

Cambridge University Canoe Club

Safety Policy – Issue 2F

1. Notes

- 1.1. This document is intended to offer guidance to competent and responsible individuals. Reading the document with the intention of finding ‘loop holes’ does not reflect the spirit in which it is presented.
- 1.2. This document should be made available to all Club members, those who paddle with the Club and the parents/guardians of members under 18. The document should be published on the web.
- 1.3. This issue of the guidelines is based on the BCU’s University Club Guidelines (Oct 2001) and the University’s Health and Safety Guidance for Sports Clubs (June 2003).
- 1.4. The club is affiliated to the British Canoe Union.

2. Participation Statement

The activities undertaken by Cambridge University Canoe Club carry an element of risk, including the risk of injury and death. Participants must make their own decisions about participation in any activity and are empowered to ask questions if in doubt about the nature or risks inherent in any activity.

3. Individual Responsibilities

- 3.1. All participants in Club activities are responsible for their own actions and for making their own assessment of risks. If they are unsure about any issue or have any problems, questions or concerns it is the individual’s responsibility to raise these with leaders or committee members.
- 3.2. All participants in Club activities must fill in a participation form. They are responsible for informing the Committee of any changes to the information given on the form. It is the responsibility of the individual to notify their next of kin of their desire to participate in canoeing before engaging in Club activities. Participants should read these guidelines and abide by them. It is impossible for the Club to take responsibility for the actions of members who ignore these guidelines or the advice of river leaders or those holding positions of responsibility in the Club.
- 3.3. It is the responsibility of the individual to bring to the attention of any trip/activity leaders any known medical condition or previous injuries that may affect their or other Club member’s safe participation in canoeing activities.
- 3.4. Members are encouraged to seek further training at every opportunity.
- 3.5. Members should be aware of the potential for injuries caused by manual handling of canoeing equipment. They should seek guidance and training on the best methods to use for manual handling and use these techniques whenever they are handling equipment.
- 3.6. Much of the Club’s activities take place on the River Cam between Granchester and Bates Bite Lock. On this section of water a group should consist either of a minimum of 2 paddlers, one of whom must hold the BCU 3 star award or have equivalent experience, or of a minimum of 3 paddlers all of whom must be proficient paddlers holding the BCU 2 star award. The Commodore will decide whether an individual paddler has this level of experience and may ask the individual to undertake a 2 or 3 star assessment if unsure. Club members may, with the Commodore’s permission, paddle alone on this stretch of water. The Commodore will only grant such permission if the paddler is sufficiently experienced and has a good reason for wishing to paddle alone. Shooting the weirs on the Cam is not allowed.
- 3.7. Buoyancy aids must be worn at all times and helmets will be used when canoeing in moving water including below weirs. Individuals are responsible for ensuring the serviceability and suitability of any Club equipment that they use.
- 3.8. It is the responsibility of the individual to report any damage, loss or failure of club equipment to the Equipment Officer. There should be adequate notices around club storage to ensure that this procedure is followed at all times.
- 3.9. It is the responsibility of the Parent or Guardian of members under 18 to read and sign a membership form on behalf of the member before any canoeing activity can take place, including paddling on the Cam, courses, or pool sessions.
- 3.10. No under-18 member of the Club can take part in white water trips or any such other hazardous off-site activity, e.g. surfing, etc. Once members reach 18 they can sign a membership form in their own name and then take part in trips.

4. Leadership

4.1. Any member may be appointed as a 'trip leader' and organise the logistics of a canoeing trip. At an early stage they should identify the most competent and experienced paddler, who then becomes the trip's 'river leader'. The river leader may choose to appoint 'group leaders' to lead groups on the river. Club coaches should follow the same guidelines as group leaders.

4.2. Trip leaders

- 4.2.1. The trip leader should ensure that the activities planned are safe and conform to BCU guidelines and recognised best Practice. They may wish to consult with the river leader in this regard.
- 4.2.2. The trip leader should satisfy themselves that those driving vehicles on a trip are competent and responsible individuals.
- 4.2.3. Trip leaders must fill in a trip registration form, available from the Coaching and Safety Officer, before the trip departs. The Coaching and Safety Officer will provide them with the phone number of a 'home contact' to call in the event of an accident occurring.
- 4.2.4. Trip leaders will call a compulsory Safety Meeting before a trip to ensure that everyone is aware of the nature of the trip (venue, length, difficulty, etc.), to make novices aware of the equipment that they will need and to ensure that the trip will have an appropriate number of first aiders and group leaders. At the meeting the trip leader must stress the personal responsibility carried by each participant.
- 4.2.5. Trips that may include sea surfing should state in the safety meeting that Polo Buoyancy Aids are the recommended choice for beginners and novices to sea surfing as they provide much better impact protection than standard Buoyancy Aids.
- 4.2.6. Special care must be taken to ensure that the group is aware of who the authorities on the water will be, with special inclusion to the River Leader and any First Aiders. To ensure that this critical information is understood by the group this information should also be sent to the group via email.
- 4.2.7. Trip leaders must be aware of the Club's emergency procedure (see below) and should ensure that those on the trip are also aware of this, and the rest of this document.
- 4.2.8. Trip leaders should ensure that the equipment being used on the trip is appropriate for the planned activities. They may wish to consult the equipment officer and the river leader on this issue.

