#### **If in Doubt, Don't go Out!**

**Lightning:** Paddling will be cancelled in the event of a lightning storm forecasted during the paddling period. If on the water when one unexpectedly blows in, the group will paddle to the nearest safe docking site or shore and get off the water to wait out the storm. Resumption of paddling may occur only after 30 minutes of time passes without thunder.

**Wind/Weather:** Paddling may be cancelled in the event of winds creating whitecaps, cold weather, or conditions that are otherwise unsafe. The steersperson will make this call, generally with input from coach/leader. Paddlers can decline to go out individually if they are uncomfortable. If paddling in rough weather the Dragon Boat should be kept within the breakwater or at least 100 m from the shoreline in the event of a capsize.

**Cold Water:** Dragon Boat should remain within 100 meters of the shoreline in early season or otherwise paddling in cold water.

**Air Quality:** Paddling will be cancelled when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is above 200. Paddlers are strongly encouraged to wear N95 masks with valves for AQI readings of 100-200.

**Visibility:** Whether caused by fog or smoke, a minimum of 150 meters of unrestricted visibility is required before going out. A loss of this visibility during a paddling session is cause to return to dock. Do not paddle after sunset or before sunrise unless carrying all Transport Canada safety equipment required for this situation.

**In-water Hazards:** The steersperson and coach/leader/drummer are responsible for keeping an eye out for and warning of deadheads or other objects in the water that could damage the boat or cause an upset.

**Safe Docking:** Never risk crushed fingers by grabbing a dock while the boat is still moving or lean out of the boat to grab the dock as this can upset the balance of the boat. Wait until the boat has been brought to a stop using paddles unless direct by steersperson.

### **Personal Equipment**

**PFD or Lifejacket:** All paddlers must wear an appropriately sized Transport Canada approved PFD or lifejacket when on the water in club activities.

**Paddles:** Every paddler should have a paddle, appropriately sized prior to setting out.

**Clothing:** Every paddler should be wearing and/or bring in a waterproof container (e.g., drybag), sufficient quantities and types of clothing to remain protected from anticipatable adverse weather, bright colours recommended.

**Sun Protection:** All paddlers are strongly encouraged to practice sun protection: **SLIP** on a long-sleeved shirt, **SLAP** on a broad-brimmed hat, **SLOP** sunscreen on uncovered skin, and **WRAP** on sunglasses for eye protection from direct and reflected rays.

### **Group Equipment**

**Required Equipment in Dragon Boat:** Every boat going out must have all equipment consistent with Transport Canada's Safe Boating Guidelines:

- One Transport Canada approved PDF or lifejacket per person with whistle attached
- One buoyant heaving line of at least 15 meters
- Two bailers
- One re-boarding device (i.e., huli strap)
- One thermal blanket
- One watertight flashlight if the boat is to be used after sunset or before sunrise or in periods of restricted visibility

**Cell Phone:** Every boat going out must have at least one cell phone or other reliable communication device stored in a waterproof but accessible container.

**First Aid Kit:** Every boat must be outfitted with a first aid kit with sufficient supplies to manage foreseeable injuries.

**Boat Check:** The steersperson is responsible for ensuring the boat is checked over to ensure bumpers are attached securely and are in good condition and that the required group equipment listed above is aboard.

### **Training**

**Steersperson:** Steerspersons are ultimately responsible for the safety and command of the boat. If the steersperson becomes incapacitated, the coach/leader will take command.

**Loading/Unloading Paddlers:** The steersperson will direct the loading and unloading of the boat so it is kept balanced, the crew will in keep the boat stable while following the organized system for paddlers getting in and out of the craft safely.

**Buddy System:** Before going out each time, the steersperson or coach/leader should review the buddy system with the crew, including numbering off by row number and/or individually by paddler.

**In-craft Communications:** Learn all commands the steersperson/captain uses and follow them. The steersperson or coach/leader may use row number to call commands.

**Single Paddler Recovery:** Every paddler should become familiar with and practice seasonally the procedures of getting a single paddler back in the dragon boat.

**Capsize:** In the event of very cold water, paddlers should be familiar with the H.E.L.P. (Heat Escape Lessening Position) and Huddle position. Paddlers are to stay with the boat unless directed by the steersperson to leave and swim to shore to get out of the water before hypothermia sets in and makes that impossible.

**Swamping:** If a Dragon Boat swamps in high waves, work to bail it out as quickly as possible.

**Safety is Everyone's Responsibility! If you are aware of an issue or concern that may affect the safety of yourself or the group, make it known prior to setting out.**