

Paddle Canada's Paddling Association Risk Management Requirements

Paddle Canada (PC) requires its Paddling Associations (PA) to comply with the risk management requirements outlined within. This lists the **minimum** requirements for managing risk during a sanctioned PA activity or event. In addition, PC recommends that the PA members review PC's safety and course policies posted on our Resources & Policies page of paddlecanada.com.

The following requirements are intended for clubs and organizations that participate in PC's shared insurance program. They are not intended to serve as a standard of care for commercial outfitters or guides.

Administrative Requirements

- **Waiver and Release of Liability:** All participants, volunteers, event organizers **must** read and sign the PC Waiver and Release of Liability form before participating with any event or activity. Individual members of a PA may satisfy this requirement by signing the PC waiver annually which are to be filed and stored by the PA member office (records to be stored for 7 years (remembering those under the age of majority must be kept for additional 7 years after that individual reaches the age of majority)).
- **PC Membership:** All activity or event participants must be a PC or PA member. Volunteers who are helping with the event but not actively participating need not become members however must still sign a PC Waiver and Release of Liability.
- **Property Damage:** Activity organizers must report all property damage resulting from a PC insured activity using the PC Accident/Incident Report form (available on paddlecanada.com).
- **Injuries:** Activity organizers, trip leaders must document all injuries that required first aid, attached to that persons waiver form on file. If professional medical attention is needed, a report **must** be filed to PC Office within 1 week, using the PC Accident/Incident Report Form & Holman Insurance Accident/Loss Claim Form. The report must include a copy of the original waiver of the injured party.

General Risk Management Requirements:

- **Lif jackets:** Lif jackets (PFD's) must be worn at all times and be appropriate fit at all times during on water activities. A PA is responsible for enforcing this requirement and understands that if a participant removes or fails to wear a lif jacket and injury or death occurs, our insurance company will deny coverage to the PA and its members.
 - **All Lif jackets must be Transport Canada or USCG approved.**
 - **Stand Up Paddleboards (SUP):** Transport Canada has determined that SUP's operating in the surf zone at a beach, are not navigating and therefore not

subject to the minimum equipment requirements such as a Lifejacket, rope, whistle and flashlight. However SUP's navigating outside the surf zone (traveling from point A to point B) are "recreational vessels" and therefore must carry a lifejacket for each person on board along with rope, whistle (and flashlight if operating at dusk or night).

- **Other exception to lifejacket wear:** Pool sessions where a nationally certified lifeguard is on duty;
- **Regulations for Guided Excursions:** Transport Canada requires minimum equipment requirements and procedures for any guided excursions. PA activities are required to follow these regulations. A full summary of these can be found in the document Transport Canada Vessel Regulations for Guided Excursions posted on [paddlecanada.com](http://www.paddlecanada.com) Resource & Policies page or download here http://www.paddlecanada.com/pdf/Guided_Excursion_Summary.pdf
- **Safety Briefing:** As part of the requirements for a Guided Excursion, Transport Canada states : "Instructors or guides will conduct, at the start of the course, an overview with all participants of all relevant safety and emergency procedures. The safety briefing will be conducted in either English or French according to the group's needs." Paddle Canada suggests a number of topics to be covered in a Safety Briefing to participants prior to departure. See **Safety Briefing** on PaddleCanada.com -> Instructor Resources -> Resources & Policies -> Policies: Paddle Canada Safety Briefing for All Disciplines & Courses.
- **Skills:** PA should maintain a culture that respects and recognizes different participant skill levels and does not place participants in situations that are beyond that persons abilities.
 - "Leaders" are responsible to know the skill levels required for the activity / trip and are required screen participants in advance to ensure they have the necessary skills.
 - Individual PA participants should also know their own skills and be empowered to voice concern to "Leaders" and to avoid conditions beyond their ability.
- **Leader : Participant Ratio** is not to exceed:
 - 1:10 in flatwater canoe tandem and 1:6 in solo canoe
 - 1:8 in Moving water canoe tandem and 1:6 in solo canoe
 - 1:8 in canoe overnight trips
 - 1:12 in Big Canoe (Voyageur canoe) – participant numbers are dependent on seats available
 - 1:9 in Coastal Canoe (Great Lakes or Ocean Canoeing)
 - 1:6 in kayak day trips
 - 1:4 in kayak overnight trips
- **Minimum Leader requirements** is defined as follows:
 - **Considerable experience (including rescues) in type of paddling craft for the excursion** (SUP , kayak or canoe). The PA is to define their own terms of experience for their location and waters through their own risk management plan.
 - **Have Paddle Canada skill or instructor certifications (or equivalent)** appropriate to the water classification / conditions (please refer to Annex A at the end of this document)

