



TYNE VALLEY CANOE CLUB

RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the aim of Tyne Valley Canoe Club is to enable people of all ages and abilities to participate in Kayaking and Canoeing and to experience paddlesport in a variety of disciplines either at a recreational or competitive level. Participation in paddlesport carries with it a number of inherent risks and by its very nature as outdoor water sport is categorised as a 'Risk Sport'. This policy has been formulated to identify the hazards associated with paddlesport and to put in place a range of procedures and control measures to minimise the risks involved and to ensure the safety of all who participate in club activities. It is appropriate that all coaches, officials and volunteers are familiar with the contents of this policy and recognise their duty of care to both members and visitors to the club. The contents of this document must also be considered in the context of other club policies and rules.

This policy is, therefore, consistent with, and so reinforces, the policies and rules of Tyne Valley Canoe Club, which seek to promote and deliver safe paddlesport to all of its members.

All Club Coaches, Officials and Volunteers must recognise their duty:

- To take care of their own safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their actions.
- To be familiar with this safety policy and other policies and Club rules, which are to be considered in the context of Health and Safety.
- To co-operate with the General Committee in promoting safe paddlesport.
- To report damaged equipment or ineffective safety systems as soon as possible to the Club Officials or Senior Coach.
- Not to undertake any activity unless suitably experienced/qualified and the requisite safety equipment is available and in good condition.
- To be responsible for the Health and Safety matters within the site or area of the paddlesport activity they are leading.

ACTIVITIES

The policy sections cover all areas of paddlesport offered by the Club. These include:

- Inland Kayaking and Canoeing.
- Sea Kayaking.
- Competitions both club and interclub e.g. slalom, canoe polo etc...
- Swimming pool activities.
- Ventures and trips involving camping.

PROCEDURES

There are four key areas, which will be considered in the management of safety for paddlesport in the Club. They are:

1. Risk Assessment and Planning before a paddlesport activity or event.
2. Organisation of routines during the activity.
3. Control measures to minimise the risks.
4. Monitor and Review to ensure procedures are effective and that risk assessments are revised and updated as appropriate.

Section1. RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

All coaches, club officials, event leaders and volunteers are required to be familiar with the contents of this health and safety policy and the supporting **venue/site risk assessment sheets** and **activity risk assessment forms**. They should consult the relevant parts of these documents before undertaking any paddlesport activity or event and be aware that the policies will be periodically updated.

The Club Secretary will ensure that all club members who are involved in delivering paddlesport are in possession of a copy of this and other relevant documents.

Every activity is assessed for risk including carrying canoes and kayaks details of which are included on the risk assessment sheets. The Club attempts to find the right balance in the desire to eliminate risk with the need to reduce risk in order to maintain an interesting, engaging and exciting paddlesport activity.

Before a paddlesport activity Coaches will:

- Have carried out a risk assessment and referenced the risk assessment site sheets.
- Have available any necessary safety equipment such as throw bags, first aid kits and spare warm clothing.
- Ensure that all coaches and paddlers are wearing appropriate clothing for the activity.
- Ensure that all coaches and paddlers are wearing helmets and buoyancy aids.
- Brief and reinforce any safety points and guidelines, which paddlers must follow when paddling in a particular environment.
- Know how and when to use particular emergency equipment and protocols if the needs arise especially in a swimming pool.
- Have checked and noted the quality and condition of all items of canoes, kayaks, safety wear and rescue equipment.
- Be aware of any medical conditions and details of medication club members are taking. This information will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- Be in receipt of parental consent and medical information for children and youth members under 18 years of age.

Risk Assessment

The Club will carry a range of risk assessments on sites and venues, which are used for paddlesport activity. These will be periodically reviewed and updated by the Club Senior

Coach or named Official responsible for Health and Safety issues. It must also be recognised that the coach on an activity especially on river journeys where water levels have changed may carry out a dynamic risk assessments on route. Obstructions on narrow sections of rivers, which are choked with flood debris such as large trees, may be a serious and potential hazard.

