

Kelowna Paddle Centre Members Safety Manual

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Welcome to the Kelowna Paddle Centre (KPC)! Your safety is our top priority. Please read this manual carefully to ensure a safe and enjoyable paddling experience.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Paddling Equipment.....	1
Weather and Water Conditions.....	2
Buddy System.....	2
Emergency Procedures.....	2
Training and Accreditation.....	2
What to Wear.....	3
Environmental Awareness.....	3
Centre Policies 4	
Lost Paddler Protocol.....	4
Injured Paddler Protocol.....	4
Conclusion.....	5

Introduction

The Kelowna Paddle Centre (KPC) is dedicated to promoting safe paddling practices for all members. Whether you're a seasoned paddler or a beginner, it's essential to understand and follow safety protocols to prevent accidents and injuries.

Paddling Equipment

- Always inspect your equipment before paddling. Ensure that your paddle, life jacket (PFD), and any other gear are in good condition.
- Always wear your PFD while on the water.
- Always wear your paddleboard/kayak/canoe leash when on the water,

Weather and Water Conditions

- Check weather forecasts and water conditions before heading out. Avoid paddling in severe weather, high winds, or rough waters.
- Be aware of local currents, tides, and potential hazards such as rocks, submerged objects, or strong currents.
- Adjust your paddling route and duration based on current weather and water conditions.

Thunder and Lightning

30-30 Rule

- When you can count 30 seconds or less between lightning and thunder, head for safe shelter
- Remain sheltered for 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder.

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors

Buddy System

- Whenever possible, paddle with a buddy or in a group. This ensures that someone is available to assist in case of an emergency.
- Share your paddling plans with someone onshore, including your intended route and expected return time.
- Keep visual contact with your paddling partners and stay within a reasonable distance of each other.

Emergency Procedures

- In case of an emergency, remain calm and assess the situation. Determine if you can self-rescue or if you require assistance.
- If you or someone else is in distress, use a whistle, signaling device, or loud voice to attract attention.
- If a member of your group requires assistance, initiate a rescue using appropriate techniques or equipment. Call for help if necessary.
- Be prepared to administer first aid if needed and seek professional medical attention for serious injuries.
- Refer to the 2025 General Safety and Emergency Safety Plan posted on the KPC website and various locations around the centre.

Before Going On The Water

BEFORE YOU GO PADDLING

- Check local weather conditions. This includes wind speed and direction, air & water temperature, long range forecast, sunrise & sunset, other water activities in your area.
- Inspect your boat for damage, leaks or possible problems.

CHECK YOUR EQUIPMENT

- Wear a leg leash. *Note that this is REQUIRED whenever using KPC small boats.*
- Wear a Government of Canada approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD). PFD's must fit properly and be in good condition with an attached whistle for emergencies.
- Ensure all Transport Canada required equipment is on board. You can find checklists and more information on-site at the Kelowna Paddle Centre.

WHEN YOU GO PADDLING

- Plan your route for current and forecasted weather conditions.
- When you arrive, sign in: the boat you are paddling, your intended route, and your estimated time of return. Sign back in upon return.
- Do not paddle in the dark.
- Immediately return to the paddling centre during lightning and thunder weather storms. See Thunder and Lightning 30-30 Rule.
- Ensure protective clothing is used depending on weather conditions.
- Winter paddling (October 15 through April 15) - paddle within 200 meters from shore.

Safety On The Water

Water conditions on Okanagan Lake can change dramatically in only 10 minutes. You need to plan your paddle to always allow for wind, water and temperature changes. Always follow these three rules:

1. You are responsible for your own safety.
2. Do not paddle beyond your physical or skill limits.
3. When in doubt, don't go out.

Use of Big Boats

All KPC Big Boats – Outrigger OC6 Canoes may only be used under the direction and control of an approved stern person and with sufficient crew members:

- Minimum 2 paddlers for a 2-man boat.
- Minimum 2 paddlers for a 3-man boat.
- Minimum 5 paddlers for a 6-man boat.

The approved stern person is the person who makes the decision regarding the safety of the proposed trip or practice, given the conditions, the crew and their experience.

An approved stern person is a KPC member who has demonstrated to the KPC staff that they have the experience and/or training to be competent in handling the type of craft in the expected setting and circumstances.

Responsibilities of Stern Person

Ensure a minimum of 4 paddlers have practiced righting the canoe (huli) within two years.

