

BALTIMORE DRAGON BOAT CLUB SAFETY RULES AND REGULATIONS

**Baltimore Dragon Boat Club, Inc. (BDBC)
Tide Point Marina, Baltimore, Maryland**

Preamble

- Safety of all club members is the number one priority in helping all members paddle/steer/drum in a rewarding and secure environment.
- These rules and regulations are to be used primarily by the Drummers, Steerspersons, Coaches, Dock Masters, and Team Captains, as a guide to *train all members of the BDBC Dragon Boat Club ("BDBC") about Dragon Boat Safety Guidelines.*
- A Drummer, Steersperson, Coach, Dock Master and Team Captain:
 - Ensures the safety of a crew on the water during practice, training and during a hosted event at the BDBC by following the established procedures, as laid out in this document.
 - Ensures a crew does not jeopardize the safety of other vessels on the water during training and races;
 - Teaches the crew to be responsible in meeting the above two (2) goals. Everyone has a responsibility to "SAFETY".
 - The Drummer and Steersperson are in control of the dragon boat and are in the best position to make decisions involving safety (i.e. determining whether the boat and crew remain on the water, or return to dock, or head for calmer water). This responsibility is also shared with the Coach and Team Captain.

Precautions

- As administered by the crew captain or designate, each person in the boat should be aware of the buddy system and who their buddy is for the water session, usually the person beside them in the same seat. The drummer will buddy with the front pair and the steersperson with the last pair. In case of a swamped or capsized boat, it is the first responsibility of a buddy to make sure their partner is safe and well.
- Practice distance from shore should always take into account the temperature of the water and how long it would take a crew to reach shore, if capsized.
- Before starting the practice the crew captain must be informed and fully aware of any medical conditions of team members, as well as any weak swimmers. The crew captain must also know the exact number of people in the boat and that the boat is reasonably balanced left to right, front to back.

The crew captain should be aware of site safety staff on shore or on the water and communicate with such staff their practice plan. It is also recommended that such water staff have radio contact with shore staff.

Personal Safety

- Each athlete has to take personal responsibility of their front-line safety in the areas of equipment, hydration, warm up, sun exposure and safety procedures education. A comprehensive safety plan is dependent on every member of the crew doing his or her part in this regard.
- Safety equipment will include a properly fitted and approved PFD as well as all weather wear for appropriate training conditions. There are many excellent products (dri-fit, neoprene, *gore-text* etc.) that can make your training comfortable and safe, especially in colder weather conditions.
- Hydration is very important at all times and water bottles should be considered to hydrate before, during and after the workout.
- Sunscreen is a must in summer training situations, especially if the training or racing is done in mid-day. There are many products especially designed for water sport use. A hat is always a good idea for sun and rain.
- Waterborne Infections Athletes should always be careful with raw water exposure (water bottles in the bottom of the boat), water on open wounds (cover with a water-proof dressing if possible) and general contact. At the earliest possible time after practice, a shower is recommended, cleaning ears, eyes and nose. If the athlete falls ill after water sport activity, a visit to a doctor should take place and the doctor should be informed of the water sport involvement.

Boat Management

Starting with loading the boat, the coach is responsible for proper, safe, boat management. If possible, always load the boat starting in the middle. Load seat 5, then 4, then 6, then 3, then 7... with the coach last. Once the crew is fully loaded the coach will ask for a light push away from the dock and then gentle movements in the desired direction. Coaches must make it clear to their crews that they must listen carefully when near the loading area and that speeds are reduced around the loading area.

Bracing the boat may be necessary because of unstable conditions caused by winds, waves or personnel movement. Bracing the boat is a technique that all coaches must teach their crews. This is done by having all or part of the crew "feathering" their paddles on the water surface to widen the base of support. The feathering technique ("spread the butter on the toast") is an important safety skill and helps paddlers feel confident in leaning out over the water to stabilize the boat. If water conditions are very dangerous then part of the crew can brace the boat while part of the crew paddles, to ensure the highest degree of safe movement. The command should be "*brace the boat*". Part-boat bracing (even, odd, front, back) can be used as a variation that allows varying degrees of mobility and stability. Stopping the boat may need to be done to turn quickly or avoid collision. This is done best by the whole crew taking a stroke together in the opposite direction of movement, followed by another one or two strokes, if necessary. The command should be "stop/hold the boat".

