

# Inverness Canoe Club – Risk Assessment



## Based on Guidance from the Scottish Canoe Association

This Risk Assessment is provided to give all those paddling with Inverness Canoe Club guidance as to the standards and precautions to be expected when taking part in Club activities. It is designed to ensure that everyone can have fun on the water in the knowledge that they are protected from harm to a reasonable degree. It does not guarantee safety, but it is intended to provide sensible advice to minimize risk.

General risk control measures:

All Coaches/Leaders:

- must hold the appropriate BCU/SCA coach/leader qualification
- must equip themselves with appropriate knowledge of the particular venue
- must have experience of and be comfortable on more challenging grades of water and conditions than they find on the day
- must remain in control of the group at all times
- must have planned for emergency situations and know the procedure to be followed for different types of incident.

All activities must commence with a group briefing covering hazards, safety, group control, signals, emergency action, any participant illnesses, water confidence and roles.

All Coaches/Leaders should ensure that they and the participants are fit to undertake the activity. Participants exhibiting signs of exhaustion, illness, or the influence of drugs or alcohol must not be allowed to participate. No activity is acceptable if it includes the consumption of alcohol before or during paddling.

All Coaches/Leaders will need to carry out dynamic risk assessments throughout the activity and act appropriately when circumstances are encountered which are not covered by this document.

The following are Club rules to which there are no exceptions:-

1. No Club water based activity shall take place with less than three participants
2. A properly fitted buoyancy aid must be worn at all times on the water
3. All participants will abide by the instructions and decisions of the activity leader

Where an individual Coach/Leader is unsure of their ability to run an event they must seek authorisation from the Club Committee before posting details on the events calendar. The Club will support the decision of a Coach/Leader to cancel, abort, or change the location of an activity for safety reasons.

The risk assessment process should have three components:

1. The generic risk assessment (below)
2. A site specific risk assessment, most of which will be contained in the route planning for the trip
3. Ongoing dynamic risk assessment throughout the activity/trip. This should include monitoring of variable hazards, such as changing weather, water levels, ability and morale of the group, etc. This third element of the risk assessment is not documented, but is as important as the first two. It should be undertaken primarily by the Coach/Leader, but in consultation with the rest of the group.

### Pre-paddle Briefing

A pre-launch briefing should be given by the Coach/Leader/Trip Organiser. This should include: introductions (if required), route, medical/fitness issues, weather, communications, safety procedures and kit, risks to paddlers.

A useful mnemonic for what to include in a briefing is: **MY ABCDE**

<b>Me</b>	(about the Coach or Leader)
<b>You</b>	(names of the group and experience, if not generally known)
<b>Area</b>	(the route, any hazards, weather)
<b>Boats</b>	(and equipment carried: who has the group shelter, First Aid kit, flares, tow ropes, etc.)
<b>Communication</b>	(VHF channel to be used, any signals needed, light sticks, etc.)
<b>Doctor</b>	(any medical issues in the group, or paddlers not at their usual ability; has anybody got any professional medical skills, etc.)
<b>Emergency</b>	(what happens in an emergency: who takes charge, any actions to be taken e.g. rafting up, towing, etc.)

### **Generic Risk Assessment for Organised Club Canoe and Kayak Events**

N.B. The majority of the principles contained in the first section apply to all subsequent sections

Hazard (Step 1)	Who might be harmed? (Step 2)	How is the risk controlled? (Step 3 & 4)	Review & revision (Step 5)
The Water (Drowning)	All Participants on and near the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All paddlers must wear buoyancy aids</li> <li>• Coaches and Leaders should hold the appropriate SCA/BCU Coaching Awards as outlined in the 'BCU Terms of Reference' document</li> <li>• Coach/Leader: participant ratios should not exceed those outlined in 'BCU Terms of Reference' document</li> <li>• Route planning should include, as appropriate: river grades, tides, tidal streams, weather, duration, distance, route, escape routes/points, known hazards</li> <li>• A site specific risk assessment will be carried out for locations where BCU definitions of e.g. sheltered water are open to interpretation</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders should carry out a dynamic risk assessment during the trip/activity</li> <li>• Group discipline should be maintained at all times, ensuring that all paddlers are in contact with each other. Once embarked on the trip, all paddlers are to remain part of the group. Any paddler/s who elects to splinter from the group does so at their own risk and no liability will be accepted by the trip leader or ICC</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders must be satisfied that all paddlers have the knowledge to perform a capsize drill and be able to re-enter their boats, with assistance, on the water</li> <li>• Appropriate safety equipment should be carried within the group, e.g. storm shelter, First Aid kit, repair kit and tow lines. This equipment should be accessible e.g. in a day hatch and its location known to all participants</li> <li>• More than one means of summoning assistance must be carried within the group (e.g. VHF radio, whistle, mobile phone, PLB (personal locator beacon), flares).</li> </ul>	
Sunburn / heat exhaustion	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate clothing/hats, etc. should be worn, along with high factor sun screen</li> </ul>	