The risk assessment sheets will have four components, which include:

1. Hazards – These include identified risks and potential hazards. These will be recorded as a list and will cover the following areas:

- Hazards generated by the site i.e. walking over particular terrain approaching the riverbank or activity site, steepness of gradient and state of paths etc...
- Hazards generated by the environment i.e. the weather conditions, the time of the year, the state of the water, the temperature of the water, river obstacles, overhanging branches, water quality; is there a risk of Weil's Disease? Sea tides and currents etc...
- Hazards generated by man including weirs, fish ladders, bridges, fences, other water craft, fishing lines and nets; other water traffic such as jet skis, surfers, speed boats, sailing craft and sea going vessels; discarded debris such as broken glass, tins and household appliances etc...
- Hazards generated by other canoeists and kayakers. These include collisions causing capsize and entrapment, being struck with a paddle and other incidents, which may be caused by inappropriate and foolhardy behaviour and disregarding the club codes of conduct, rules and procedures.
- Risks generated by the individual, which may have implications on self and others, safety. These may include attempting an activity out of their skill level and experience, paddling alone, masking medical conditions, which may influence their ability to perform paddlesport activity efficiently and competently, ignoring advice and instructions on and off the water, inappropriate and foolhardy behaviour when paddling, not wearing appropriate safety equipment and being inadequately clothed or equipped for an activity.

2. Who might be harmed? Cause and effect– A list of all the groups of people who are at risk. This section will identify the risk against the action from the hazards list and will include:

- All paddlers involved in paddlesport doing a particular activity. For example completing a capsize drill may carry a risk of head or face injury from a submerged rock, therefore, a suitable depth of water must be determined before the exercise is carried out etc...
- The group size should be restricted according to the guidelines recommended by the BCU and should be determined by the activity to ensure safe participation.
- The safe and effective use of equipment which will include paddlers moving around on the water so not to injure others by their actions. That games are carried out in a safe manner and the risks of some activities such as running over the deck of a raft of kayaks have been realised by the coach may result in injuries to participants etc...

3. Is the risk adequately controlled? – This section identifies the existing control measures and examines the activity environment, including setting the activity boundaries, limits and procedures. Examples of these controls are detailed below:

- Club coaches will carry out pre-check of launch site for apparent hazards such as broken glass bottles and tins etc...
- Club coaches will carry out pre-check of launch site and warn participants to be aware of the terrain, where to walk and where to put their hands when launching and landing.
- Instructions will be given on lifting and carrying especially to novice paddles.
- All canoes kayaks and equipment will be checked for defects and any found will be made safe.
- All paddlers will be adequately clothed appropriate to the weather and planned activity as recommended by the coach.
- Buoyancy aids and helmets will be worn at all times during canoeing activities.
- Participants are able to swim confidently wearing canoeing clothing, buoyancy aid and helmet.
- Participants will carry items of equipment as specified by the coach such as spare food, flask with hot drink, spare clothing, first aid kit etc...
- A warm-up will be completed prior to any paddling activity.
- Participants are appropriately briefed on the planned activity.
- Coaches and group leaders will brief participants on potential hazards and any safety procedures to be followed.
- Coaches will set limits/boundaries for canoeing activities where appropriate.
- The recommended minimum group size for paddlesport activities where a coach is not present will be three.
- Participants will be practised in capsize drills and be aware of rescue procedures.
- All novice and youth paddlers will operate under the guidance and supervision of a club coach.
- Participants will be warned of the dangers of chewing and eating whilst canoeing in case of unexpected immersion and the risk of choking as a result.
- Coaches and group leaders will carry a hot drink, spare clothing in addition to a bivey bag to deal with incidents of participants suffering from the effects of cold or Hypothermia.

4. Further actions take to control the risk – This section identifies any additional actions taken to control the risks and in particular examines the competence and qualifications of the coaches and leaders in the context of the BCU Coaching Certification. The Club will ensure that all club coaches who are teaching and leading groups hold current and up-dated certification including valid first aid certificates. Examples of additional control measures are summarised below:

- The Clubs senior coach will monitor all paddlesport activities.
- All paddlesport-coaching activities will be under the supervision of qualified BCU coaches with awards pertinent to the level of water or activity taking place (reference BCU guidelines).
- Experienced canoeists who intend to enter the BCU coaching scheme may operate under the direct supervision of a club coach.
- Coaches and leaders will check the competence and experience of coaching volunteers and assistants prior to activities.