- **Have completed a Paddle Canada “Leader” or “Instructor” certification course**
- **Leaders have the ability to:**
 - **Communicate with the group** effectively on the water during an emergency capsize or situation.
 - **Prepare group gear and packing** for a day or overnight excursion
 - **Navigate** using charts and/or topographical maps, using compass for simple navigation and basic GPS knowledge, and communicate position (co-ordinates) to others including rescue services
 - **Marine Environment:** Use tide and current table for tidal predictions and navigation consideration
 - **Moving Water Environment:** Ability to read rapids for safe lines, eddies and identifying potential hazards. Know behaviour of particular river at different water levels.
 - **Weather:** Obtain appropriate marine weather forecast and understand and interpret its effect on paddling conditions.
- **Considerable familiarity of and time spent in excursion location waters** and shoreline with knowledge of local hazards (currents, wind, weather, shoals, boating channels, marine wildlife etc.) and emergency access and egress points.
- **Must carry and have ability to use a communication devices** appropriate for the trip location such as VHF marine radio, cell / satellite phone, sat tech devices such as SPOT or InReach.
- **First Aid:** Current Standard (14 hrs) First Aid & CPR. If excursion is to be at any time more than 1 hour away from advanced medical care (ambulance), then Wilderness 1st Aid (2 day) is strongly recommended.
- **Clothing:** All participants should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the weather and water temperatures at the place of activity. Participants must be made aware of possibility of capsize and be prepared to get wet. If the water temperature is less than 15 C, it is strongly recommended to have all participants dressed in wetsuits or drysuits or have rewarming clothes/methods at their immediate disposal. See Paddle Canada Trip & Clothing checklist:
http://www.paddlecanada.com/pdf/Check_Lists.pdf
- **Drug and Alcohol use:**
 - a. No intoxicants shall be consumed by any participant eight hours or less prior to any PA activities by the participants. Where appropriate, a PA leader may further limit the use of intoxicants by participants on the outing to ensure a safe and respectful paddling environment.
 - b. It is the responsibility of every PA leader to remove a participant from an activity, if she or he feels the participant is under the influence of intoxicants.
 - c. It is the responsibility of the leader to brief participants before the commencement of each excursion on the Paddle Canada Intoxicants Policy and their responsibility to maintain a respectful and safe environment for other participants alike.

- d. It is the responsibility of the participant to conform to this policy.
- e. For more info please see Paddle Canada Intoxicants policy:
http://www.paddlecanada.com/pdf/Paddle_Canada_Intoxicant_Policy.pdf
- **Paddling Alone:** The PC's program insurance covers group paddling activities only. There is no insurance for individuals paddling alone who are not part of a PA group activity.
- **Managing the Group:**
 - Leader : Participant Ratio is not to exceed those noted above in Leader Participant Ratio section. The leader will file a float plan and leave it with someone of responsibility who is not a participant of the excursion or filed according to their own PA Risk Management Policy.
 - PA leader will conduct a Safety Briefing with group prior to setting out on the water.
 - Leader is to designate a 'lead' boat that group follows and who navigates, and a 'sweep' boat to bring up the rear and make sure the group does not lose stragglers. Sweep also stays in contact with the 'lead' boat through appropriate use of signals or communication aids.
- **For all water venues (coastal, river, lake) :**
 - Activity leaders are required to have the following additional equipment according to locations
 - Navigation equipment: GPS, magnetic compass & navigation map (marine chart or topographic of region being paddled).
 - First Aid equipment.
 - Communication tools such as cell, SPOT, InReach, sat phones, marine radios as appropriate for trip location (minimum of one per group).
 - Rescue equipment : Tow System and/or Rescue Sling.