Hazard (Step 1)	Who might be harmed? (Step 2)	How is the risk controlled? (Step 3 & 4)	Review & revision (Step 5)
Exposure to Cold (hypothermia)	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate clothing for the season, weather and air and water temperature should be worn.</li> <li>• Spare dry clothing should be included in personal kit carried in the boat</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders should have spare clothing, hot drinks and high energy foods, etc. with them</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders should continually monitor participants for signs of hypothermia.</li> </ul>	
Allergic reaction, seizure, coma or other life threatening onset of illness	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches/Leaders/Trip Organisers should check whether any paddlers have serious illnesses, such as diabetes, epilepsy, allergy or asthma, prior to the trip/activity starting</li> <li>• Paddlers should ensure that appropriate medicines (e.g. inhaler, EpiPen, etc.) are easily available at all times and that they have made the Coach/Leader/Trip Organiser/other participants aware of its location.</li> </ul>	
Conflict with others	All Paddlers On shore support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of other water users</li> <li>• In harbours, rivers, locks and canal systems act considerately and in a non-confrontational manner, both on and off the water</li> <li>• Alert fishermen to your presence by whistle and wait upstream until they reel in or give you directions to pass.</li> </ul>	
Collision with other water users	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches/Leaders should be aware of the potential dangers within the particular environment the group is paddling in</li> <li>• Be aware of the potential for other craft to be present and remain vigilant at all times</li> <li>• In harbours, estuaries and canal systems, be aware of commercial, amateur and deep draught shipping that may not be able to manoeuvre quickly to avoid small craft</li> <li>• In surf, have defined areas and follow surf etiquette. Beginners should be separated from other users.</li> </ul>	

Hazard (Step 1)	Who might be harmed? (Step 2)	How is the risk controlled? (Step 3 & 4)	Review & revision (Step 5)
Impact on Rocks (Head/body injury due to capsize)	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where conditions require it, helmets should be worn (e.g. in caves with swell, when rock-hopping in rough weather/swell, when negotiating rapids or when surfing waves near rocks)</li> </ul>	
Entrapments due to capsize	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches/Leaders must be satisfied that all paddlers have the knowledge to perform a capsize drill and be able to re-enter their boats, with assistance, on the water</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders/Peer Paddlers should be able to undertake rescues</li> <li>• Route planning should ensure that paddlers are directed away from known obstacles.</li> </ul>	
Slips / trips on the bank	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate footwear should be worn</li> <li>• Entry/exit routes should be assessed and areas of particular risk identified and avoided.</li> </ul>	
Manual handling	All Paddlers On-shore support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in manual handling to be a part of all beginners' sessions and to be repeated occasionally for all Club members</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders/Trip Organisers to remind participants of correct lifting techniques and to ensure that they have warmed up prior to unloading and carrying boats</li> <li>• Carrying distances should be minimised as far as possible and carry straps and trolleys, should be utilised, as appropriate</li> <li>• When carrying boats, two people per boat is recommended</li> <li>• It is recommended that heavy or fully loaded boats are carried by a minimum of 4 people, with carry straps, if appropriate.</li> <li>• Regular training in rescue techniques that avoid excessive strain when handling waterlogged boats and paddlers in the water should be undertaken.</li> </ul>	

Hazard (Step 1)	Who might be harmed? (Step 2)	How is the risk controlled? (Step 3 & 4)	Review & revision (Step 5)
Lost and/or damage to equipment	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate repair equipment to be carried and readily accessible (e.g. repair kit; sheet of plastic, duct tape, alcohol swabs, multitool, etc.)</li> <li>• Spare equipment to be carried within the group (e.g. paddles, warm clothes, etc.).</li> </ul>	
Musculo-skeletal injuries from general paddling	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches/Leaders should ensure proper stretching and warm up routine is carried out as an integral introduction to every paddle</li> <li>• Regular training in appropriate paddling techniques that avoid injury should be undertaken.</li> </ul>	
Strong Winds and Tides/Tidal Currents	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route planning should take into account most recent weather forecasts and available tidal information</li> <li>• Anticipated conditions should be explained as part of the pre-launch briefing</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders must be satisfied that all paddlers have the knowledge to perform a capsize drill and be able to re-enter their boats, with assistance, on the water</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders/Peer Paddlers should be able to undertake rescues</li> <li>• Contact should be maintained within the group at all times</li> </ul>	
Exhaustion	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route planning should take into consideration the abilities and fitness of all members of the group</li> <li>• Pre-launch briefing to be given to alert before exhaustion point</li> <li>• Coaches/Leaders to undertake dynamic risk assessment and regularly monitor participants condition</li> </ul>	

Hazard (Step 1)	Who might be harmed? (Step 2)	How is the risk controlled? (Step 3 & 4)	Review & revision (Step 5)
Infection from waterborne diseases	All Paddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water quality to be assessed visually prior to session</li> <li>• All cuts and abrasions to be covered</li> <li>• Hands should be washed before eating food</li> <li>• Where water quality is of particular concern, participants should shower after activity</li> <li>• All clothing should be washed and dried thoroughly after each activity</li> <li>• Take necessary steps to ensure biosecurity.</li> </ul>	

### **Dynamic Risk Assessment**

A dynamic risk assessment should be maintained throughout the trip, monitoring variable hazards, such as changing weather, water levels, ability and morale of the group, etc.

A dynamic risk assessment undertaken by the Coach/Leader/Trip Organiser is a critical part of risk management. The mnemonic CLAP is a very helpful framework for conducting dynamic risk assessments:

**C** - Communication. Is there a system in place for frequent communication with the people I am responsible for? If people are out of range of my voice, how do I communicate with them (VHF radio, whistle, use of signals, etc.)

**L** - Line of Sight. Can I see all the people I am responsible for? If they go out of sight, what arrangements have I made to ensure they are being looked after (e.g. move an assisting parent to watch that section)

**A** - Avoid the problem. Have I created a scenario where those on the water are naturally moving away from potential hazards?

**P** - Position of maximum usefulness. Where am I positioned in relation to those I am responsible for and the identified Site Specific hazards? Are the more experienced paddlers in a position to be able to assist those who might require help?

Adopted by: Inverness Canoe Club Committee

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