- Be familiar with, or anticipate, potential hazards in the trip area/route.
- Be aware of weather and water conditions which may affect safety.
- Check the latest public and marine forecasts and, when paddling on the ocean, tide tables, before departure where applicable.
- Discuss the objectives of the trip, route, type and known hazards of the trip, accident prevention, signals, emergency and rescue procedures with the crew.
- Ensure that the required safety equipment is in the boat before launching.
- Decide the safest course, watch for hazards such as debris, waves, and other boats and users of the water – swimmers, fishers, etc.

- Be aware of the rules for passing other craft and take appropriate action to avoid collisions.
- Advise a responsible person if they are paddling offshore and when they are expected back.

Responsibilities of Paddlers

- Know the appropriate procedures to follow if boat capsizes (hulis).
- Be aware of the stern person's responsibilities and cooperate with him/her with respect to safety of boat and crew.
- Only participate in trips that you feel competent to handle.
- Be properly equipped.
- Know proper procedure for lifting, carrying and transporting boats.

Cold Water Effects

The human body loses more heat when wholly or partially immersed in water than it does while only exposed to the air. Thermal loss in water is 2 to 5 times greater than in the air.

Most experts in immersion hypothermia and cold water near drowning/drowning define cold water as temperatures below 20C. Hypothermia is defined as a drop in body temperature below the normal level. At this lower temperature, a person's muscle and mental functions are affected. A person exposed to cold water, and becoming hypothermic, can exhibit certain progressive signs and symptoms. They are as follows:

- Shivering and slurred speech, conscious but withdrawn at the early stage.
- Slow and weak pulse, slow respiration, lacks coordination, irrational, confused, sleepy at intermediate stage.
- Weak, irregular or absent pulse or respiration, loss of consciousness at final stage.

If you end up in the water, do everything you can to conserve body heat.

- Wear your PFD or lifejacket. Valuable energy will be lost keeping your head above water if you are not wearing it.
- Climb onto your boat to get as much of your body out of the water.
- If alone and your boat sinks, adopt a "heat escape lessening position" (h.e.l.p.) by crossing arms tightly against the chest and by drawing the knees up close to the chest.
- If with others and your boat sinks, "huddle" with other persons by getting the sides of everyone's chest close together with arms around mid to lower back and legs intertwined.

Rescue and Treatment for Cold Water Immersion

The general principles include:

- The safety of the rescuer(s) as well as the casualty, must be ensured at all times
- Victims of immersion incidents should be handled gently, and placed and maintained in a horizontal position as much as possible.
- Consider the mechanism of injury for possibility of trauma, but realize the biggest immediate threat is likely to be the airway due to the aspiration of fluids. Medical observation is recommended as the effects of aspiration can be delayed for hours.

- Upon recovery, the objective is to prevent further heat loss. Remove wet clothing if the environment allows, insulate with available materials and remove to shelter.
- Any re-warming attempts of the hypothermic casualty should be passive and focus upon the body core. Rapid full surface warming is to be avoided.
- Pulses in the hypothermic casualty are hard to find and should be assessed for up to two minutes at the carotid artery prior to CPR. If CPR is indicated, it should be at the normal rate for the age of the casualty.

Cold Water Policy

The following rules apply during the cold-season. The specific dates for each cold-season will be set each year but are approximately October to April.

- **WEAR YOUR PFD.**
- **Paddle with a buddy.**
- **Stay close to shore** (within 200m).
- **Only paddle during the daytime** (from sunrise to sunset).
- **Call 911 in an emergency.** Cold water immersion and hypothermia are emergencies.
- **Know your limits.** Don't paddle if you aren't confident of your abilities to paddle, remount, and stay safe in the conditions on the water.
- **Check out & in.** Tell a trusted person when you are leaving, where you are going, how long you will be on the water] and when you are safely back to KPC.
- **Check the weather forecast.** Be aware of wind conditions, potential changes.
- **Dress for the conditions and the activity.** Ensure your clothes will not worsen heat loss if you fall into the water, will not prevent you from remounting if necessary, and are visible from shore.
- **Check your equipment.** Inspect your boat and gear, and ensure you have all Transport Canada required safety equipment.
- **Plan ahead.** Know your route and keep track of safe exit points.

Use of KPC Owned Boats and Equipment

- KPC equipment is only for the use of KPC members, participants, and guests.
- KPC boats are not allowed off the KPC site without permission of the general manager.
- The cost of repairing damage to a KPC boat or equipment beyond normal wear and tear will be the responsibility of the person/group causing the damage.

