

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this safety guide is to formalise in writing, current safety practices for club trips. The White Water Canoe Club (inc.) is committed to providing a club structure and atmosphere that ensures all club activities are carried out in a safe manner.

OPERATING PROCEDURE

The Trip Coordinator

A responsible person should be appointed as trip coordinator and she/he should ensure that:

- a) The trip is suitably planned. (See "Planning")
- b) The party is suitably equipped. (See "Equipment")
- c) The party is using suitable craft. (See "Craft")
- d) All members of the party have a skill level sufficient to cope with the conditions likely to be encountered on the trip.

Planning

The Trip Coordinator should see that information for the trip or activity is obtained from: "River Guides", previous trip reports, maps, charts, tide tables and other paddlers.

Permission should be obtained from landowners, if private land needs to be crossed.

Before leaving, the Trip Coordinator should make known the party's intentions, giving details of the following to a responsible authority or person:

- a) Number and experience of paddlers, names and a contact's phone number.
- b) How they are equipped.
- c) Expected "pull out" time and location.
- d) Campsites to be used.
- e) Transport arrangements.

Equipment

Canoeists should, at all times on the water, wear a suitable Life jacket or Buoyancy-aid.

Canoeists on moving water and close to the shore trips should wear helmets capable of protecting the wearer's head from impact.

Where spray-decks are worn they must be fitted with release tabs or loops.

Suitable protective clothing should be worn and/or carried to protect against cold, wet and exposure.

The party should be equipped with the following Party Gear:

Split or spare paddle	Throw lines
Repair tape	Means of lighting a fire
Folding Saw	First Aid Kit
Survival bag	Spare food

If the river is not well known to the paddlers it is suggested that they also take a map and compass. More remote rivers may need specialised equipment.

Craft

Kayaks/Canoes should be of a suitable design for the expected conditions.

Kayaks/Canoes should be built of suitable materials, to a good standard of workmanship and properly fitted with adequate buoyancy, end-grabs and footrests.

Party Management

The party should consist of at least four canoeists, so that in the advent of an accident, two can go for help, while the other remains with the injured person.

An experienced canoeist should paddle at the front of the party and another should paddle at the rear.

A regular count of paddlers should be taken and on no account should a single paddler be left behind.

Exposure

Canoeists should be aware of the risk of Exposure (Hypothermia) particularly in cold and or windy conditions. They should make sure that they are adequately protected from the cold and wind. The party should be equipped with extra clothing, spare food and survival bag.

General

Because of the great variety of paddling experiences that are possible, canoeists must be aware that this "Safety Guide for Club Trips", is only a set of minimum recommendations and that the circumstances of any trip must dictate the safety and equipment requirements.

Trip Coordinator

For each WWCC trip an overall Trip Coordinator is appointed and their name and phone number listed in the WWCC Trip List. Unless specified in the trip list, it is not mandatory for those planning to go on the trip to contact the Trip Coordinator – so time must be spent at the meeting point checking out ability and experience of participants. For specified "phone in" trips, this process must be carried out as each person phones in.

The Trip Coordinator may delegate the leading on the river to experienced paddlers.

Leader Qualifications

This includes all those leading a group on the river.

- Recent knowledge of the river to be kayaked.
- Ideally, a recognised and current first aid qualification, including training in both expired air resuscitation (EAR) and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Competence in rescue techniques appropriate to the grade and flow of the river. As a minimum this includes handling pinned or wrapped kayaks, rescue of entrapped swimmers, swimmer-to-swimmer rescue and river crossing techniques.

Prior to the Trip

- The Trip Coordinator should check that permission has been obtained for access to the river.
- Record names of those that phone, and check that their paddling ability is appropriate for the trip. If necessary, ring previous leaders of trips that the person has been on.
- Ensure there will be enough experienced paddlers to give a ratio of one experienced to two beginners, or one experienced to four intermediate paddlers.
- Get an up-to-date weather forecast and river flow.

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On the day

- Arrive at the meeting point on time and leave at the specified time.
- Discuss with the whole group the plans for the day including the grade of the river, the expected flow and weather conditions, the length of time on the river, and the options for various standards of paddlers.
- Check that each person has the appropriate clothing and equipment to complete the trip safely.
- Be prepared to stop a person travelling to the river if you know their paddling ability is not appropriate for this trip, and/or they don't have the appropriate clothing and equipment.
- Ensure all paddlers record their details on the Trip Contact List. (See Annex B)
- Arrange transport of people and boats, and discuss shuttle plans. Ensure everyone knows the way to the river, and the get-in and get-out points. If necessary arrange intermediary-meeting points en route.

