



Australian Canoeing

Education and Safety Technical Committee

Safety Guidelines

11 January 2008

**Minimum standards for the conduct of safe
non-competitive canoeing and kayaking activities**



Australian Canoeing

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Disclaimer

The information in these guidelines is of a general nature only and is not intended to be relied upon as, nor as a substitute for, specific professional advice. No responsibility for the loss occasioned to any person acting on or refraining from action as a result of any material in these guidelines can be accepted.

Preface

These Guidelines were prepared by a Special Purpose Safety Working Party of Australian Canoeing ("AC") and adopted by its Board of Directors on 1 December 2004.

The members of the working party were drawn from a wide cross-section of the canoeing industry and other qualified individuals. The party included sports administrators, canoeing instructors, Olympic standard athletes, legal experts, insurance industry representatives, representatives from government regulatory bodies, representatives from peak outdoor recreation organisations, etc.

The Guidelines specify the minimum requirements for the safe conduct of Recreational (non-competitive) Canoeing and Kayaking activities.

Reviews

This edition has been amended by AC Education and Safety Technical Committee, January 2008:

Cover picture

Photograph by Judy Fakes: whales seen off Brush Island, October 2007

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About Australian Canoeing and the Award Scheme

Since 1949 Australian Canoeing (AC) has been the Peak Industry Body for canoeing and its qualifications have been regarded as 'best industry practice' since their implementation in 1976.

Over the past few years competency based Vocational Education and Training (VET) has replaced many traditional types of training in industries nationally. Canoeing forms part of the Outdoor Recreation Industry, where competency based qualifications have been introduced in many key areas, such as climbing, abseiling and canoeing by the Australian National Training Authority.

In 1999 Australian Canoeing conducted a major review of its Award Scheme and as part of the process aligned it to the Outdoor Recreation Industry Training Package. When a candidate qualified for an Australian Canoeing Award they had met or exceeded the requirements of a cluster of competency units from the Outdoor Recreation Training Package (SRO03).

Experience over a number of years revealed problems with the Scheme, particularly with assessment. Many club members, the core of AC's membership, found the Scheme too complex, with required competencies beyond their needs, and did not seek qualification. In 2007 it was decided to abandon the links with VET, and to control the Scheme directly.

Each Australian Canoeing Award has been carefully developed and reviewed so that it covers the skills and knowledge required to operate at the level of the Award definition.

The Australian Canoeing Instructional and Guide Awards have been devised to give a leader the minimum level of competence to operate as a canoeing specialist in the outdoor recreation industry. This level of competence is Australian Canoeing's recommended level for operation in the Award context.

Courses for the conduct of AC Instructor and Guide Awards are facilitated and delivered by National Training Providers approved by AC. These National Training Providers undergo an audit process to ensure that the training they deliver meets minimum industry standards.

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope

These guidelines provide the minimum requirements for the safe conduct of Recreational Canoeing and Kayaking activities. The guidelines do not specify the requirements for every conceivable activity or environmental condition. The onus is on all Instructors and Guides to ensure that they undertake a thorough Risk Assessment prior to activities to ensure that additional requirements are considered and if required undertaken.

These guidelines do not apply to competitive canoeing and kayaking such as Flatwater Racing, Marathon Racing, Slalom Racing, Freestyle, Wildwater Racing, and Canoe Polo. Requirements for the safe conduct of these activities are detailed in the applicable competition rules and other relevant policies issued from time to time by the ICF and AC.

The guidelines do not address the many varied requirements of State and Federal Legislation, much of which applies to general boating activities and not just canoeing and kayaking. The requirements of some of this legislation are not necessarily suited to canoeing and kayaking activities, such as requirements to carry anchors. However, AC does not endorse the ignoring of various legislative requirements. Organisers of canoeing and kayaking activities should consider such requirements in the planning of their activities.

1.2 Purpose

- (a) All on-water activity involves risks and hazards, most of which can be eliminated by thorough planning, good Instructor or Guide skills and effective management. Well run activities will:
 - contribute to the safety of participants and the public
 - assist in the smooth running of the activity
 - add to the enjoyment of the participants.
- (b) The purpose of these guidelines is to promote safe, well run and enjoyable canoeing and kayaking activities. These guidelines play an important role in fulfilling Australian Canoeing's goal to pursue high standards of safety, education and training in all aspects of the sport. The Guidelines:
 - provide information from which government regulators (e.g. land managers, waterways departments, educational authorities, etc), organisations conducting canoeing activities (e.g. tour operators, canoe clubs, schools, community groups, etc), Guides and Instructors can establish appropriate policies and standards for their canoeing and kayaking activities
 - provide details on managing participants before, during and after activities
 - establish minimum standards for different grade activities for the qualifications of Instructor or Guides, participants, boats and equipment, communications and the management of emergencies.

1.3 Definitions

"AC" means Australian Canoeing Inc.

"Guide" A person who leads or guides a group without the intention of imparting skills or knowledge beyond that which is necessary to participate safely and adequately in the activity. At the end of a session or program with a guide, the intent is not for the participant to have acquired the skills to independently participate in the activity.

"ICF" means the International Canoe Federation.

"Instructor" A person who facilitates skill transfer or development to participants in order that they may act independently or with minimal supervision. This requires the instructor to be able to critique technique, apply a variety of appropriate instructional strategies and may require them to assess participant's skill acquisition at the end of a program or session.

"Leader" A person giving direction to a group. This includes Instructors, Guides, trip leaders, peer leaders, Scout leaders, group leaders, etc.

“Participant” A person who has the necessary competencies to participate independently or under supervision in an outdoor activity. The ability to demonstrate participatory skills to the appropriate standard is a pre-requisite to performing as a Guide or Instructor in outdoor recreation.

“Peer Activity” A paddling activity where no instructional or guiding structure exists and it is the responsibility of each member of the group to ensure the suitability of their equipment and themselves for the activity.

2. Planning

2.1 Risk Management

The risk management process should be directly applied to the management of safety risks associated with planning organised canoeing and kayaking activities and must be undertaken prior to each organized activity occurring.

AC Instructors and Guides are educated in Risk Management processes.

AC recommends that all personnel or organisations conducting canoeing or kayaking activities develop an emergency management plan that allows them to establish a programmed response to incidents that reduce the consequences should such incidents occur.