Risk Management for Specific Venues

- **Whitewater I-III :** All activity leaders must ensure additional equipment for the class of water they are paddling in such as :
 - wear properly fitting helmets.
 - have adequate flotation in each boat for the class of water.
 - throw rope(s) packed properly and accessible.
 - PA leaders are recommended to take a Paddle Canada Moving Water Safety and Rescue Clinic and/or any Swift Water Rescue training.
- **Large Events with General Public Involved:** Large events such as festival and races where members of the general public will be involved as participants or spectators, pose special risk management challenges. Some events will have both on and off water components. PC requires event organizers to follow these requirements:
 - **Prepare a risk management plan for the event** – If appropriate, appoint a risk coordinator or committee.
 - Inspect event site early in planning and again just prior to the event, identifying any risks that need to be addressed to participants or volunteers. Change locations if necessary.

- Notify municipality, land managers, emergency personnel, marine police or coast guard in advance as necessary.
- Determine the number of safety personnel needed on land and on water including safety boats (motorized) or otherwise. Safety boats should carry spare paddles and first aid kit and communication devices.
- Determine locations of first aid, safety and rescue equipment (numbers) needed and best location to store for the duration of the event.
- Prepare and distribute the following lists:
 - List of on site volunteers, coaches, participants.
 - List of safety and rescue equipment that is available and location.
 - List of communications resources available to event volunteers and location.
 - List of local and regional emergency contacts (police, fire, ambulance) including event organizer.
 - A plan to handle extreme weather (heat or cold) or changing water levels with plans for cancellations or postponing event.
 - Determine skill level required for participants to be included when promoting event and during registration process.
 - For races, hold an a pre-race meeting with all organizers, volunteers and participants to identify route, hazards, communication options, safety and rescue options and contingency plans in extreme weather or emergency.
 - Provide appropriate signage for spectators and participants to follow.
- **Serving Alcohol at Club Meetings, Banquets and Events:** PC's insurance policy does include Liquor Liability coverage for events and meetings. This is adequate for most situations however PA's, depending on the venue/municipality may be required to:
 - acquire provincial event liquor license from an alcoholic beverage control board.
 - follow provincial serving regulations (licensed server where appropriate).
- Alcohol may only be served post on-water activities and during on land activities.
- Consider whether selling or providing alcohol is really necessary.
- Plan to have plenty of non-alcoholic drink options like water, soft drinks, juice.
- Plan to provide food / snacks appropriate to temper effects of the alcohol.
- Monitor ages for under age participants by checking of ID and considering adding. wristband policy.
- Stop serving alcohol well before the event is over (suggest 1 hr).
- For more info or clarification on any of the above topics please contact the Paddle Canada office at 1-888-252-6292 - info@paddlecanada.com

Annex A – Equivalent Paddle Canada Levels for “Leaders” (based on type of craft and water classification)

- Sea Kayak trip Class 1 Water: Level 1 Sea Kayak Skills
- Sea Kayak trip Class 2 Water: Level 2 Sea Kayak Skills
- Sea Kayak trip Class 3 Water: Level 3 Sea Kayak Skills
- River Kayak trip: Class 1–2 – Intermediate River Kayak Skills
- River Kayak trip Class 2+ to 3 – Advanced River Kayak Skills
- Moving Water Canoe daytrip – Class 1 – Moving Water Canoe Intro Tandem Skills
- Moving Water Canoe daytrip – Class 2 – Moving Water Intermediate Tandem Skills
- Moving Water Canoe daytrip – Class 3 – Moving Water Advanced Tandem Skills
- Lake Canoe Daytrip – Pond or Lake Very Sheltered with little or no wind – Lake Canoe Intro Tandem
- Lake Canoe Daytrip – Pond or Lake with variable wind & waves – Lake Canoe Intermediate Tandem
- Overnight Canoe Trip (Lake and River) 2–3 days – Canoe Tripping Intro Tandem Skills
- Overnight Canoe Trip (Lake and River) – 4 plus days – Canoe Tripping Advanced Tandem Skills
- Big Canoe (Voyageur Canoe) Sheltered Daytrip on Pond, Lake, River or Ocean – Big Canoe Intermediate Leader, with Big Canoe River Endorsement if on River
- Big Canoe Daytrip in variety of wind and wave conditions on Pond, Lake, River and Ocean – Big Canoe Advanced Leader
- Coastal Canoe Daytrip – Class 1 Water – Coastal Canoeing Skills Intro or Lake Skills Intermediate
- Coastal Canoe Daytrip – Class 2 Water – Coastal Canoeing Skills Intermediate
- Coastal Canoe Overnight – Class 1–2 Water – Coastal Canoeing Skills Advanced
- Stand Up PaddleBoard daytrip – Class 1 Waters (Lake / Sheltered Water)– Advanced Flatwater SUP Skills
- Stand Up PaddleBoard – Class 2 Waters – Touring 1 SUP Skills
- Stand Up PaddleBoard River trip – Class 1 Water – River 1 SUP Skills
- Stand Up PaddleBoard River Trip – Class 2 – River 2 SUP Skills
- Stand Up Paddleboard Surf – Class 2 Waters – Surf 1 SUP Skills