- All participants will be fully briefed and aware of the type of activity they will be involved in.
- It will be established that participants are able to confidently swim wearing clothing, buoyancy aid and helmet.
- No junior members are allowed on the water unless supervised by an adult coach.
- No beginner or novice members are allowed on the water unless they are under the supervision of a club coach or suitably experienced paddler.
- All coaches will hold current BCU Awards and valid first aid certificates.
- All coaches and leaders will carry a first aid kit as part of their standard kit for coaching when teaching or leading paddlesport activities.
- A first aid kit is available in the club store for on site emergencies.
- Appropriate rescue equipment will be carried by club coaches/leaders and additional throw bags are available in the club store.
- Weather and water conditions are reviewed by coaches and leaders prior to paddlesport and will be constantly monitored during the course of the activity for any changes.
- Coaches and leaders will ensure that river and sea conditions are within the experience and capabilities of the participants.
- The coach must be prepared to abandon or halt an activity if weather and water conditions worsen or when the safety of club members is in doubt.
- All paddlesport will be undertaken at the pace of the slowest participant.
- All club kayaks and canoes are regularly checked and are fitted with additional air bags.
- All helmets and buoyancy aids are periodically checked for damage and wear.
- Club Accident and Emergency procedures will be followed.
- Where transport is shared, members do so at their own risk.
- Coaches will brief members of the dangers of other water born craft and water users such as fishermen etc...
- Where camping is concerned participants are responsible for being properly equipped and prepared.

Section 2.ORGANISATION OF ROUTINES DURING THE ACTIVITY

It is important for coaches and group leaders to ensure that certain preparation and activity routines are followed as a matter of course. A summary of these routines is detailed below.

- A register of junior and youth members will be taken detailing emergency contact numbers and medical information as appropriate.
- Coaches and leaders will constantly check the state of helmets and buoyancy aids to ensure they have not come loose or been unfastened during the activity.
- Frequent reference will be made to apparent hazards and safety rules when appropriate.
- Before paddlesport activity participants should be advised to remove large rings and items of jewellery, which could become snagged.
- Participants should be warned of the danger of '**LEPTOSPIROSIS**' (**Weil's Disease**) and the actions to prevent infection. It is advised to wash or shower after paddlesport activity.

- During the paddlesport activity coaches will constantly monitor participants for the effects of cold and for symptoms of '**Hypothermia**' especially following water immersion and if it is an especially cold and windy day.
- Coaches should be aware of the effects heat and monitor participants especially on very hot days for the onset of '**Hyperthermia**' or '**Heat Stroke**'. This may be the result of wearing heavy dry tops and dehydration brought on by strenuous activity.
- Participants in paddlesport should be encouraged to develop a strong sense of safety awareness for themselves and others and be familiar with the general safety rules and procedures. They must heed the coaches' advice on how to avoid potential risks when approaching elements of the activity. This is especially relevant when coaching child and youth members.
- Coaches should encourage participants to correctly equip themselves with the correct safety wear and be advised on how to check items for damage how to ensure they are correctly fitted and fastened prior to paddlesport activity.
- Canoes/kayaks and canoeing equipment must be treated with respect and not mishandled in such a way that damage occurs. For example kayaks should be carried and not dragged across the ground.
- Any damage to safety wear and canoeing equipment must be reported immediately.
- At the end of the session the members will ensure that all items of equipment borrowed will be dried and stored in the appropriate manner.
- All serious incidents, accidents and cases of emergency will be reported to the Chairperson or other senior club official as soon as possible after the event.

Equipment Checking

The following equipment checks will be routine and carried out periodically and before use in paddlesport:

Safety Wear

- Buoyancy aids – check jacket for tears, damage to zip, and integrity of inherent floatation foam. If necessary carry out annual check of buoyancy jacket by completing a floatation test according to current BCU Guidelines for centres.
- Helmets – check dome for damage and intrusion, cradle and foam integrity and chinstrap is secure.
- Throw bags – Check that the rope is correctly stored and that there are no tangles, which will prevent the efficient deployment of the bag in an emergency.