An Emergency Management Plan should consider:

(a) Chain of Command

The persons or positions with which a leader should communicate or report to, in the event of an emergency response.

(b) Communication Systems and Technology

Emergency responses in outdoor environments can be assisted by various technological modes of communication. These may include mobile phones, radios and satellite phones, etc. While all can assist in the activation of an emergency response, consideration should always be given to their limitations (e.g. mobile telephone network coverage, battery failure).

When activating an emergency response requiring external assistance, the following information should be accurately provided to the recipient of such calls for assistance:

- communication and contact details
- escape route and location information
- participant lists
- medical forms and patient details
- transport details.

(c) Emergency Procedures

- Emergency procedures should be documented before embarking on an activity and will be implemented in the event of:
 - serious injury or fatality
 - serious threats to personal safety from high risk environmental conditions (e.g. bushfire)
 - lost participants
 - behavioural management problems
- Such procedures should include:
 - priority of tasks: immediate, second, third
 - roles and responsibilities
 - exit routes, emergency and evacuation procedures
 - injury
 - lost persons

- contact details for base camp, and program administrators as required
- contact details for police, rescue and medical services in the area
- communication modes and protocols
- location management
- vehicular access
- boat access
- helicopter access
- identification of nearest medical facilities
- identification of natural hazards and appropriate response
- bushfire
- lightning
- flooding
- post incident management: contact of insurer, legal procedures post incident trauma counselling.

2.2 Float Plan

- (a) AC recommends that for every trip that leaves the immediate launch area, details of the participants and the trip should be lodged with a responsible person or authority so that in the event of an emergency, a detailed description of the group and its activity is freely available. Australian Canoeing refers to these details as a Float Plan.
- (b) For trips, full details of the route and any contingency plans should be noted.
- (c) A float plan template is included in Appendix F.

3 People

3.1 Responsibilities of the Leader

Leaders have the following minimum responsibilities:

- Research likely hazards
- Confirm group experience/ capabilities (where possible)
- Adhere to these guidelines
- Ensure a full briefing of participants is clearly carried out and understood
- Check environmental conditions (i.e. river levels, weather reports, weather forecast)
- Ensure that all group equipment is stored correctly
- Confirm head count before departure and throughout trip
- Be alert for physical and psychological condition of the group
- Control the pace of the group
- Rest group if necessary
- Ensure, to the best of their ability, that participants do not get into situations beyond their capabilities
- Designate responsibility to other leaders
- Confirm headcount after trip
- Notify appropriate persons of safe completion
- Check all equipment on return.

Before commencing the trip, it is the Leader's responsibility to ensure to the best of their ability that each party member has the knowledge, ability, skill and equipment to participate safely.

3.2 Competency and Qualifications of Instructors and/or Guides

Australian Canoeing Instructors and Guides are trained to conduct Canoeing and/or Kayaking activities. All AC Instructors and Guides have been assessed acting to the full capacity of their Award in the Award context. Details of the requirements for each of AC's qualifications are detailed below.

In addition to achieving the minimum level of competence, Australian Canoeing Instructors and Guides must re-register with Australian Canoeing. Accreditation re-registration is a policy that requires Australian Canoeing Instructors and Guides to undertake a prescribed amount of continuing education. Re-registration is required to retain any rights as an Australian Canoeing Instructor or Guide.

Re-registration is part of the continuing education of Canoeing Instructors and Guides. Its purpose is:

- to extend the knowledge and skills of Instructors and Guides
- to provide an avenue for post accreditation servicing
- to ensure that Instructors and Guides are up to date with the latest techniques, teaching methods, safety issues, legal responsibilities and risk management information.

All Australian Canoeing Instructor and Guide awards are valid for three years from the date of accreditation registration or re-registration.

Instructors and Guides are also required to comply with and observe the constitution, by-laws, and regulations of AC, including the AC Member Protection Bylaw and these Safety Guidelines.

Leaders of Canoeing Activities must hold appropriate Instructor or Guide Qualifications. A Statement of Attainment, listing the achievement of units of competence under the National Outdoor Recreation Industry Training Package, is not regarded by AC as satisfactory evidence that the holder is appropriately qualified to lead Canoeing activities.

A summary of AC Instructor and Guide Awards follows.

Canoe/Kayak Lifeguard

Holders of the Canoe/Kayak Lifeguard award have been assessed as and are qualified to manage a paddling activity in controlled situations, performing rescues as required, where the group does not leave the immediate launch area.

Controlled situations include:

- An area where no environmental forces (waves, wind or current) are acting to separate or move the group significantly
- Still water (insignificant tide or river flow)
- The ability to see all participants at once
- One lifeguard per six boats

A risk analysis of the area must be conducted prior to the activity to determine whether the area is suitable for the number of boats and skills of participants.

This qualification is a supervisory award for an enclosed area only

Flatwater Instructor and Guide (Level 1)

Holders of the Flatwater Instructor and Guide (Level 1) Awards have been assessed at and are qualified to operate on inland waters such as open lakes and rivers (but not on Whitewater or at sea) in controlled conditions for inland kayaking and canoeing which include:

- sheltered and calm waters
- minimal wind
- ease of access to shore
- minimal flow of water.

A risk analysis of the area must be conducted prior to the activity to determine whether the area is suitable for the number of boats and skills of participants.

Sea Leader

Holders of the Sea Leader Award have been assessed at and are qualified to operate with participants who hold Sea Skills in conditions that are:

- below “strong wind warnings” conditions (forecast or observed of greater than 25 knots)
- crossings of less than 10 nautical miles
- surf to 1m

Sea leaders may also lead less experienced paddlers in conditions that include:

- wind conditions below 15 knots (forecast or observed)
- crossings of less than 1 nautical mile
- surf to 0.5m
- not rounding a significant headland.

Sea Instructor and Guide (Level 2)

Holders of the Sea Instructor and Guide (Level 2) Awards have been assessed at and are qualified to operate in conditions that are:

- below “strong wind warnings” conditions (forecast or observed of greater than 25 knots)
- crossings of less than 10 nautical miles
- surf to 1m.

Operations may also be conducted in conditions that exceed the above where a documented hazard identification and risk management process has been undertaken to ensure the participants skills and equipment are appropriate to the environment.

Sea Instructor (Level 3)

Holders of the Sea Instructor (Level 3) Award are to conduct a risk analysis before any activity to determine whether the area is suitable for the number of boats and the skills of participants.