4.3. River Leaders

- 4.3.1. The river leader is the most experienced person on the trip, regardless of qualifications. They must satisfy themselves that the trip is run safely and should begin by checking that the trip leader's planning is acceptable. They have ultimate responsibility for any decisions that need to be made.
- 4.3.2. The river leader will make decisions on how the groups should be organised and will appoint sufficiently experienced group leaders for each group. They will take control of situations where groups come together (e.g. at significant rapids).
- 4.3.3. The trip leader should be particularly concerned with ensuring the safety and well being of inexperienced participants. They should ensure that they use equipment properly, arrange for training to be provided and give advice where necessary. All participants must make decisions to accept risk for themselves; leaders can only provide advice to facilitate a decision.

4.4. Group Leaders / Coaches

- 4.4.1. Group leaders will not necessarily have any qualifications, but should have sufficient experience to lead on the water being paddled. The Club encourages leaders to obtain training including whitewater safety courses, BCU student camps, first aid training and training for the 5 star award.
- 4.4.2. All leaders and coaches must submit details of their qualifications and experience to the Coaching and Safety Officer before taking responsibility for a group.
- 4.4.3. Group leaders must carry sufficient equipment to allow them to look after their group and perform rescues and first aid as required.
- 4.4.4. Group leaders should brief their group before getting on the river. The brief will include: the nature of the river and any likely hazards, who is taking on what roles in the group, how the group will be organised, what river signals are to be used and what should be done if

problems occur. The group leader must ascertain if any of the group has a medical condition that could affect their participation.

4.4.5. The group leader should make a final check of their group's equipment, including both personal and Club equipment. Particular checks should be made of:

- Boats – correct footrest positions, inflated airbags, sound grab loops
- Helmet – fastened and correctly fitting to protect forehead
- Buoyancy aid – securely fastened
- Spray deck – grab loop visible and in good condition

5. Emergency Procedure

- 5.1. In the event of an accident occurring, the first priority will be to get a casualty to medical help as soon as possible.
- 5.2. If the accident is a serious one, or if the victim is admitted to hospital in an unconscious state, the trip's home contact must be contacted as soon as possible in order to obtain the information on the victim's membership form.
- 5.3. The home contact will then be responsible for informing the victim's tutor or primary contact, if required, and should liaise with other parties as appropriate. In order for them to do this they should ensure that they have full details of the incident.
- 5.4. Do not make any statement to the media or discuss any aspect of the incident with anyone not connected to the emergency services. Ensure that all group members follow this guideline.
- 5.5. Any incident or 'near miss' must be reported to the Coaching and Safety Officer as soon as possible after returning to Cambridge. If required, they will complete an accident report form and pass it to the university PE department. The Committee will review the risk assessment and safety policy in the light of any lessons identified. They may also need to liaise with the BCU, university authorities and other interested parties as appropriate.

6. Safety Management System

- 6.1. Certain positions within the Committee have particular responsibilities. The Commodore will ensure that those seeking election to the committee are aware of these responsibilities before they stand.
- 6.2. The **Commodore** is responsible for running the Club and Committee in a manner that promotes a safe ethos within the Club. He/she must support the committee members with particular responsibility for safety and ensure that they, and all members, are playing their part in the safe running of the Club.
- 6.3. The **Coaching and Safety Officer** is responsible for:
 - Seeking and disseminating information on 'best practice' including BCU information
 - Updating the risk assessment, this safety policy and other relevant paperwork
 - Organising and promoting appropriate training for Club members at all levels
 - Liasing with the university PE department and ensuring that club procedures are, as far as possible, compliant with University policy.
 - Maintaining the file of Club membership forms and passing the file, with the relevant trip registration form, to a home contact when required for the duration of a trip
 - Maintaining records of the experience and qualifications of club coaches and leaders
- 6.4. The **Equipment Officer**'s post carries considerable responsibility. The equipment officer will oversee the following activities, delegating responsibility to other Club members or external experts as appropriate:
 - Keeping equipment receipts, with details of date and place of purchase
 - Labelling equipment to identify it as belonging to CUCC and for traceability
 - Storing and maintaining all equipment in accordance with manufacturers' guidelines
 - Carrying out regular checks (at least once a term) of Club equipment and keeping a record of these checks
 - Taking damaged or suspect equipment out of use and destroying any equipment that is no longer serviceable

The equipment officer should discharge their responsibilities with reference to BCU guidelines where available and should seek out best Practice as required. Current BCU guidelines (Oct 2001) recommend that:

- All kayaks should have airbags back and front
 - All buoyancy aids should be tested in accordance with BCU guidelines
 - Helmets should be discarded after 5 years or before if showing any signs of degradation – rust on rivets, white streaks in the plastic, buckles fail to take load
 - Throwbags should be stored unpacked and replaced every 5 years or sooner if damaged or worn
- 6.5. The **Captain** will be responsible for overseeing safety in competitive canoeing. They will seek to identify and implement ‘best Practice’ in competitive canoeing and provide advice and guidance to members as appropriate. When the committee has a polo captain, they will assume the captain’s responsibilities in respect of canoe polo.