

Bideford Canoe Club Risk Assessment: white water sessions (Grade 2-3)

Canoeing is 'an assumed risk', 'water contact' activity however serious accidents are very rare. More people drown whilst cycling than canoeing. Accidents can be avoided by a combination of training, based on the accepted code of technique and safety; and experience gathered over a number of years, where techniques are acquired and practiced under the shadow of a leader.

Accidents can be placed in three broad categories:

- Lack of knowledge – as the saying goes 'fore-warned is fore-armed'. You can never know enough.
- Over-estimation of ability – common with inexperienced canoeists.
- Carelessness – may affect both novice and expert. Ensure you have sound knowledge of the skills, techniques and equipment you are using by undertaking adequate training and practise.

| Significant hazards | Persons at risk | Severity 1-5 | Likelihood 1-5 | Rating | Controls/Actions required |
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| Risk of drowning as associated with water sports | All | 5 | 2 | 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 4 Star River Leader who is trained in CPR to supervise all sessions where paddlers are inexperienced at this level • Confirm that new participants have either the new 2 Star or have shown equivalent skills, i.e. have other experience on lesser rivers, as recommended by the Club • New 'improvers' to be given one-on-one attention |
| Entrapment in boat | All, but especially paddlers new to white water | 5 | 2 | 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Star Leader(s), with the help of other adults who are competent paddlers, to supervise all 'improvers' at this standard • Leader to ensure kayaks and equipment are appropriate and serviceable before the trip leaves • Leader to ensure all group members know how to avoid upstream pins, and practice avoiding them • Group to be briefed on fallen tree hazards and how to avoid. Leadership system protects group from the unexpected • Leader to carry safety equipment to enable rapid rescue, if required. |
| Banging head or other body parts on other boats/ | All | 3 | 2 | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All paddlers to wear CE approved and well fitted helmets. |

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| rocks/river bed | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elbow pads advisable on rocky low river levels |
| Extreme cold weather and hypothermia | All | 5 | 2 | 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Leader who is trained in first aid to make a "dynamic" decision regarding appropriate clothing for each session – club recommendation for all is minimum long sleeved wetsuit and cag in winter • If wet activities/drills are planned then River Leader should make a common sense decision regarding where and when they should take place (how close to bank/end of journey etc.) • In cold weather the trip leader/group should carry hot drinks and either spare clothes and a bothy or be within 10 minutes of vehicles. • Avoid running beginner/junior trips when the weather is very cold, icy or snowy as they are unlikely to enjoy themselves and a swim could be serious/uncomfortable/horrible! |
| Extreme hot weather | All | 2 | 2 | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During any session lasting over 1 hour all participants should be encouraged to carry a drink • During hot and sunny weather all participants should be encouraged to wear sun cream when on the water • On longer journey's in sunny weather the River Leader should make sure that paddlers are either not wearing too much and/or deliberately engineer situations whereby participants will get wet and cool off • The River Leader should be familiar with the signs a treatment of heat stroke |
| Slippery banks | All | 3 | 2 | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Leader ensures all group members have suitable footwear, capable of making portages on rough and/or slippery ground. Footwear should not easily come off when swimming. |

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| Moving and handling boats | All | 2 | 3 | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and egress at safe places, with suitable eddies. • All paddlers encouraged to carry boats in pairs where strength and unfamiliarity are issues • Boats tied on securely to vehicles/trailer, checked by driver |
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SEVERITY: 1 – minor injury; 2 – injury needing medical attention; 3 - injury needing 5 days off work/school; 4 - Serious injury/long term sickness; 5 – fatality.

LIKELIHOOD: 1 – impossible; 2 – unlikely; 3 – even chance; - 4 – likely; 5 – certain.

A “responsible club member” is considered to be either a member of the club committee or a long-term member of the club who has either coaching qualifications or a 4 Star proficiency award.