Whitewater Instructor and Guide (Level 2)

Holders of the Whitewater Instructor and Guide (Level 2) Awards are qualified to operate in Grade 2 Whitewater conditions.

A Whitewater Instructor (Level 2) may instruct on Grade 2.

Whitewater Instructor and Guide (Level 3)

Holders of the Whitewater Instructor and Guide (Level 3) Awards are qualified to operate in Grade 3+ Whitewater conditions.

3.3 First Aid Qualifications of Instructors and Guides

First aid qualifications, personnel requirements and equipment/kit requirements are regulated at the State level by the workcover or OH&S government regulatory body.

All Instructors and Guides must have a current state government regulating body approved first aid qualification to maintain the currency of their AC qualification. Qualifications must contain a course approval number.

All Guides and Instructors should carry their state government authority’s designated first aid kit as a minimum.

AC also recommends that trip Instructors or Guides should hold a current wilderness/remote area first aid certificate, in addition to their first aid qualification, for any trip, which is, at any point, more than two hours from medical attention.

3.4 Communication and authority

Leaders and participants should use an agreed and understood system of communication. AC recommends that the National Standard Signals be understood and used by all paddlers. Details of the National Standard Signals can be found in Appendix A.

The leader should ensure that the participants are given clear and concise instructions on the following matters:

- the National Standard Signals
- the correct and safe handling and navigation of any canoe or kayak
- the correct fitting and wearing of appropriate Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) which are to be worn at all times
- the whereabouts of all group and safety equipment
- the correct and safe operation of any (including safety) equipment
- in sea programs, the group spacing and average speed as well as the signals to be used by the trip leader and participants
- the group's capsize procedure
- sun and or environmental protection
- group medical concerns
- the program for the day
- the role of each participant
- the expectations on each participant.

3.5 Ratios and group size

Appendix C lists the leader:participant ratios as recommended by Australian Canoeing.

Note: Where a group has to pass a crux point, travel a rapid, launch or recover through surf or perform any activity that increases the level of risk only one participant shall be in the danger zone at any time, **and** a dedicated leader will be attendant to the participant in the danger zone.

3.6 Skills of Participants

The leader should take all reasonable steps to ensure that participants are competent to participate in the proposed activity. In this regard the leader should conduct an on-water familiarisation session to demonstrate and practise relevant skills and procedures including, but not limited to, rescue, self rescue and capsize drills. If the leader judges that a person is not sufficiently capable or responsible (e.g. by virtue of their age) to participate in the activity, then that person should not be permitted to.

As a minimum AC recommends that an individual should comply with the AC Safety Code. A copy of the Safety Code can be found in Appendix H.

4 Equipment

Equipment requirements vary with the objectives of the trip plan and the environmental conditions likely to be endured. When planning equipment requirements for a canoeing trip it is important that leaders consider all possible eventualities.

It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that all participants carry with them all necessary equipment for the activity. They will also ensure that they have adequate emergency supplies to handle any likely contingency. In some situations such as Canoe and Kayak Lifeguards operating on very small bodies of water it is sufficient for much of the equipment to be available on shore and not carried in boats.

Detailed design and construction requirements of equipment can be found in Appendix E.

4.1 Boats and associated equipment

Kayaks and canoes used in all activities shall be of a type that is suitable for the nature and duration of the activity, the conditions expected during the activity, and the skill levels of all participants

Craft should:

- provide a stable platform allowing strokes to be performed effectively
- possess the strength to withstand all foreseeable forces
- not sink, but remain horizontal when swamped and be useable as buoyancy for its crew
- be capable of being towed by rope and grasped by hand
- allow for easy exit in the event of capsize
- not be designed, made of a material or finished in a way that could cause injury or impede exit
- be fitted with end loops or toggles
- be fitted with a footrest that will not allow feet to become entrapped, and that will not break in the event of foreseeable paddling forces or impacts
- be of a colour that is clearly visible to other water users or rescue authorities
- positive buoyancy at each end which may consist of:
 - sturdy, waterproof bulkheads, fore and aft, with water tight hatch covers
 - Integrated cockpits with watertight hatch covers
 - fixed flotation bags
 - being a 'sit on top' self-draining kayak.

Kayak paddlers are to wear spray decks on white water and the sea. Decked canoe paddlers are to wear spray decks on white water: they are optional on open canoes.

Rudders, skegs or retractable fins are recommended for use on sea kayaks, but paddlers should not be reliant on them for directional control of their craft.

Pump or self-bailer

The ability to remove water from a sea kayak cockpit is essential since the addition of water:

- inhibits stability
- increases the possibility of hypothermia
- decreases endurance
- increases the possibility of water and salt related problems such as blisters, infection, etc.

Personal vessels

To help ensure your safety in a sea kayak:

- you should have a "bomb proof" method of re-entering your kayak after capsize (the preferred method is re-entry and roll)
- you should be able to paddle your boat, with a fully flooded cockpit, away from a dangerous situation in offshore conditions, and then be able to completely evacuate the water from the cockpit in the same conditions.

It is recommended that a pump or self-bailer system is fitted. Choice of pump needs to give careful consideration to the skills of the paddler, the vessel and expected operational use (expert advice in this regard is recommended). No pump system is fail safe and all pump systems require regular inspection and maintenance.

Vessels used for clients under supervision

The kayak needs to be configured in a manner that a competent paddler can guide and assist the novice paddler back into the kayak in a safe and efficient manner.

A method of evacuating any water from within the cockpit that can be accessed effectively by either the competent guide or novice paddler.

4.2 Paddles

Paddles are to be appropriate for the type of craft and the build and skill levels of the participants. One or more spare paddle(s) shall be carried by the group as appropriate for the activity, notably at sea and in remote areas.

Paddle parks are recommended for all participants while sea kayaking or in other exposed conditions such as large lakes.

4.3 Personal Flotation Devices

All participants are to wear an appropriate personal flotation device (PFD) whose construction meets or exceeds Australian Standards for Type 2 or Type 3 at all times while on the water. Paddlers must also comply with local equipment regulations, which vary from State to State.

PFDs should be the correct size for the wearer and be adjusted correctly whilst on the water.

A whistle attached to the buoyancy aid for emergency use is recommended to enable a person to attract attention.