These skills should be practiced in non-emergency situations to allow the crew to react instinctively to the commands.

Safety

Dragon boat safety is a partnership of all stakeholders in the sport, including athletes, coaches, steerspersons, site safety staff and support emergency services. Everyone has a role to play to

ensure that the sport is as safe as possible at all times and that clear, integrated procedures are in place for foreseeable emergency situations. The Baltimore Dragon Boat Club Safety Policy takes its lead from the IDBF Water Safety Policy.

Equipment: Each boat leaving the dock should have the following:

- A US Coast Guard approved PFD (or comparable US standard) for each crew member to be worn at all times by all members of the crew
- Two bailers
- One whistle worn by the steersperson
- Two spare paddles
- One throw (minimum 15m of rope length)

A comprehensive safety plan requires the cooperation of several individuals and organizers; a five-part hierarchy can help explain.

1. Baltimore Dragon Boat/ IDBF: Policy makers on safety issues. BDBC/IDBF needs to increase awareness on safety issues. BDBC/IDBF sanctioned festivals must follow BDBC/IDBF safety protocol. This policy is presently being developed and will involve event organizers, officials, event staff and support emergency services.
2. Club/Facility: Responsible for facility safety, training area, warnings, and enforcement. The club/facility must provide a safe loading and unloading area, provide proper rescue equipment, have a communications system to ensure clear and uninterrupted communication from the boat to land, and make sure that all coaching staff is properly trained in CPR and first aid.
3. Individual: Most basic form of responsibility. Individuals must conduct themselves in a safe manner. The individual is required to follow all BDBC, IDBF, and facility safety rules.
4. Coach: Responsible for individuals in the crew. He/She makes sure that all individuals follow the rules. The coach is responsible for taking charge of safety situations. It is the coach who should hold the communication equipment on them.
5. Steersperson: Responsible for the boat when on the water and has the ultimate authority to stop and steer the boat in a safe manner.

Further details on who is responsible for what when it comes to safety.

1. Club/Facility: Responsible for closing the practice site due to unsafe environmental conditions. Unsafe environmental conditions include: Lightning, heavy rain, hail, heavy snow, strong winds, and contaminated water.
2. Club/Facility: Have all participants read and sign liability waivers explicitly stating the risks and dangers associated with paddling.
3. Club/Facility: Acquire all necessary insurances.
4. Club/Facility/Coach: Ensure Dragon Boats are fully equipped with US regulation safety equipment.
5. Club/Facility: Provide a properly maintained safety/escort boat. Ensure the safety/escort boat is properly equipped with US regulation safety equipment.
6. Club/Facility/Coach: Have a rescue coordination plan involving radio communication between all facility safety boats and land personnel.

7. Club/Facility/Coach: Ensure each crew has First Aid/CPR certification on board r available at the facility.
8. Coach/Steersperson: Steering competency is required at all times; the steersperson must be aware of and follow the local facility's practice routines.
9. All Parties: Zero tolerance for drugs, alcohol or other substances that impair judgment or jeopardize an individual's health or crew safety.

Safety Scenarios

Safety procedures will depend on the availability of safety staff on site. Ideally there should be a staff person on land and a water staff person in a motorboat. It is recommended that a practice/race site management group invest in the equipment and training (radio contact, CPR, first-aid, air horns, cell phone) for such staff. The suggested routine below may be adjusted to suit the specific practice/race environment. It is critical that the agree-upon set of actions is clearly communicated and understood by all parties.

Paddler Overboard

- In the event of a paddler overboard, the crew shall stop paddling and bring the boat to a complete stop; if necessary the crew will "Brace the Boat". Paddlers should be silent and only talk if necessary.
- The steersperson will alert the safety boat with three sharp whistle blasts.
- The overboard paddler should indicate to the crew (if possible) that he/she is okay and if necessary "tuck up" to preserve body heat. The crew should not try to pull the paddler back into the boat (assuming safety staff is present).
- If the practice facility does not have a rescue boat or if the rescue boat is too far, then alternate procedures may take place. This may include the overboard paddler swimming to shore with the dragon boat as an escort or getting back in the boat as the crew braces for stability. Always use common sense in these situations.
- The safety boat operator will approach the rear of the dragon boat from the leeward side (keep motor running) to communicate with the steersperson and find the overboard paddler.
- The safety boat operator will assist the overboard paddler into the safety boat, then decide if the paddler is able to continue the practice. If so, the paddler will be returned to the boat. If not, the paddler will be transported back to the dock and the crew shall follow.
- When the paddler is returned to shore, if unable to continue for reasons of injury or hypothermia, standard first-aid procedures will apply, as EMS are contacted. At least one member of the crew will be asked to stay with the injured party to assist.

