

Bideford Canoe Club Risk Assessment: sea kayaking

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
Risk of drowning as associated with water sports	All	5	2	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A trained Leader (4 or 5 Star) who is trained in CPR to supervise all organised outdoor sessions • Confirm that new participants can swim before they join in with the session • Paddlers new to sea kayaks to be given one-on-one attention in sheltered safe conditions
Delays in getting help diminishes survival times	All	5	1	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to carry VHF radio and be trained/qualified in its use • Cell phone carried as back up • Flares carried for coastal and off-shore trips
Entrapment in boat	All, but especially beginners	5	2	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A qualified Leader, with the help of other adult\ (not necessarily first aid or kayak coach trained), to supervise all outdoor sessions • Adults to help juniors/beginners to select a kayak at the start of a session and to confirm that they are confident getting in and out of their boat • An adult must discuss a capsize drill with beginners before they get on the water • Beginners to perform a capsize drill at the end of their first session (subject to their confidence) or sooner so they can be given

					more freedom in the future
Injury from rocks/shell fish when near rocks with swell or in surf	All	3	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to make a "dynamic" decision regarding what activities are/are not suitable for each session and where the best place is • Helmets to be worn in surf or 'rock-hopping' sessions
Extreme cold weather and hypothermia	All	5	2	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified Leader 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, preferably drysuit in winter • If wet activities/drills are planned then Leader should make a common sense decision regarding where and when they should take place (how close to shore/end of journey etc.) • In cold weather the trip leader/group should carry hot drinks and either spare clothes and a bothy • 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!
Stormy weather and changing weather	All	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to be well informed and competent in interpreting inshore forecasts • Escape route built in when weather deteriorates • Plan B available
Extreme hot weather	All	2	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During any session lasting over 1 hour all participants should be required to carry sufficient drink. This may be up to 4 litres • 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 clothing to be appropriate with changes and waterproofs easily available

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leader should be familiar with the signs a treatment of heat stoke
Slippery banks	All	3	2	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Responsible club member" to make all members aware of acceptable behaviour and to ensure that they comply
Moving and handling boats	All	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Responsible club member" should pick a suitable (flat, not slippery etc) .point for paddlers to access and egress the sea/estuary in order to promote safety and confidence at the start and end of the session All paddlers encouraged to carry boats in pairs

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.