Rescue PFDs should comply with the previously mentioned standards for Type 3 PFDs. Towing cowtails must be quick release. The PFD must not contain any pocket or other component that may impede paddling, normal rescue practices or exit from craft. It is highly recommended that all PFDs be of a bright colour.

4.4 Helmets

AC recommends that helmets comply with the CE EN 1385:1998 standard and:

- be made of strong, lightweight material, e.g. plastic or carbon fibre
- cover the head to provide ample protection to the forehead, temple and back of the head
- have enough positive buoyancy to float
- be a good fit so as not to move, but not to be so tight as to be uncomfortable
- have an effective fastener to fix the helmet securely in place
- have a good system to absorb the shock from impacts and to provide a separation distance between the outside of the helmet and the paddler's head.

A canoeing helmet which meets these requirements must be worn while paddling water Grade 2 and above and while surfing, paddling among rocks or in sea caves, and during rescue practice, and are optional for other canoeing activities. The helmet should be securely fixed whenever it is worn.

4.5 Navigation Equipment

Maps and/or marine charts, compasses, and GPS receivers shall be carried as deemed appropriate for the navigational requirements of the activity, and shall be treated and/or stored in such a way as to make them water resistant.

No single navigation system should be relied upon. Where an electronic system such as a GPS is used, spare batteries and another position fixing method should be available.

4.6 Communication Equipment

The following communication equipment should be carried as appropriate for the activity and area of operation. Electronic and other equipment that can be damaged by water is to be carried in water resistant containers. Leaders are responsible to determine the equipment to be carried by all participants:

- marine whistle
- mobile phone
- signalling mirror

- marine VHF radio (operators should hold the Marine Radio Operator's VHF Certificate of Proficiency)
- flares (red, smoke, parachute)
- marine 27MHz radio
- torch
- strobe light
- UHF radio
- V-sheet
- satellite phone
- chemical light stick (or electronic equivalent)
- EPIRB.

4.7 Safety and Rescue Equipment

Basic rescue equipment should be carried where it is quickly and easily accessible. Paddlers should receive training in the use of any rescue equipment that they carry, and regularly practise its use.

All leaders are to have an appropriate towing system easily accessible so that it can be deployed quickly when needed. Other participants may also carry towlines, as appropriate for the activity and at the discretion of the leader. All towing systems must be quick-release, and should be set up so that they do not restrict the manoeuvrability of the towing boat.

Throw bags must be carried by all leaders on any activity involving moving water. They may also be carried by some other participants at the discretion of the leader. All participants should be trained in their use.

It is recommended that a rescue knife (safety knife) should be carried by all leaders on Whitewater. Knives should be quickly and easily accessible, but it is generally not considered appropriate to carry them on the outside of a PFD.

A basic repair kit should be carried by all leaders and by other participants at the leader's discretion. A roll of duct tape is considered a minimum requirement. A comprehensive group repair kit appropriate for the boats that are being used should be carried on all expeditions, particularly in remote areas.

4.8 Maintenance, Replacement and Storage of Equipment

All equipment used in canoeing activities should be used, maintained and stored according to manufacturers' specifications where applicable

5 Incident reporting

The reporting of accidents and incidents with the maintenance of an incident database allows all paddlers to benefit from the experiences of others.

Australian Canoeing maintains records of canoeing incidents and accidents that resulted in injury or had the potential to result in injury.

Australian Canoeing Instructors and Guides are encouraged to complete an incident report form and forward it directly to AC for processing. These records are stored centrally and regularly reviewed to identify trends. Incident and accident reporting is a valuable risk management tool that assists Australian Canoeing in identifying injury trends. The timely and accurate recording of incident or accident-related information can also help Australian Canoeing and its insurer to defend possible liability claims resulting from injuries that may have occurred during an organised activity under Australian Canoeing's control.

An Incident Report Form is found in Appendix G and can be obtained of the AC website, www.canoe.org.au, or by contacting the AC office on (02) 8116 9727.

6 Other requirements

6.1 Clothing

The outer layer, whether PFD, cag or other, should be of a colour that makes it easily visible for other water users or rescue services.

Clothing is to be of a material and design that give adequate protection from the weather conditions that are expected during the activity. The protective qualities of the clothing shall not be significantly reduced when the material is wet.

Suitable clothing includes but is not limited to wetsuits, dry suits, thermal underwear, synthetic fleece, and paddling jackets for cold weather, and Lycra® rash shirts, stinger suits, and synthetic water-sports shirts in hot conditions.

Note that compression clothing (Skins™, 2XU™, LineBreak™, etc) provides no thermal insulation, and should not be worn in conditions where body heat must be retained.

Footwear is to be worn at all times while paddling. It is to provide adequate protection when the wearer is in the boat, and while walking both in and out of the water. The design should be such that the footwear cannot come off easily, especially while walking in water or mud. Heavy boots of any style shall not be worn. Footwear must also not be of a design that may become caught on foot pegs (some sandal types are dangerous when worn with some foot peg systems).

In situations where helmets are not worn, hats should be worn for to provide adequate sun protection and/or warmth. Beanies and similar headwear may be worn under helmets to provide additional warmth. Broad brimmed and legionnaire style hats provide suitable sun protection. Baseball caps do not, and should not be worn without additional sun protection.

Sunglasses and prescription spectacles should be secured with a suitable restraint.

Leaders should carry extra dry clothing, as appropriate, for the participants, the paddling conditions and the duration of the activity.

6.2 Sun Protection

Leaders should adhere to and promote best practice sun protection behaviour. In the case of UV protection, best practice includes:

- Regular use of high protection factor sunscreen on all exposed areas, with reapplication at least every 2 hours (more often when sweating or in spray / wet environments)
- Regular use of a high protection factor lip balm
- Use of a wide brim hat or a style that gives 360 degrees protection. The hat should be tied on. Where helmets are used, liberal, regular use of sunscreen is required. Helmets with visors should be used if available
- Long sleeved shirts with a collar, appropriate to the conditions (rash vests, thermal tops, cags, etc.) should be worn
- In the event that legs are exposed for prolonged periods then liberal, regular use of sunscreen is a minimum. A full length pant, of a fit and material that is safe and comfortable for swimming, is preferable
- Eye protection from solar UV radiation is recommended, particularly in highly reflective environments (the paddling environment). Sunglasses should be chosen for their UV protection

6.3 Food and drink

Adequate food and drink supplies as appropriate for the nature and duration of the activity for all participants should be carried. It is recommended that high-energy foods should be carried, particularly in colder weather.