Capsized or Swamped boat

- Crew members should let the boat roll over or sink, making sure to clear themselves from their seat partner and the boat, if possible.
- If caught under the boat, crew members should come up in the air pocket, breathe and then duck back down away from the boat as they orient themselves by grasping the gunwale.
- Crew members should stay calm and check for their buddy (seat partner) and inform the crew captain if someone is missing. It's important that all crew members understand that

they must remain calm and as quiet as possible. Crew members should only speak if it is important.

- Everyone is to stay near their buddy and close to the boat, nobody should hold onto the boat unless they need to do so. Wait, and listen for instructions.
- The steersperson will alert the safety boat with three sharp blasts with the whistle, if necessary.
- The safety boat operator will approach the rear of the dragon boat from the leeward side (keep motor running) to communicate with the steersperson and watching out for people in the water.
- The safety boat operator should assist any injured paddlers into the safety boat while directing the able-bodied paddlers to stay with the boat as a head count by the crew captain is taken.
- All other crew members should stay with the boat and if possible under the instructions of the crew captain roll the boat over and start to swim it to shore. The first concern is the safety of the crew, before the recovery of the boat. Discretion must be used to decide a course of action based on the swim competency of the crew, the water temperature and the proximity to shore.
- The safety boat operator will inform the site staff person of the emergency to trigger EMS as necessary.
- Crew members will either swim to the launch area or wait to be transported by safety boat.
- In the event of a collision between boats, the above procedures still apply. Each crew is responsible for their own members and care should be taken to ensure that members are not mixed, creating confusion.

In the absence of safety boat support, the IDBF safety rules should apply (see IDBF Competition regulations – Capsized Dragon Boat – Unescorted Crews).

If there is not rescue boat available then in calm condition the whole crew may attempt to “swim” the boat to the nearest safe landing point, as directed by the crew captain. If conditions are not suitable “swimming” the boat, then as a last resort the crew may leave the boat and swim to shore in pairs using the buddy system, again under the control of the crew captain. As with other method, the crew must be accounted for at all times during any attempts to swim the boat or as pairs under the buddy system. However, in a training situation, members are advised to not attempt to swim to shore unless they are wearing PFD’s. Should there be no alternative but to swim to shore, then any member who is not wearing a PFD should join a “buddy” pair with PFD’s or make up a group (or groups) of three, to provide mutual support and assistance during the swim.

Medical Emergency (*Land*)

- In the event of a medical emergency on land, the site staff or designate will contact Emergency Medical Services (EMS) if possible and an appropriate person will use standard first aid procedures to assist until professional support arrives. In the absence of such first-stage expertise, the affected person should be kept warm, conscious and quiet

as much as possible. In an ideal environment, a qualified CPR/first-aid operator should be in each crew. A cell phone on site is also very useful.

Medical Emergency (*Water*)

- In the event of a medical emergency on water, the affected crew shall stop paddling and bring the boat to a complete stop.
- The steersperson will alert the safety boat with three sharp whistle blasts.

The safety boat operator will approach the rear of the dragon boat from the leeward side (keep motor running) to communicate with the steersperson and determine the extent of the emergency.

- The safety boat operator will communicate with the senior shore staff to call for EMS or other support as necessary.
- The injured party may be transferred to the safety boat and transported to shore or will be paddles directly, whichever is most time-efficient and safest.
- The injured party will be treated with standard first-aid procedures by safety staff until professional support arrives. At least one member of the crew should be asked to stay with the injured party to assist.

Regulations and procedures are an important guide, but nothing replaces common sense and a degree of reasonable of advance caution in certain situations. The key is to prepare in advance, so that all stakeholders know their role in a time of emergency.

After an emergency it is prudent to document the incident for reasons of general communication, follow-up, liability and future safety improvements. A safety incident form may be useful in this regard.