Kayaks

- Kayaks – check the hull for visible damage or penetration; check location and fixing of the buoyancy foam blocks is secure. Check bow and stern airbags are inflated and have no leaks. Ensure that the footrests are fixed and that there are no loose fixing bolts and that the backrests are correctly positioned. Ensure that the end grabs are firmly located and are sound.
- Sea Kayaks – additional checks will include the hatch covers that they are not damaged and the seals are sound. Ensure the skeg or rudder systems operate effectively and that they are not jammed. Check that deck-lines and tow systems are secure and not loose or broken.

Open Canoes

- Hull – carry out a visual check to the hull ensuring there are no splits or serious damage. Ensure the seats, thwarts and gunwales are sound and the fixing bolts have not come loose or undone. Check that the bow and stern floatation and air bags are correctly inflated and attached. End painters and handles must be attached and undamaged.

Kayaking/Canoeing Equipment

- Paddles – check the integrity of the blades and ensure there is no damage to the blade or loam, which will cause failure.
- Spray decks – ensure there are no splits in the deck or deterioration of the coaming or waist elastics. Check that the release strap stitching is sound and that the waterproof backing of the nylon deck is damaged that serious leaks will occur.

Any damaged items of safety wear, which is considered a risk to health and safety will be withdrawn from use and destroyed.

Accidents

- In the event of a participant of paddlesport injuring them self, dealing with that incident must take priority.
- All activity must STOP and the rest of the group must get out of their canoes and be organised on the river bank or shore in such a way as they themselves are not at risk and so not to hinder the actions of the coaches/group leaders whilst they are dealing with the incident. Ensure that they are adequately supervised.
- Stay calm but act swiftly and observe the situation. Is there danger of further injuries?
- Listen to what the injured person is saying.
- First Aiders in the group must be alerted.
- Do not move someone with major injuries. Wait for emergency medics.
- Small cuts and abrasions can be dealt with using personal first aid kits, which should be carried or from the first aid kit located in the canoe store.
- Serious accidents and incidents will be dealt with in the appropriate manner by calling the emergency services or police if warranted. Mobile phones are recommended to be carried by club coaches and group leaders, which would be used in the event of an incident or emergency.

Reporting Accidents, Incidents and Emergencies

- All serious incidents, accidents and cases of emergency will be reported to the Chairperson or other senior club official as soon as possible after the event and the details will be recorded using the club accident and incident/accident reporting form.
- In the event of a very serious incident it may be necessary to involve the police in the initial stages of calling the emergency services.
- In the event of emergency treatment being required by a doctor or accident and emergency hospital department, a member of the injured parties family must be notified.

- If the accident is very serious the Club Chairperson/General Committee will inform the British Canoe Union by using the appropriate channels.
- Coaches and group leaders who were in attendance when the accident or incident occurred must not speak to the media under any circumstances.
- When the accident or emergency has been dealt with to an acceptable conclusion coaches and group leaders must ensure all other participants are returned home safely.

Note: Simplified guidelines for dealing with incidents and accidents have been compiled to support this section and its contents have been made known to all club officials, coaches and event leaders.

SECTION 3. CONTROL

- i) **Safety information:** Details of the Tyne Valley Canoe Club safety policies and Governing Body guidelines will be held by the Club Secretary and Chairperson. In addition all Club Committee members, club coaches and volunteers will also be in receipt of up to date copies of the Club Health and Safety documents. Any changes in policy and guidelines will be communicated to all the above mentioned and absorbed into the safety procedures and routines of the Club.
- ii) **Damage to equipment:** In the event of damage to or faults with equipment, which is liable to render their further use dangerous, it is important that the equipment is physically removed from use and destroyed if appropriate.
- iii) **Safety training for coaches:** It is expected of all coaches that they make every effort to attend any canoeing safety training and assessment courses, which, are a prerequisite for their awards and be familiar with current recommendation. These are run from time to time both by the Club and British Canoe Union. Safety prerequisites are built into the BCU Coach Awards in both training and assessment. Coaches are required to maintain current ***First Aid Certification*** and the club organises training and assessment courses in this respect. The Clubs Senior Coach will offer guidance to prospective coaches and current coaches in order to ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the awards they are pursuing or already hold.
- iv) **Operating guidelines:** Coaches will only operate on the level of water, which their award entitles them to so and according to the British Canoe Union guidelines. Coaches who wish operate at higher levels will be expected to progress through the appropriate coach training and assessment courses operated by the BCU.
- v) **Safety training for club members:** It is expected during the normal course of paddlesport that members will be coached in appropriate safety matters. Some of the areas, which will be covered include:
 - Why it is important to wear a buoyancy aid.
 - Why it is important to wear a helmet.
 - Lifting and carrying kayaks and canoes.
 - Hazards to canoeists.
 - The effects of cold (wind chill).
 - Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease).
 - Never to canoe alone.
 - Recognising one's level of ability.
 - What to do in the event of capsize.
 - The ability to swim in canoeing clothing.

