

Whitewater Ontario Safety & Risk Management Policy

Purpose

This policy applies to Whitewater Ontario (“W/O”) members and clubs conducting on-water activities. It is intended to alert event organizers and participants of important safety practices to minimize and manage the risk of accidents.

The procedures outlined in Part 1 must be followed at all W/O sanctioned events/trips and all W/O sanctioned club events/trips (“Event/Trip”). Failure to follow the procedures could result in the insurance company rejecting a coverage claim.

The procedures outlined in Part 2 are recommended for W/O sanctioned events/trips and should be applied as appropriate according to the judgment of Event/Trip Leaders (“Leaders”).

Mandatory Safety Practices

1. When in a kayak/canoe while on open water, every paddler must:
 - a. Wear a lifejacket or personal floatation device (PFD).
 - b. While on moving water, wear a helmet.
 - c. Carry a sound signaling device (whistle).
 - d. Have equipment that is safe, appropriate for the paddler and the current weather & water conditions.

Items a. & c. are required according to Transport Canada, Safe Boating Guide – TP 511E (2011), “Minimum Safety Requirements”

2. Trip Leaders, or a designate in the group, must:
 - a. Carry a safety throw rope, and be competent in its use;
 - b. Have a first aid kit on the river or in an accessible location on shore (within a vehicle located at the put-in/take-out is acceptable)

These requirements listed under Section 1 & 2 are not deemed mandatory for Paddling/Rolling training activities undertaken in a Pool, whereby Certified Lifeguards are present. Unless the activities undertaken present an increased level of risk/injury, e.g. Kayak Polo, for which the appropriate level of PPE shall be assessed by the Trip Leader.

3. River trips shall adhere to the following guidelines
 - a. River trips shall be conducted with no less than 3 paddlers (non-W/O members may count towards this number)
 - b. The ratio of participants to Trip Leaders shall not exceed 8:1 (non-W/O members shall not count towards this number)
4. River trips in areas considered to be isolated or remote (> 1 hr required to contact Emergency Services)
 - a. Remote river trips shall be conducted with no less than 4 paddlers (non-W/O members may count towards this number)
 - b. A first-aid kit must be carried on the river by a Trip Leader or designate

- c. Ensure a responsible individual not on the river trip is aware of the trip details, expected return or contact time, and necessary response in the event of non-contact
5. Trip Leaders shall adhere to the requirements laid out in the “Trip Leaders Roles and Responsibilities”
6. Rivers / Rapids shall be free and clear of any known Ice-Shelves, Strainers, or any other abnormal/adverse hazards which present a direct hazard to paddlers to be considered Sanctioned.
7. Rivers / Rapids which are considered to be Class 5 or higher cannot be sanctioned by W/O.

Recommended Safety Practices

1. It is recommended that all paddlers:
 - a. Be able to swim with a life jacket and be familiar with safe practices when swimming in rapids (e.g. feet first, do not attempt to stand due to risk of entrapment or river obstacles).
 - b. Have flotation devices in their boat.
 - c. Bring an appropriate means of re-hydration while on the river.
2. It is recommended that Trip Leaders, or designates in the group:
 - a. Wear a safety boat harness tow system when running a river.
 - b. Have at least one Leader or participant experienced in First Aid and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
 - c. Have at least one Leader or participant experienced in swift water rescue techniques.
3. It is strongly recommended that a Trip Leader, or designate in the group, while paddling in a Remote or Isolated location (> 1 hr required to contact Emergency Services):
 - a. Carry a Pin-Kit (Z-Drag) and be competent in its use.
 - b. Carry a Spare Paddle.
 - c. Carry a Survival Kit for a potential long-term (Overnight) stay in the wild.
 - d. Carry a satellite SOS beacon.