Guides and Instructors are not qualified by virtue of their AC qualifications to determine the suitability of lake or river water for human consumption. The condition of water should be checked with the relevant body and if any concerns exist water should be carried or an acceptable water purification method should be used.

7 Further information

Australian Canoeing ("AC") is the Peak National Sporting Organisation responsible for the management, coordination, development and promotion of paddle sports in Australia. One of its primary responsibilities is the promotion of safe canoeing practices.

AC is governed by a Board of Directors who are elected by the seven State Association Members of AC.

The Board is advised by an Education and Safety Technical Committee whose powers and authorities are delegated by the Board of Directors. It is the responsibility of all committee members to act within the parameters of these delegated powers and authorities. The Committee was previously known as the Australian Board of Canoe Education. In summary the role of the Committee is as:

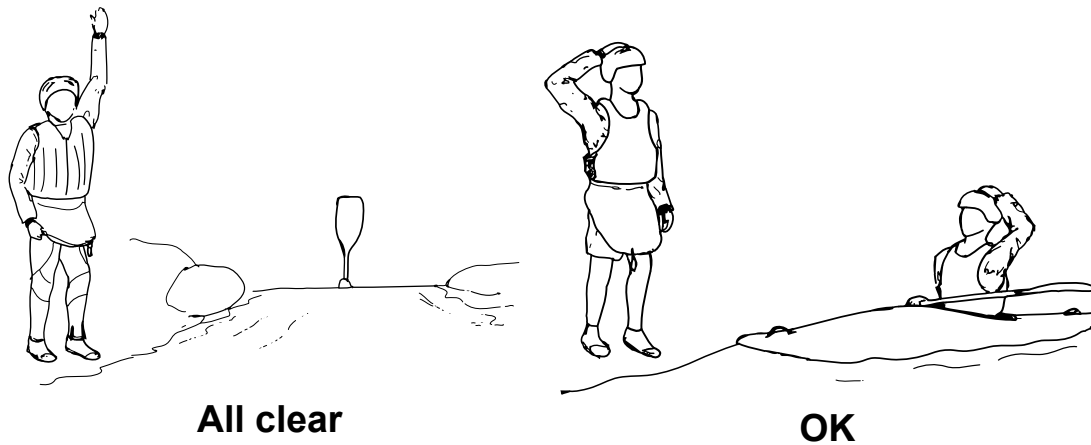
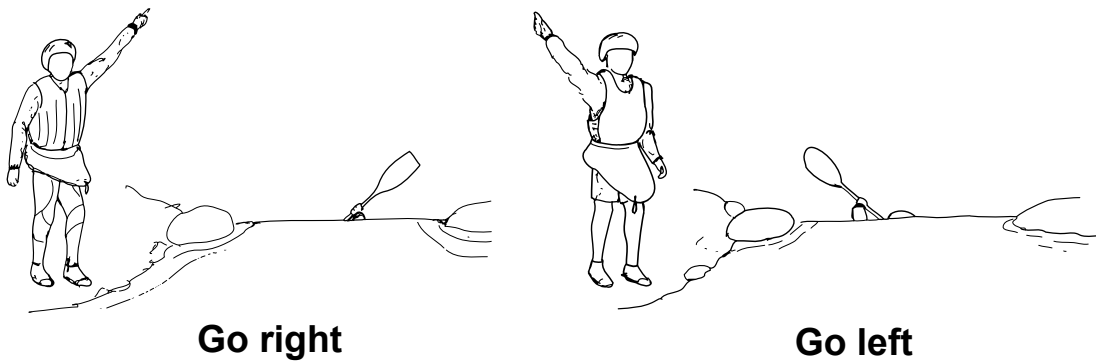
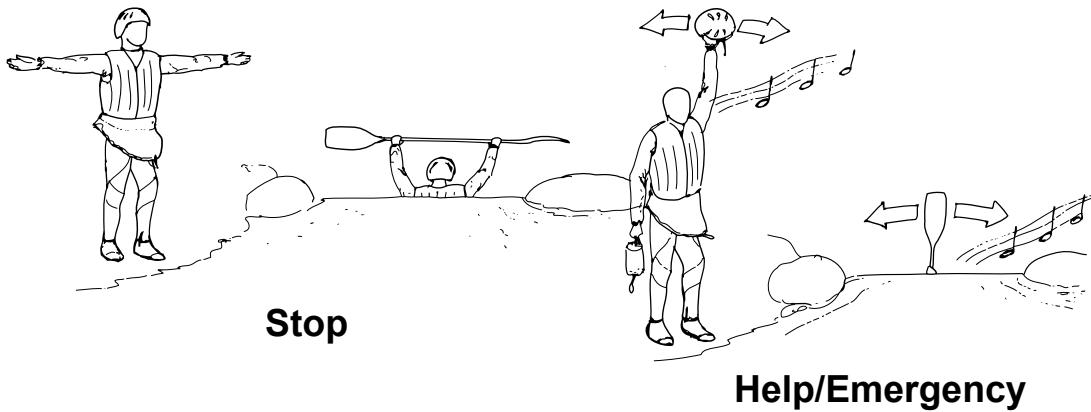
- a forum for consideration of practical issues and resolution of problems
- a source of expert advice and assistance to the Board of Directors and Australian Canoeing
- a review body and commentator (in relation to discussion papers, reports, etc)
- a source of policy proposals and reform initiatives
- a monitor of practice standards and advocate of ongoing training and skills development
- a liaison body.

For further information on this standard or other information on Australian Canoeing, contact:

Australian Canoeing
PO Box 6805
Silverwater NSW 2128
Tel: (02) 8116 9727
Fax: (02) 8732 1610
Email: education@canoe.org.au
Internet: www.canoe.org.au

Appendix A: National Standard Signals

River Signals



Sea Signals

Leaders of sea kayaking activities must adopt a series of signals appropriate to the context that is simple and allows communication amongst their group in sea conditions. It is recommended that these signals be adapted from the international river signals.

