

MARATHON CANOE RACING COUNCIL SAFETY POLICY

I. SCOPE

These guidelines provide the minimum requirements for the safe conduct of marathon canoe activities. The guidelines do not specify the requirements for every conceivable activity or environmental condition. The onus is on coaches and race organizers to ensure that they undertake a thorough Risk Assessment prior to activities to ensure that additional requirements are considered and if required undertaken.

II. PURPOSE

(a) All on-water activity involves risks and hazards, most of which can be eliminated by thorough planning, effective management and good coaches. Well run activities will:

- contribute to the safety of participants and the public
- assist in the smooth running of the activity
- add to the enjoyment of the participants

(b) The purpose of these guidelines is to promote safe, well run and enjoyable canoe activities. These guidelines play an important role in fulfilling MCRCs goal to pursue high standards of safety, education and training in all aspects of the sport. The Guidelines:

- provide information from which the MCRC can establish appropriate policies and standards for their canoeing activities
- provide details on managing participants before, during and after activities
- establish minimum standards for the management of emergencies

III. GENERAL PADDLER SAFETY FOR MCRC SANCTIONED EVENTS

- 1) A lifejacket or personal floatation device (PFD) must be carried for every competitor in a boat.
- 2) All lifejackets and PFDs must meet federal government approval and be of appropriate size for the paddlers.
- 3) All bantam paddlers (age 13 and under as of January 1st of that racing season) must wear a lifejacket or PFD.

- 4) All junior paddlers (age 14 – 17 as of January 1st of that racing year) must wear a lifejacket or PFD while in a North Canoe, a Montreal Canoe or an OC6.
- 5) October 31st to April 1st within Canada, all paddlers in every class must wear a lifejacket or PFD.
- 6) It is highly recommended that all weak and non-swimmers wear a lifejacket or PFD throughout the entire race.
- 7) According to the *Small Vessel Regulations (Amended July 13th, 2017)* **PART 2** Safety Equipment for Pleasure Craft **SUBPART 5** Exceptions for Human-Powered Pleasure Craft Paddleboats, Watercycles, and Sealed-Hull, Sit-on-Top **Sections 220-222**:
 - a. **Racing Canoes and Racing Kayaks**
 - b. 221 (1) A racing canoe or racing kayak that is engaged in formal training, in an official competition or in final preparation for an official competition that is governed by safety guidelines and procedures established by the governing body is not required to carry on board the safety equipment required by this Part if it is attended by a safety craft that is carrying on board a personal flotation device or lifejacket of an appropriate size
 - (a) for each person on board the canoe or kayak, if the safety craft is attending only one pleasure craft; or
 - (b) for each person on board the canoe or kayak with the most persons on board, if the safety craft is attending more than one pleasure craft.
 - c. 221 (2) However, if the canoe or kayak is not attended by a safety craft, it is required to carry on board the following safety equipment:
 - (a) a personal flotation device or lifejacket of an appropriate size for each person on board;
 - (b) a sound-signalling device; and
 - (c) a watertight flashlight, if the canoe or kayak is operated after sunset or before sunrise or in periods of restricted visibility.
- 8) For events where, competing craft may be isolated (out of sight of other craft and race officials) on the course, it is recommended that all safety equipment be carried by all competing craft i.e. lifejackets or PFDs, a sound signaling device (whistle), a bailer with a minimum capacity of one litre, and a watertight flashlight where time of day dictates.
- 9) Bantam age paddlers, spring and fall races and non-swimmers are subject to paragraphs (3) to (6).

IV. INCIDENT REPORTING

The reporting of accidents and incidents with the maintenance of an incident database allows all paddlers to benefit from the experiences of others. MCRC maintains records of marathon canoeing incidents and accidents that resulted in injury or had the potential to result in injury to use as learning opportunities.

- 1) Accidents are to be recorded on the ELCC Accident Report Form found in Appendix A or in the ELCC Marathon Canoe Coach Workbook
- 2) The MCRC Chair is to be notified of any major incidents

V. RACE GUIDELINES

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RACERS:

- 1) If you come across competitors who have tipped, or are in trouble, aid if needed.
- 2) If a racer withdraws from a race before the finish, he/she must inform the race organizer as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in a ban from future competitions.
- 3) Race competitors and officials may not use alcohol, illegal or intoxicating drugs before, or during the race. Failure to comply will result in disqualification and local authorities will be informed.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTINS FOR BANTAM RACES:

- 1) All races involving Bantam paddlers (<14yrs) must be supervised by one safety boat for three teams. The safety boat can be a canoe or a motorized craft.
- 2) The recommended maximum distance is 5 km. Distance is at the discretion of the race organizer.
- 3) A bantam race<14yrs should be postponed or canceled in the event of poor weather or water conditions. This is also at the discretion of the race organizer.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RACE ORGANIZERS:

- 1) If the person responsible for running the race (the Race Chairman) is a competitor, a non-competitor must be designated to act as Race Chairman during the race.
- 2) If a change in the race-course is required, the Race Chairman or a designate must be available and be prepared to make changes. If poor weather conditions or water conditions might threaten the safety of racers an alternate route should be available.
- 3) No race shall start in a thunderstorm.