At the river

- Divide the paddlers into groups (Approx 4 to 6 per group) with an assigned Leader and Second. Emphasise the need to stay in these groups.
- Each Group Leader will assign Minders for beginners.
- Make sure that each person has the appropriate clothing and equipment, and each group has safety and rescue gear. (See below)
- Some food and drink should be carried. Leaders need to stress the need to drink plenty of fluids throughout the trip.
- On colder days thermos flasks could be taken on the river.
- Ensure each Group Leader and Second knows the hazards of the river, the get-out point and other access points on the way.
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Safe practice guidelines on the river

- All participants should be competent at wet exits, bank entrances, tossing and receiving a throw line, emptying an overturned boat and self-rescue.
- Group Leaders, Seconds and Minders should be competent at rescuing swimmers and recovering boats and gear.

Leaders should ensure participants are aware of;

River signals and group organisation. (See river signals below)

Leaders should make the final decision on whether or not the group or an individual will run any section of the river or rapid, based on the physical and mental preparedness of participants, weather and river conditions. Leaders should be evaluating the group's skills, fitness, tiredness, etc., throughout the trip and adjusting rules accordingly.

When running major rapids the group should make visual reconnaissance of the rapid and discuss the safest route. The designated lead boat should run the rapid, turn out below, and wait for the next boat.

A regular head count should be made especially after a rapid, and at each bend in the river.

The Leaders', Seconds' and Minders' first responsibility is the safety (physical and emotional) of the individuals in their group.

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Equipment Recommendations

- All craft must be fitted with sufficient buoyancy to remain afloat and provide support when capsized.
- Footrests must be adjusted to the paddler, and must be of such a design to prevent the occupant's feet from being caught in front of the fitting.
- Each Kayak must have grab loops at each end.
- Each paddler must wear a buoyancy vest, helmet and spray deck. A paddle jacket should at least be carried in the boat.
- Clothing should be adequate to lessen the effect of sudden immersion in cold water and sufficient spare warm clothing should be carried.
- Footwear should be worn if possible. (Modern boats don't always allow for this). If footwear can't be worn it should be carried in the boat or on the person.
- All paddlers should carry their own first aid kits, spare clothes, spare food and be encouraged to carry throw bags, karabiners, slings, spare paddle, knife and folding saw.
- Leaders and Seconds should carry repair tape, first aid kit, karabiners, slings, split paddle, folding saw and an accessible heavy-duty knife.

Universal River Signals

Paddle or arm held horizontally and moved slightly up and down = stop!

Paddle or arm held vertically in line with the body = Go.

Vertically held paddle or arm waved back and forth = Help!

Paddle held out at 45° (or near as) to one side = go that way. N.B. **Never point at the hazard.**

Signals agreed on within the group can include;

First hitting open palm = hard landing.

Open hand hitting open palm at about 45° and skating off at 45° = boof move.

Hand held up with palm out and fingers stretched open = tree or sieve.

Pointing at outstretched tongue = tongue of water.

First hitting top of head = I'm okay, are you okay?

Hand pointing to the centre of head or stomach then travelling up and down the centre of the body = go centre.

Index finger pointing up and moved in a circular motion, then pointed in a certain direction = there is an eddy there to use.

Fist clenched and held up = rock

River Classification

- Grade 1** Rapids are small regular waves. The passage is clear and easy to recognise and negotiate. Care may be needed with obstacles like fallen trees and bridge piers.
- Grade 2** Rapids have regular medium sized waves (less than 1 metre), low ledges or drops, easy eddies and gradual bends. The passage is easy to recognise and is generally unobstructed although there may be rocks in the main current, over hanging branches or logjams.
- Grade 3** Rapids with high waves (1-2 metres), broken water, stoppers and strong eddies, exposed rocks and small falls. The passage may be difficult to recognise from the river and manoeuvring to negotiate the rapid is required.
- Grade 4** Rapids with high, powerful, irregular waves, broken water, often boiling eddies, strong stoppers, ledges, drops and dangerous exposed rocks. The passage is often difficult to recognise and precise and sequential manoeuvring is required.

Club trips will not be conducted above Grade 4 level