- vi) **Leader equipment:** It is expected that coaches and group leaders whilst leading paddlesport will have available items of equipment applicable to the level of journey or event. The following list represents the basics of a leaders pack:
- First Aid Kit.
 - Mobile Phone.
 - Throw Bag
 - Bivey Bag.
 - Spare Clothing.
 - Flask with hot drink.
 - Spare food.
 - Repair kit for canoe/kayak.
 - Pencil and paper.
 - Map of off site venue.

SECTION 4. MONITOR AND REVIEW

It is appropriate to have in place systems in order to Monitor and Review health and safety matters in the Club. This is in three parts:

1. Procedures for reporting safety matters

- Always inform the Chairperson of any accident or incidents, which have occurred whilst involved in paddlesport activity.
- Matters of concern in respect of safety procedures and systems should be made known to the Chairperson/Club Secretary/Senior Club Coach that they can be acted on.
- All Club coaching staff and officials will be informed of any revisions made to safety policy and will be in receipt of a copy of the Risk Assessment Policy.
- Any damage or faults to canoeing equipment will be reported immediately to the Chairman/Senior Coach or Equipment Officer. A decision will be made as to when the equipment can be used again or if it is necessary to withdraw it from stock and replace it.

2. Procedures for circulating safety information

On receipt of any new legislation or safety recommendations received by the Club will be analysed and categorised by the Club Committee under one of three headings:

- i) ***Immediate action required:*** Coaches, officials and leaders are verbally informed by the Chairman/Senior Coach and are given a circular, which they are asked to read as soon as possible. The '***Risk Assessment Policy***' and related '***Risk Assessments***' will be updated as appropriate.
- ii) ***Medium/long term action required:*** All Coaches, officials and leaders are made aware of possible forthcoming adjustments to policies and procedures and the risk assessments are then altered as appropriate. This may arise through general revisions recommended by the General Committee or from other relevant bodies.

- iii) **No action required:** The contents confirm that the Club already practise the recommendations being made. All coaching staff and club officials will still be made aware of the suggested recommendations. All such materials received by the club will be retained and filed.

3. Procedures for reviewing and revising safety policies and risk assessments

The Club safety policy and risk assessments will be reviewed on an annual basis and will take into account any recommendations being made by the British Canoe Union or other relevant bodies.

Any amendments to this policy will be notified to Club members at the Annual AGM. If necessary these will be notified to members in the Club Newsletter given out as information circular.

Supporting Policies

The following Club Policies should be referenced in particular contexts in support of this document. They include:

- Club Duty of Care.
- Supervision of Away Trips.
- Club Code of Conduct.
- Junior Code of Conduct.
- Child Protection Policy.

Declaration of Acceptance of the Risk Assessment Policy

All members of Tyne Valley Canoe Club will read this policy when they become members and sign a receipt of acceptance attached to the Club membership form as required under Section 25 of the Club Constitution.

DECLARATION

Name.....

Upon acceptance into membership of TYNE VALLEY CANOE CLUB I hereby accept the rules and conditions of the Club and understand that canoeing is undertaken at my own risk. I confirm that I do not suffer from any disability or medical condition, which may render me unfit for strenuous exercise*

I have read and accept the Risk Assessment and Child Protection policies.

*Signed.....Date.....

#Parent/Guardian (if under 18).....

*Should a medical condition exist, this will not necessarily preclude you from membership/participation, but it must be declared. Should you be in doubt, advice should be sought from your family doctor.
#For membership under 18, signing this section gives consent for day excursions.

Date of last revision: 1:03:2006

Date of next review: On an annual basis and when revisions will be made if deemed to be necessary and appropriate.

D Gray. (Chairperson)