- 4) The MCRC Safety Policy must be posted at each race site.
- 5) An emergency action plan (EAP) must be implemented. The EAP consists of appointing an "in charge" person to make decisions in the event of an emergency; a "call" person to arrange for medical assistance and transport to medical facilities; and the preparation of an EAP outline that contains phone/contact numbers for medical facilities (hospitals and clinics, St. John Ambulance, etc.), police, fire department, doctors (e.g. 911 services if available). GPS or detailed street addresses and routes to the site for access by outside medical assistance should be described in the EAP outline. The EAP outline must be posted with the Safety Policy in a readily accessible location at the race site start.
- 6)
 - a) All competitors must sign waivers; competitors under 18 years of age require the signature of a parent or guardian (respective team or club coach). Waivers must inform the participants of the potential dangers and personal risks involved with competitive paddling events.
 - b) For legal and liability reasons, the Organizer must retain waivers for at least two years after the event. When younger paddlers are named, waivers must be retained for at least two years after they have reached the age of majority.
- 7) A mandatory race briefing must be held prior to all races and include the following information:
 - a. Race course and rules
 - b. Potential safety hazards
 - c. Review the safety plan
 - d. Personal safety requirements
 - e. Paddler code of conduct – see appendix
- 8) The entire race course, including portages, must be inspected for hazards before the race with these removed where possible. Where hazards cannot be removed, they should be clearly marked, and the participants informed as to the nature and locations of the hazards during a pre-race briefing. Where hazards exist on the course, there must be safe routes to by-pass them.
- 9) All portages should be clearly marked, groomed, and if possible supervised and clear of spectators. Portages on roads should be closely supervised, with traffic controlled by local police if necessary.
- 10) Motorized patrol boats must be used for lake portions of races, unless the entire race is within view of the race organizers and the course is never more than 200 meters from the nearest accessible shore line. If possible, contact local police for assistance. On rivers, provide a patrol boat if possible. If this is not possible, use a check point system.

- 11) A map of the course shall be posted at each race site. A briefing before the race should describe the course and refer to the map.
- 12) Race organizers must ensure that all racers have finished the course safely and are off the course after a predetermined posted time.
- 13) A sweep boat or a tally system must be used to ensure that all competitors have been accounted for.
- 14) First aid kits must be available at the race site. It is recommended that personnel with St. John's Ambulance, Red Cross, or equivalent first aid training be available at the site.
- 15) At least one vehicle at the race site should be designated and be available for emergency medical transportation.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COACHES

- 1) All coaches must be familiar with, and enforce, this MCRC Safety Policy.
- 2) Before coaching at a site, a coach shall familiarize him/herself with the site and water conditions and be aware of hazards or obstacles.
- 3) Coaches are responsible for inspection of canoeing/kayaking equipment to ensure it is safe and that it is appropriate for the participants and racing/training conditions at the site.
- 5) It is recommended that coaches be trained in First Aid and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), water safety and life saving.
- 6) It is recommended that all coaches in charge of, or supervising, on-water activities be Trained or Certified in Marathon NCCP ELCC or an equivalent.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MCRC EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:

- 1) Monitor the Safety Program and act as resource persons for race organizers and new paddlers.
- 2) Compile an updated list of rules and a safety policy that is to be forwarded to all race organizers prior to the racing season.
- 3) Review Safety Policy annually prior to the Annual General Meeting.

Adapted from the OMRCA Safety Policy - December 2007
Approved April 5, 2008 - Updated Nov 2018

PADDLER SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

THE PADDLER

- a. Be able to swim confidently and be confident in water, even with the clothing you will wear paddling.
- b. Wear a PFD when and where appropriate.
- c. Be honest with yourself and your paddling partner about your ability. Paddling a canoe on quiet water doesn't qualify you for more difficult conditions.
- d. The waters of creeks, rivers, and lakes are all very different, and demand knowledge and skill. Develop your paddling incrementally, preferably with people more skilled than yourself. Clubs are wonderful.
- e. Beware of cold water and weather extremes. Swimming ability and lifejackets cannot counteract for long the effects of very cold water.
- f. Be equipped for the conditions that could occur. Secure your belongings (keys!), have appropriate footwear, allow for protection against the sun, wind, and rain.
- g. Learn how to capsize, to rescue yourself and others and learn first aid, so that you are prepared for an emergency.
- h. Seek training. Look for coaching courses or clinics to attend.
- i. Before accepting an invitation to undertake a paddle, enquire about:
 - i. who is organising it
 - ii. the leader
 - iii. the water (creek, stream, river, lake)

If you accept, give the leader a frank assessment of your skill and experience and your full cooperation.

EQUIPMENT

- a. Make certain you have the right canoe for the paddle, race or trip!
- b. Test new and unfamiliar equipment before undertaking hazardous assignments. This includes alterations to gear.
- c. The canoe must be in good condition before starting a paddle.
- d. Carry a spare paddle in a position where you can get at it quickly.
- e. Use spraycovers whenever there is any possibility that water may come into the canoe in quantity.
- f. Carry water, food, a patch kit, and any safety equipment.
- g. Leave a plan of your trip with a responsible person and an expected time of arrival at your destination.

THE LEADER

- a. The leader should describe the conditions that could be experienced to prospective paddlers, prior to acceptance of invitations.

- b. The leader should not allow persons to participate beyond their proven ability, nor allow inappropriate canoes to start.
- c. The leader must know the range of weather conditions which may occur and their influence on the water conditions
- d. Before starting and at any appropriate time, the leader should make it clear that his or her decisions in the interest of safety are final.
- e. The leader nominates the functions of other group members and the formation on the water.
- f. By example the leader should impart knowledge, skill and confidence.

IN THE EVENT OF A CAPSIZE

- a. Keep calm but very much alert.
- b. Stay on the upstream or upwind side of your canoe.
- c. Be aware of your responsibility to assist your partner (in the case of pairs).
- d. Follow your rescuers' instructions.
- e. Leave your canoe only if this improves your safety. If rescue is not close at hand and the water is dangerously cold or worse rapids follow, then swim in the appropriate direction for the nearest point of personal safety. The loss of the finest craft is not worth even the risk of personal safety.
- f. If swept into a rapid, then swim feet first on your back. Keep your head clear of the water for good visibility.

AS A RESCUER

Go after the paddlers. The canoe can wait until the paddlers and you are safe.