

Bideford Canoe Club Risk Assessment: surf 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 Surf Kayak Leader 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 surf kayaking to be given one-on-one attention in safe conditions, i.e. 2' surf
Delays in getting help diminishes survival times	All	5	1	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell phone readily available on the beach • Enough helpers available to assist
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 • All paddlers must have previous training and skills so as to be confident about capsizing or swimming in surf
Swimmer or paddler swept out to sea by a rip current	All	5	2	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader to make a "dynamic" decision regarding where activities are/are not safe

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for each session in relation to conditions Paddlers to be briefed about possible dangers and what personal action they can take Safety boater to be always available just outside the break line
Surfer struck by other boats/paddles or by his own equipment if swimming					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helmets to be worn in surf Briefed about keeping boat shore side when swimming Briefed about protocol on waves so avoiding surf collisions
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 Surf sessions are planned by the Leader making an informed decision regarding where and when they should take place (how close to shore, boundaries etc) In cold weather the trip leader/group should have first aid kit, hot drinks and either spare clothes and a bothy on the beach 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 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. During hot and sunny weather all participants should be encouraged to wear sun cream when on the water The Leader should be familiar with the

					signs a treatment of heat stoke
Moving and handling boats	All	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.