

## Water Safety

Crew Training Situations. Risk Assessments should be considered for all training locations and an Accident Book should be maintained by dragon boat clubs. The Accident Book should be available for inspection any time by the Safety Official.

When on the water in a training situation, especially in temperate winter conditions, The Dragon Boat Club should maintain a log of those crews on the water. The log should contain the following information:-

- \* Number of people afloat.
- \* Direction and details of journey.
- \* Estimated time of return.

For crews that train without the provision of a rescue boat, that is, un-escorted, all participants are required to wear PFDs. When training in adverse temperate summer weather conditions, particularly when un-escorted, Novice adult crew members and any crew member under the age of 18, are required to wear PFDs. In cold water (temperate winter) training conditions, when a crew is operating 50 yards or more from a shore, river bank or other landing point, without rescue cover, then the Helm should ensure that the wearing of PFDs, by all crew members is mandatory. It is particularly important that a crew log is maintained in such circumstances.

All Dragon Boat Clubs (Crews) that train regularly on a defined area of water should produce a Safety Standing Procedures document (SSP) for all crews to abide by. When training away from a Crews normal location, as a minimum, a Risk Assessment must be carried out for each training location used, by a qualified Dragon Boat Coach or in the absence of a Coach, the Boat Captain or Helm of the Crew concerned.

### **Policy:**

To ensure that the property owned by The UWO, is used appropriately through standardized procedures thereby allowing approved persons to take control of a boat during a training session or during a competition so that assets and personal safety is maintained.

### **Procedure:**

A spreadsheet is to be kept and updated within a reasonable time after any training or competition showing who was on the water during the session and who the authorized UWO and Oshkosh Dragonboat Club Safety Official 'Of the Day' was. The Day Safety Official will be a qualified Dragon Boat Coach or a qualified person with experience of operating dragon boats on the water area concerned, such as a Boat Captain. There may be a number of personnel qualified to act as a Day Safety Officials, who are appointed by the Club Safety Officer. The Club Safety Officer will hold an appropriate Coaches Award or have a similar qualification or experience of conducting Dragon Boat training sessions, on the water concerned and/or other areas of dragonboat activity. All Dragon Boat Helms(Cox) will be appropriately qualified. A Dragon Boat Helm with competitive Dragon Boat Racing experience may act as a Crew Helm if authorized by the Club Safety Officer. It is important for all to understand that no individual or group may use Club equipment without a suitably qualified Boat Captain being present on the boat during the training or practice session. This means that the person in charge of the vessel will need to demonstrate safe boating practices with regards to manning it, assessing water conditions, and in carrying out safe onboard boating practices. In the event of a vessel swamping or capsizing, the Boat Captain, is required to manage the situation to minimize the chance of injury or loss of life. For Novice crews taking part in a Dragon Boat introductory session, the Boat Captain will normally be the designated Helm for the Crew. If more than one boat is being used, each boat will require a Boat Captain. The boat captains will consult with each other and the Day Safety Official before launching the boats. Regular swamping and capsize drills will be held throughout the year for the benefit of all Club Members, regardless of crew membership. Any paddler can participate in these safety drills at any time. The drills will be recorded cumulatively as training sessions. Note: Some drills require a minimum number of Crew Members on shore. A brief and debrief is required for each session by the person controlling the session.

A CAPTAIN MUST

- Explain that they are responsible for their seat buddy firstly, to those in front of them secondly, and thirdly, to those behind them. The Drummer is assigned to the FRONT most pair of paddlers and the Helm to the REAR most pair of paddlers
- Give instruction that their number will remain theirs during the session.
- If the boat capsizes the Boat Captain (normally the Helm) will ask the crew to call their numbers (have the paddlers call their numbers again).
- Instruct that the Boat Captain has the full authority on the boat.
- Explain what may cause the boat to swamp or capsize and instruct how to prevent it.
- Instruct the Crew that in the event of a capsize everyone should release their paddles and attempt to recover them once they are clear of the capsized boat. Demonstrate how to take up the fetal position, i.e. with their hands on the top of their heads. Should the boat hit them this position will help to ensure they stay on the top of the water.

- **CONFIRM THAT THEY HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE BRIEF**

- Explain that to board the boat the paddler **steps into the middle of the boat – not on the Seat**, and then sits down.
- If possible, board the boat from front to rear, paying attention to position.
- Explain why it is necessary to keep hands OFF the gunwale beside the dock or sea wall.
- Explain the two main strokes for safety “Brace the Boat” (or “flat paddle”) and “Emergency Stop”

The paddlers must be able to understand the commands, even though the local commands may be different. Please review the list of commands given to Club Members and visiting guests of the Oshkosh Dragonboat Club.

**Understand the requirements of First Aid on the water and its associated risk**

The UWO and Oshkosh Dragonboat Club boats are **NOT** equipped with First Aid Kits, these are located at a specified location known to all persons on the dragonboat.

In the unfortunate event of injury or accident, assist the person(s) to shore as soon as possible. This is the reason it is recommended to stay within 80 yards of the shore at all times and the reason for ensuring shore-based patrols are notified in advance. It is believed the greatest possibility of injury is from a boat capsizing and accordingly it is better to manage the risk before this type of incident occurs in order to prevent injury. Other possible medical problems may be associated with a heart attack, which requires that CPR be carried out - this is best done on the shore. Minor cuts or bumps from paddles may also occur, but once again, this can be prevented through training **BEFORE** the paddlers get onto the water and by correct positioning of novice paddlers in the boat. Dependent on the severity of an injury, the situation may require the team be taken back to shore. For cuts, pressure should be applied to the general area to stop the bleeding.