Appendix B: River and Sea Gratings

International River Grading System

The International River Grading System has been designed to provide an indication of the degree of difficulty of a rapid and/or river. It is not an absolute scale and should be used with the understanding that the scale does not indicate the full extent of hazards that may be encountered on a river:

- The degree of remoteness, overhanging trees and other elements that add risk to the trip that aren't actually part of the river, are not accounted for in this system
- Rivers tend to be graded by the grade of the majority of the rapids they contain, but there may be one or two much harder rapids on the river
- The skills needed to paddle, for example, technical Grade 4 rivers are very different from the skills needed to paddle big volume Grade 4 rivers
- It should be remembered that the higher the grading the greater the risks involved in swimming
- Paddling one very difficult rapid, say Grade 4, presents a different level of risk than paddling an entire river of continuous Grade 4 rapids
- The degree of difficulty of rivers can change significantly at different water levels
- Slight variations in the interpretation of the grading will exist in each local region according to the nature of the rivers found there.

Experienced local paddlers are the best source of information about rivers

The following descriptions are a basic guide to each grade.

Grade 1: Easy

Slow to medium flowing water with very small, regular waves or riffles. Relatively few obstacles, with an easy path to find and follow. Suitable for novices.

Grade 2: Medium

Rapids are straightforward with medium sized, regular waves. The path through rapids can be clearly seen from the water and is often indicated by well-defined chutes or Vs of water. There are some obstacles that require manoeuvring around, but paddlers with a good command of basic strokes can easily miss them.

Grade 3: Difficult

Rapids have moderate, irregular waves and strong currents. Manoeuvring is required to follow the preferred route. Small to medium sized stoppers may have to be negotiated. The route is difficult for inexperienced paddlers to see and scouting is advisable. Suitable for experienced Whitewater paddlers, with the ability to roll an advantage.

Grade 4: Advanced

Rapids have large waves and powerful confused, currents. Drops are big and stoppers can be large and unavoidable. Fast manoeuvres may need to be made. The route is not clear, and scouting may be needed. Suitable only for very experienced Whitewater paddlers with consistent skills and reliable rolls.

Grade 5: Expert

Extremely long, obstructed or powerful rapids. Rapids may contain very large unavoidable drops, waves, and stoppers and turbulent, unpredictable currents. Fast and accurate manoeuvring is necessary. Eddies may be very small, turbulent and scarce. The route is complex and scouting is highly recommended.

Suitable only for expert paddlers, who are willing to accept the higher level of risk. Rolling in adverse conditions is essential. Swimming is very dangerous.

Grade 6: Extreme

Rapids are extremely technically difficult, powerful and unpredictable. They are rarely paddled, and if they are paddled successfully they are usually downgraded to Grade 5 plus.

The river cannot be paddled without severe risk to life.

Sea Conditions Grading

Sea conditions vary according to many factors, including the following:

- wind strength (speed or Beaufort number)
- duration the wind has been blowing
- fetch (the distance over which the wind has blown)
- depth
- bottom type and shape
- presence and type of shore lines
- currents
- air and sea temperature
- tide.

Appendix C: Leader to Participant Ratios

Preamble

A risk analysis must be conducted prior to the activity to determine an appropriate ratio for the conditions, number of boats and skills of participants.

Ratios for flatwater/inland kayaking or canoeing

In adverse weather, the conditions on a large body of inland water can approach those found at sea. Water temperatures, even in summer, may be much lower than equivalent sea temperatures.

Control of a group can be rapidly lost as conditions deteriorate, and capsizes occur. Under such conditions, as at sea, it can be difficult to keep the group together unless they are able to respond skilfully and effectively to instructions: the larger the group, the more so.

The acceptable ratio of leader / guide to participants for conducting group kayaking or canoeing activities on inland water is 1:6, or 1:8 in double canoes or kayaks.

Supervision should be increased towards a ratio of 1:4 under the following conditions:

- participants have special needs, including behavioural, physical or mental disability
- participants are primarily younger children
- weather conditions are poor (existing or forecast), with white horses, wind and/or cold water
- any planned trip is along a committing shoreline with few safe egress points
- the area is remote from observation or rescue
- the body of water is subject to unpredictable winds, common in mountainous areas.

Supervision should be relaxed towards a ratio of 1:12 under the following conditions:

- all participants are 17 years of age or older
- all participants are competent, both individually and as a group, to deal with likely problems, which may be encountered
- good weather forecast with light / favourable winds, flat and warm water which present little risk to participants
- area is in a non-remote where assistance from other groups or craft might be available
- planned trip will stay close to an easily accessible shoreline.

Ratios for white water kayaking or canoeing on moving rivers up to Grade 3

Communication problems caused by water noise, helmets covering ears, and a shortage of safe, 'assembly points', will always make the management of a large group extremely difficult. The value of a qualified assistant (to bring up the rear, or pre-shoot a rapid, or deal with individual problems) cannot be over-emphasised when paddling on moving water.

The acceptable ratio for conducting group kayaking or canoeing activities in moving water up to, and including, Grade 3 is 1:4.

Supervision should be increased under the following conditions:

- participants have special needs, including behavioural, physical or mental disability
- participants are primarily younger children
- the river being paddled is in flood
- the water temperature is cold and may affect participant's capabilities
- the river is in a remote area
- the river is known to have few large breakouts
- the river has continuous sections of technical water
- the river has frequent 'pinning' hazards (rocks, trees, etc)
- egress is required above more hazardous sections.

On Grade 2 water, the ratio may be relaxed to 1:6 in the following circumstances:

- two or more instructors are with the total group
- the whitewater is in short sections rather than being continuous
- appropriate group management is applied so that only one participant is at the crux point of the rapid at any time.

Ratios for Sea Kayaking

The effect (not always obvious) of winds and currents on novice paddling groups at apparently benign-looking beaches, can be dramatic. Local knowledge, and experience in this type of environment is vital for leaders.

Control of a group at sea can be rapidly lost as conditions deteriorate, and capsizes occur. Under such conditions, it can be impossible to keep the group together unless they are able to respond skilfully and effectively to instructions: the larger the group, the more so.

Some tidal estuaries, whilst sheltered at times, at other times can present severe open sea hazards.

The acceptable ratio of leader/guides to participants for conducting group kayaking activities at sea is 1:6, or 1:8 if using double kayaks.