Annex B – Coastal Water Classifications (based on BC Waters) :

Class 1 – Non challenging, protected waters with limited wind effect, little or no current, easy landings and ready access to land based assistance

Class 2 – Lightly populated areas with short crossings, moderate potential wind effects, gently to moderate non-turbulent currents, easy to moderate landings and light surf beaches

Class 3 – Exposed water, sparsely populated areas with more committing crossings, moderate to strong currents with turbulence, moderate to strong wind effects, ocean/lake swells, difficult landings, surf-beaches.

Annex C – International River Classification System and Paddle Canada Moving Water Programs

The International River Classification System is a useful tool to determine the severity of sections in a river. These guidelines offer a general classification for rivers, but paddlers should be aware that the system is not exact. Rivers do not always fit neatly into the various classifications, and regional interpretations of the classification system may create misunderstandings.

There is no substitute for a cautious approach to rivers with which a paddler is unfamiliar.

Whitewater Classifications (6)

Class I: Easy

- Few or no obstructions – all obvious and easily missed
- Fast-moving water with riffles and small waves
- Risk to swimmers is slight
- Self-rescue is easy

Class II: Novice

- Straight forward rapids with wide, clear channels that are obvious without scouting
- Occasional maneuvering may be required but trained paddlers miss rocks and medium-sized waves easily
- Swimmers are seldom injured and group assistance, while helpful, is seldom needed

Class III: Intermediate

- Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and capable of swamping an open canoe or kayak
- Complex manoeuvres in fast current and narrow passages requiring good boat control frequently exist
- Large waves, holes and strainers may be present but are easily avoided
- Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers
- Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties
- Chances of injury while swimming is low, but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims

Class IV: Advanced

- Intense, powerful rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water
- Depending upon the character of the river, there may be long unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast manoeuvres under pressure
- A fast reliable eddy turn may be needed to negotiate the drop, scout rapids or rest
- Rapids may require “must” moves above dangerous hazards Scouting is necessary the first time
- Risk of injury to swimmers is moderate to high, and water conditions may make rescue difficult
- Group assistance is often essential but requires practiced skills
- A strong Eskimo roll is highly recommended

Class V: Expert

- Extremely long, obstructed or violent rapids, which expose the paddler to above average risk of injury
- Drops may contain very large, unavoidable waves and holes or steep, congested chutes with complex, demanding routes
- Rapids often continue for long distances between pools or eddies, demanding a high level of fitness
- What eddies exist may be small, turbulent or difficult to reach
- Several of these factors may be combined at the high end of this class
- Scouting is mandatory
- Rescue is extremely difficult even for experts
- A very reliable Eskimo roll and above-average rescue skills are essential

Class VI: Almost Impossible

- Difficulties of Class V are carried to the limits of navigability
- Nearly impossible and very dangerous
- Risks are high and rescue may be impossible
- For teams of experts only at favourable water levels, after close study and with all precautions
- The frequency with which a rapid is run should have no effect on this rating, as there are a number of Class VI rapids, which are regularly attempted

How the International River Classification System connects with Paddle Canada's Moving Water Programs	
Class I	Introduction to Moving Water Tandem or Solo
Class II	Intermediate Moving Water Tandem or Solo
Class III	Advanced Moving Water Tandem or Solo
Class IV	No Paddle Canada Program
Class V	No Paddle Canada Program
Class VI	No Paddle Canada Program