Training and Accreditation

- Accreditation ensures all members are comfortable handling KPC equipment, aware of potential wind and water conditions, and prepared for self rescue in unforeseen circumstances for whatever boats or boards they are accredited for.
- You must complete a yearly accreditation on each boat or board you would like to use.
- Instructors must be confident you and your equipment will be safe when paddling alone and that you are able to complete the following tasks on each type of boat/board you will paddle:
 - determine what is KPC equipment and what is private equipment
 - carry the boat/board to and from storage without damage or stress on the equipment

- select the correct size paddle and PFD for yourself
- mount your boat/board and paddle forwards, backwards and draw yourself sideways
- fall off your boat/board (huli) and remount in deep water without help
- Accreditation can be completed at the end of any Learn to Paddle class.
- Standard accreditations are for adults only. Youth ages 14 to 18 may complete an individualized accreditation with specific restrictions. See the [Youth section of the Members Handbook](#) for further information.

Moving Boats

Boats are heavy, awkward and can cause injury when improperly lifting. Follow these guidelines to help avoid injury or damage while moving boats on the KPC grounds, while competing at other locations, or loading boats onto KPC trailers

- The route the boat will travel on should be clear of obstacles.
- The minimum number of people required to move a boat should be the number of paddlers the boat is designed for (two people to carry a two-person canoe, six people for a six person canoe, etc.) *with the exception of KPC OC1s.*
 - *At least TWO people are required when moving centre-owned OC1s.*
- In windy conditions one additional person is required to safely move a boat.

Anyone moving a boat to/from the water and/or onto a trailer should have successfully completed the accreditation program which includes how to safely lift and carry a boat.

What to Wear

In the Spring and Fall, the water is a bit cooler and the wind can be chilly. You should always choose tighter fitting clothing in case of the unlikely event that you 'huli' (fall into the water) as it will be easier for swimming. Generally, most paddlers wear a lightweight thermal long sleeve shirt, a windbreaker (same as used for running or skiing) under their PFD along with spandex or wetsuit pants and neoprene booties (knee length are best for wading deeper into the water to get in the boat). Dry suits, dry pants and tops are also an option. Adding a warm hat and neoprene gloves help during the winter months, keeping in mind that the thinner, more flexible option is best.

In the Summer the same principles apply with regards to being able to swim in your clothing, usually lightweight shorts or spandex, and a t-shirt or tank top. Most paddlers go barefoot in the boats and on boards but will wear flip flops while walking around the site. You are welcome to wear water shoes or booties if you choose. We always recommend that you choose bright clothing that is visible on the lake as a safety precaution and always have your PFD.

Environmental Awareness

- Respect wildlife and natural habitats. Avoid disturbing animals or sensitive ecosystems.
- Dispose of waste properly and follow Leave No Trace principles.
- Support conservation efforts and organizations that protect waterways and marine life.
- [CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY](#). Prevent the spread of invasive species by cleaning off all plants, animals, & mud from your boat & gear; draining all water from your boat & gear onto land; and drying all parts of your boat & gear completely.

Centre Policies

- Familiarize yourself with KPC's rules and regulations, including guidelines for equipment usage, boat storage, and KPC activities.
- Follow designated launch and landing areas, and be mindful of other water users, such as swimmers, kayakers, or boaters.
- Report any safety concerns, hazards, or incidents to KPC staff.
- Check the Member's Handbook for additional info on rules and policies.

Lost Paddler Protocol

When the Kelowna Paddle Centre is OPEN (*KPC staff are on-site and available*)

- Immediately notify an office staff member.

When the Kelowna Paddle Centre is NOT OPEN

- URGENT CIRCUMSTANCES
 1. Call: 9-1-1
 2. Contact a Kelowna Paddle Centre staff member:
- NON - URGENT CIRCUMSTANCES
 1. Call the Kelowna RCMP Non-Emergency Line at **250-762-3300**

Injured Paddler Protocol

When the Kelowna Paddle Centre is OPEN

1. Immediately notify an office staff member.

When the Kelowna Paddle Centre is NOT OPEN

- URGENT CIRCUMSTANCES
 1. Call: 9-1-1 for Ambulance/Fire and / or RCMP
 2. Contact a Kelowna Paddle Centre staff member:

AED - Located outside the Paddle Office

Conclusion

By following these safety guidelines and exercising caution while paddling, you can minimize risks and enjoy a safe and rewarding experience on the water. Remember, safety is everyone's responsibility, so be proactive in promoting a culture of safety within the Kelowna Paddle Centre community. Have fun and paddle responsibly!