Supervision should be increased towards a ratio of 1:2 considering the following conditions or variables:

- participants have special needs, including behavioural, physical or mental disability
- participants are primarily children
- foreseeable conditions are poor, including swell, breaking waves, spring tides and/or wind (especially if against tide)
- the water temperature is cold and may affect participants' capabilities
- a trip is being undertaken which:
 - is along a committing shoreline
 - is remote from observation
 - involves unavoidable tide races or overfalls
- access or egress will involve surf >1 metre

Supervision may be relaxed towards a ratio of 1:10 under the following conditions:

- all participants are adults
- all participants are competent, both individually and as a group, to deal with likely problems, which may be encountered
- all participants are reliable rollers
- good weather forecast for a stable sea state with no spring tides or tidal stream
- water temperatures are warm and present little risk to participants
- the location/route is in not remote and assistance from other groups or craft is available
- the location/route is always close to an easily accessible shoreline
- the leader holds a higher qualification than required for the activity.

Appendix D: Australian Canoeing awards

The Australian Canoeing Award Scheme offers awards on Flatwater, Whitewater and Sea, and as Skill, Guide, and Instructor qualifications. Note that Awards on Flatwater and Whitewater may be in canoe or kayak. For details of the awards and their units of competency, see the *Award Scheme Handbook*.

Flatwater

Skill	Guide	Instructor
Basic Skills—Flatwater	Canoe/Kayak Lifeguard	
Flatwater Skills	Flatwater Guide	Flatwater Instructor

Whitewater

Skill	Guide	Instructor
Basic Skills—Whitewater	Club Trip Leader	
Whitewater Skills	Whitewater Guide	Whitewater Instructor
Advanced Whitewater Skills	Advanced Whitewater Guide	Advanced Whitewater Instructor

Sea

Skill	Guide	Instructor
Basic Skills—Sea		
Basic Skills—Coastal (Sit on Top)		
Sea Kayak Skills	Sea Guide, Sea Leader, Coastal Guide	Sea Kayak Instructor
Advanced Sea Kayak Skills	Advanced Sea Guide	Advanced Sea Instructor

Appendix E: Equipment

Whitewater Equipment Standards

Kayaks and Canoes

The kayak or canoe must be constructed specifically to reduce the risk of bending, folding or entrapment. Specifically, craft should be fitted with internal supports to resist folding. The cockpit setup should be such that the vessel grips the occupant firmly for maximum control **and** so that the occupant can exit the vessel easily.

- Craft should not collapse onto the paddler's legs
- Depth of the cockpit, height of cockpit rim and any seat strapping must not impede exit
- Any restraining device must be single handed, single action, quick release
- Bow and stern must be rounded
- Apart from the cockpit, the boat should be filled with buoyant material, excluding as much water as possible
- Craft shall not sink when swamped, should remain horizontal and should support its occupant in the water
- End loops or toggles should be fitted within 30 cm of the bow and stern, minimum diameter of 10 mm with a breaking strain of 8000 N. The loops must not allow the full insertion of a hand
- Footrests should be constructed so that feet will not become jammed.

Paddle

Paddles should allow the full range of strokes, braces and rescues and be strong enough to withstand the forces involved in all aspects of whitewater paddling, including impacts with rocks.

Spraycover

Spraycovers (also called spraydecks or sprayskirts) must correctly fit the craft and stay fitted during all aspects of Whitewater paddling.

PFD

PFDs must conform to Australian Canoeing safety policy standards for PFDs.

Sea Kayak Equipment Standards

Kayak

When used in sea conditions, the kayak must be a recognised sea kayak with:

- Minimum volume cockpit (bulkheads or integrated cockpit) so that the kayak is controllable in sea conditions with the cockpit flooded
- Positive buoyancy made up of compartments or fixed flotation—it is recommended that empty compartments be filled with buoyancy material (inflated wine/spring water/fruit juice cask bladders, etc.) that will minimise the amount of water that enters a compartment in the event that its integrity is compromised
- Deckline system of at least 6mm in diameter that is secured to the deck with fastenings that will not fail under normal sea conditions, and that are sufficiently spaced to keep the deckline controlled. The deckline system plus cockpit surrounds should provide handholds for the complete length of the kayak
- Toggles or other safe handholds as near as practical to the bow and stern. If used, hand loops must not allow the full insertion of a hand
- Pump or self-bailer

The ability to remove water from a sea kayak cockpit is essential since the addition of water:

- inhibits stability
- increases the possibility of hypothermia
- decreases endurance
- increases the possibility of water and salt related problems such as blisters, infection, etc.

Personal vessels

To help ensure your safety in a sea kayak:

- you should have a “bomb proof” method of re-entering your kayak after capsize (the preferred method is re-entry and roll)
- you should be able to paddle your boat, with a fully flooded cockpit, away from a dangerous situation in offshore conditions and then be able to completely evacuate the water from the cockpit in the same conditions.

It is recommended that a pump or self-bailer system is fitted. Choice of pump needs to give careful consideration to the skills of the paddler, the vessel and expected operational use (expert advice in this regard is recommended). **No** pump system is fail safe and all pump systems require regular inspection and maintenance.

Vessels used for clients under supervision

The kayak needs to be configured in a manner that a competent paddler can guide and assist the novice paddler back into the kayak in a safe and efficient manner.

A method of evacuating any water from within the cockpit that can be accessed effectively by either the competent guide or novice paddler.

Paddle

Paddles should allow the full range of strokes, braces and rescues and be strong enough to withstand the forces involved in all aspects of sea kayaking including surf launches and landings.

Spraycover

Spraycovers must correctly fit the craft and stay fitted during all aspects of sea kayaking.

PFD

PFDs must confirm to Australian Canoeing safety policy standards for PFDs.

Spare paddle system

A spare paddle must be available for immediate use, the number to be determined by the activity and group size and skill level.

Towline

A quick release towline of at least 15 metres length with a float that will support the system, including any clips/karabiners if unclipped. Waist tow systems are not recommended for use at sea because of the forces involved. Consideration needs to be given to the thickness and stretch characteristics of the rope in terms of safety, ease of deployment and recovery and repacking.

Paddle park or leash

A paddle leash system allowing the paddle to be restrained whilst used should be available. Consideration needs to be given to the safety aspects of tethering the paddle to the person or kayak.