**Achieve a swim of at least 50 yards**

All persons wanting to qualify as a Boat Captain must be able to demonstrate they can swim ably enough to save themselves. Captains of the water rescue boats and the life guards working in the area should be informed before this drill is carried out.

**Complete a “Swamping drill”** (this can be done in conjunction with the Capsize drill)

This is the most likely event to occur when on the water and the risk of this can be reduced by proper RISK ANALYSIS and consultation with other users of the water. Dependant on the height and pitch (crest to crest distance) of the waves, the Boat Captain (normally the Helm) needs to determine the best angle to avoid swamping or capsizing the boat. It is important that the crew remain calm and take direction from the Boat Captain.

### **Demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Safety committee the Swamping Drill:**

Captains of the water rescue boats and the life-guards working in the area should be informed before this drill is carried out. During this exercise the Boat Captain needs to remain vigilant of the water conditions, other water-craft operating nearby and their position relative to the shore, and keep the boat under control by utilizing the paddlers as required. After the RISK ANALYSIS is made a Safety Brief is carried out with regard to this particular exercise.

#### **Drill Brief:**

- There will be a **minimum** requirement of 10 persons in the boat for this drill.
- Take the boat into shallow water (approx 4 feet) and slowly fill the boat.
- The boat should be kept into or down the wind/wave direction.
- It is not necessary to fill the boat completely but there must be at least 8 inches in the hull, this can be done by bucketing the water in and **NOT** by allowing the water to come in over the gunwale.
- After the boat has sufficient water onboard, paddle and maneuver the boat carrying out a figure of eight near the shore.
- Bring the boat close to the shore again and proceed to bail the boat until the water has been removed.

#### **Complete a “Capsize drill”**

This is unlikely to occur and the risk of this can be reduced through a proper RISK ANALYSIS and by a consultation with other users of the water. Dependant on the height and pitch (crest to crest distance) of the waves, the Boat Captain (normally the Helm) needs to determine the best angle to avoid swamping or capsizing the boat. When waves are higher than normal the Boat Captain should ensure that the boat is at approximately **45 degrees** and under paddle power OR that the boat is braced by the BRACE THE BOAT command. He or she should be looking out for other boats in the area, especially those traveling at speed or heavy with large wakes.

NOTE.1: It is possible an injury may occur during this exercise so a full briefing of what to expect during the drill **MUST** be made along with the standard SAFETY BRIEF.

NOTE.2: During normal training or race practices, it is not recommended that any paddlers leave the boat unless they are easily able to reach the shore. The **COMMAND** to abandon the boat will be given by the Boat Captain. This forms part of the SAFETY BRIEF and RISK ANALYSIS (covered in this document) given immediately **BEFORE** any on-water activity. It is recommended that all paddlers stay with the boat, holding onto the side if possible.

Captains of the water rescue boats and the life guards working in the area should be informed before this drill is carried out. During this drill the Boat Captain needs to remain vigilant of the water conditions, other water craft operating nearby and their position relative to the shore, and keep the boat under control by utilizing the paddlers as required.

#### **Capsize Drill Brief:**

In accordance with the SAFETY BRIEF each member will first be responsible for finding their seat buddy. Within 15 seconds of turning over the Boat Captain will call for a number count to begin. This will ensure that all the Crew is accounted for. If there is anyone unaccounted for, the buddy will look under the boat for their ‘Buddy’ as directed by the Boat Captain. Other crew members may be required to assist as directed by the Boat Captain. The Boat Captain will next ascertain if there are any injuries that need attention and care for these as required.

NOTE 3: All paddlers must stay with the boat at all times, holding onto the gunwale, unless directed by the Boat Captain to abandon the boat and swim to the shore or to a rescue vessel. It has been demonstrated that it is possible in certain water conditions to bail a boat that has been capsized, therefore always ensure that all bailing containers are attached to the boat by a string that will easily break, so that the bailers can be used. (i.e. builders line string with 10 lb breaking strain) If possible take the boat into shallow water (4 feet or less) and roll the boat over. At this time the participants should be able to stand beside the boat and commence bailing it out. If the boat is in water over 6 feet deep, then either swim the boat to shore, if a beach or bank is within 20 yards or commence righting the boat, if water/ weather conditions allow.

### **RIGHTING THE BOAT**

The Boat Captain will control this action

### **Demonstrate “Basic Boat Helming”**

Without basic Helming skills the paddlers and equipment may be placed in an unsafe position. A Helm or Club Boat Captain must as a minimum, be able to demonstrate their ability to maneuver a Dragon Boat competently. The Boat Captain’s function is to command the Dragon Boat. He or she must be strong in character and compassionate of others. The Boat Captain must be aware of his surroundings and see the ‘big picture’ and not focus only on what is happening in the boat, this is particularly important if the Boat Captain is also coaching. If the Boat Captain is also coaching he or she should assign one paddler to take the lookout function while they are talking or working with the rest of the paddlers. The Boat Captain needs to recognize when a paddler is having difficulty and slow the pace as required in conjunction with coaching practices. If needed, he or she must be able to take the boat back to shore, quickly and efficiently if the weather conditions change or a crew member is injured or becomes ill. The Boat Captain is responsible for discipline on the boat and while this should not normally be an issue, he must recognize it and have the paddlers understand their function before they board. The Boat Captain is responsible for the paddlers and the safety of the boat while seeking the correct course to navigate, and he must be aware of any other craft on the water or, when near the shore, any swimmers.

### **SUMMARY**

The overall safety of the boat and persons participating in the clubs activities is the responsibility of the boat captains and helmsman. Each person boarding the boat will be informed of risks inherent to the sport of dragonboating.