

Cumbria Canoeists

Risk Assessment – Sea Kayaking

Date:	August 2023
Review date:	July 2024
Assessor:	John Soady (sea kayaking lead)
Description:	Generic risk assessment for sea kayaking events
Locations:	Coastal journeys and open sea crossings in UK waters

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done	Residual risk level (H/M/L) If H this needs reducing
Generic hazards							
Deep, cold water	Leader, assistants, and participants at risk of serious injury/ cold injury/ death	Group to be briefed in associated risks. Correctly fitted buoyancy aids worn when on/ near water Leader holds FA qualifications and carries FA kit Mobile phone, VHF radio and whistle carried by leader Appropriate clothing worn during the session, towel and change of clothes available Warm drinks and spare food available Group shelter/ emergency warm layer available	If participants are likely to be poorly equipped ensure group stay closer to shore and have sheltered changing facilities available	Leader	Ongoing	Ongoing	Low
Slips and Trips	Paddlers and other bystanders	Group briefing on dangers Recommend and check footwear	None	Leader	Ongoing	Ongoing	Low
Sprains, strains and soft tissue injuries	Paddlers and other bystanders	Brief to work together Good manual handling of equipment Good paddling technique	Manual handling training for leaders	Cumbrian Canoeists Leadership Team	To be put into 2024 Development plan	Ongoing	Low
Pollution and water quality	Paddlers	Awareness of water quality and blooming of blue/green algae Cleaning of equipment Good personal hygiene	Keep up to date with local water authorities and national park updates	Leaders	Ongoing	Ongoing	Low

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Other water users	Paddlers and other users	Briefing to include making sure paddlers are aware of other water users and what action to take to avoid collision.	Avoid busy locations	Leaders	Ongoing	Ongoing	Low
Jetties/Piers/ Manmade structures/ Overhanging trees	Paddlers	Briefing to make paddlers aware of dangers	None	Leaders	Ongoing	Ongoing	Low
Traffic	Paddlers and other bystanders	Briefing and supervision of road crossing	None	Leaders	Ongoing	Ongoing	Low

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Sea kayaking hazards							
Group & individual competencies & equipment	An individual or the group could encounter conditions beyond their capabilities or for which they are ill equipped.	Explicit advance information provided at booking and prior to departure about the nature of the trip, required competency level and minimum standard of equipment.	Leaders must review participant details prior to the event and seek clarification from participants where there are uncertainties. On-shore review of equipment before launching.	Organizer and leader(s).	At booking and prior to event start date.		M
Adverse changes in wind strength / direction	Whole group could be compromised by effect of wind on kayaks and paddlers, especially if adverse to tidal flow.	Leaders will have factored into plans the expected changes to the weather based on forecasts. More than one forecast model should be employed. Leaders should log the planned paddle with the coastguard.	Wherever feasible leaders should have an alternative plan(s) informed by anticipated weather changes during the paddle / journey, including potential escape points.	Leader(s)	Prior to paddle departure and on the water.		M
Challenging tidal conditions	An adverse tidal stream adds to the physical effort of paddling and the whole group can quickly become tired. Tide races and overfalls add technical difficulty, increase capsize risk and	Leaders will have calculated tidal stream times and rates, and related this to weather, swell and group capabilities. Leaders will ensure anticipated tidal effects are within their personal paddling and group control competencies.	Where feasible crux passages could be inspected from land prior to departure. Sea conditions should be monitored during the paddle, and return / escape options	Leader(s)	Prior to paddle departure and on the water.		M

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	present rescue challenges.		considered where necessary.				
Swell and waves	Adds to the physical and technical effort of paddling for the whole group. Clapotis, confused sea and breaking waves can significantly raise the hazard level.	Leaders should have taken account in plans of forecast swell and wave conditions relative to group capabilities.	Leaders should also note the presence of physical features that could exacerbate the effects of waves & swell (such as vertical cliffs, reefs & shallows) and consider a broad steer to avoid the hazard.	Leader(s)	Prior to paddle departure and on the water.		M
Capsize	Can involve an individual or several in the group. Cold water immersion and physical contact injury risks.	Leaders should be aware of individual capabilities and the proximity of on-water hazards. Leaders should note who in the group is capable of assisting in a rescue. Helmets to be recommended where there is a risk of head injury on capsize.	Leaders should keep up to date with developments in rescue techniques and equipment.	Leader(s)	On the water.		L
Paddle breakage & loss	The loss of a paddle could mean the end of the trip for an individual or the whole group.	At least one set of spare paddles <u>must</u> be carried within the group, able to be used right- or left-handed.	Ensure paddles not left on the ground where they can be trodden on.	Leader(s)	Prior to paddle departure and on landing.		L

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Compromised water tightness eg holed hull, spraydeck, or lost hatch cover	Could mean the end of the trip for an individual or the whole group.	Leaders should carry appropriate repair equipment and know how to apply it.	-	Leader(s)	Prior to paddle departure.		
Paddler falling ill or injured at sea	Could affect an individual or the whole group.	Participants should be asked about medical conditions and medications at booking and this information made available to the leader(s). Towlines and VHF radio must be available within the group.	Leaders should review medical details and ask prior to launch. Leaders must maintain first aid qualification.	Leader(s)	Prior to event and paddle departure.		L
Effect of cold and hypothermia	Could affect an individual or the whole group.	Provide recommendations prior to event on adequate clothing & equipment. Group shelter carried where appropriate, or other means of isolating individual(s) from the elements.	Leaders to check equipment and attire, and spare clothing carried prior to launch.	Organizer and leader(s).	Prior to event and paddle departure.		L