Appendix F: Australian Canoeing Float Plan



Prepared by _____ Date _____

If the group has not reported by _____ (time) on _____ (date), call

Emergency contact _____ at _____
Agency Phone

Group agent, contact, safety person, or logistics person

Name _____ Phone _____

Availability (times, hours per day) _____

Location and vehicle details _____

Group Instructors/Guides

Name	Age	M/F	Emergency contact	Boat colours	Skill level	Medical info

Group members

Name	Age	M/F	Emergency contact	Boat colours	Skill level	Medical info

(If space insufficient attach list)

Total number in party

Departure point

Location _____ Date _____ Time _____

Vehicles at site

Make/model	Year	Colour	Registration

Destination

Location _____ Date _____ Time _____

Vehicles at site

Make/model	Year	Colour	Registration

Planned route

Maps/charts used _____

Day/s	Destination	Location (Grid reference or latitude and longitude)	Initial track on departure

Alternates

Day/s	Location/route

Equipment

Tents No. _____ Colours _____
 First aid kits No. _____
 Fire starting materials _____

Food and water

Water supplies _____ days
 Food supplies _____ days
 Resupply points _____

Communications

Mobile phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number/s	_____	Hours monitored	_____
Marine VHF	<input type="checkbox"/>	Callsign	_____		_____
Marine 27MHz	<input type="checkbox"/>	Callsign	_____		_____
Other			_____		_____

Signalling devices

EPIRB Flares: handheld red smoke parachute
 Strobe Flashlights Signal mirror Chemical light sticks

Notes

Appendix G: Incident report



Introduction

This form is to enable the collection and compilation of information and statistics about incidents involving canoes and kayaks which result in death, injury, and damage, or which have the potential to do so.

Please complete the form to the best of your ability, making enquiries and investigations if necessary. Include more information in writing, with maps and diagrams and a covering letter outlining the event.

Please send in this form even if you know someone else is filling one out for the same incident. The more information, from as many sources, the better the understanding of the incident, and the better the measures that can be put into place to reduce further incidents.

Instructions

- Please note that all measurements are to be in SI units only: metres, kilometres, kilograms, etc.
- Where only one person or boat is involved, tick the appropriate boxes. If two or more, use letters (A, B, C, etc) to distinguish the individuals.

Information on injured party

First Name _____ Postal Address _____
 Last Name _____
 Canoe Club Member Yes No Suburb/Town _____
 Canoe Club _____ State _____ Postcode _____
 Age _____ Sex _____ Height _____ cm Weight _____ kg
 Physical Condition Fit Unfit
 Swimming Ability Nil Poor Fair Good
 Paddling Experience Nil Basic Skills Proficient Advanced
 Previous experience of area Yes No
 Name of partner _____

Clothing	Yes	No	Type	Comments
PFD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Helmet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Wetsuit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Wool/synthetic garments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Anorak	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Footwear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Spraycover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

Declaration

I declare that all information contained in this Incident Report for Australian Canoeing to be true and accurate at the time of submission and that I shall notify Australian Canoeing in the event of change of information.

First Name _____ Postal Address _____
 Last Name _____
 Phone _____ Suburb/Town _____
 Mobile _____ State _____ Postcode _____
 Email _____
 Qualifications 1 _____ 2 _____

Your involvement

Signature _____

Details of the Incident

Tick all the appropriate boxes

Date _____ Time _____ am/pm
DD/MM/YY

Outcome

Death Serious injury Minor injury CPR used Hospitalisation

Damage to craft

Total loss Substantial Minor

Organisations involved

Police Ambulance Fire Other _____
e.g. State emergency services, volunteer coastguard, media

Name of leader of group _____ Number in party _____

Nature of the trip

Private Club School
Commercial Training
Day Overnight Expedition

Perceived contributing factors

Poor planning Poor judgment Inexperience
Inadequate skills Inadequate equipment Inadequate group rescue skills
Lack of self-rescue skills Lack of rescue equipment Lack of rescue knowledge
Group size too small Group size too large Alcohol abuse
Other substance abuse Health problem Paddling alone
PFD not worn Helmet not worn Hypothermia
Other equipment missing Overloaded boat Unsuitable boat
Conditions Other

Your comments on contributing factors

Nature of the incident

Capsize Collision with fixed object Collision with other boat
Trapped in weir Trapped in stopper Trapped in hole
Washed on to rocks Pinned on trees Pinned on boat
Foot entrapment Capsized on snag Trapped under rock
Equipment failure Broken paddle Hand caught in end loop
Victim panicked Other

Rescue attempt

Successful Unsuccessful Injury result of attempt

Your comments on the rescue process

Information on the boat

Type _____ Manufacturer _____
 Model _____ Materials _____
 Cockpit/s Bulkheads Integrated cockpit
 Buoyancy Materials Polystyrene Other expanded plastics Inflatable Other
 Adequacy Sufficient Insufficient

Items	Yes	No	Type	Comments
Footrests/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Handholds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Decklines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Rudder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Retractable fin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Spare paddle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Compass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
Pump	None <input type="checkbox"/>	Manual <input type="checkbox"/>	Electric <input type="checkbox"/>	Foot <input type="checkbox"/>
General condition	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	
Ownership	Own <input type="checkbox"/>	Borrowed <input type="checkbox"/>	Rented <input type="checkbox"/>	Stolen <input type="checkbox"/>
Paddle/s Type	_____			
Adequacy	Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/>	Insufficient <input type="checkbox"/>		

Information on the area

Name _____ Location _____
(Grid reference/latitude and longitude)
 Nearest landmark _____
 Distance of landmark Upstream _____ Downstream _____
 Distance from nearest safe landing _____
 Distance from assistance Time _____ Distance _____
 River level Low Medium High Flood
 Gauge measurement _____ m at gauge _____
 Grade of rapid Sea state Smooth Choppy Heavy
 Wave height _____ m Swell _____ m Surf _____ m Lines _____
 Dumping Yes No
 Shore Beach Steep beach Rocks Cliff
 Any tide or current _____ Tide race Yes No

Weather conditions

Wind Light Moderate Strong Gale force
 Sky Sunshine Cloud Overcast
 Precipitation None Light rain Heavy rain Hail Snow
 Air temperature Very cold Cold Medium Warm Hot
 Water temperature Very cold Cold Medium Warm Hot
 Forecast warnings
 Did the group have forecast Yes No
 Had plans and instructions been submitted as appropriate (e.g. Float Plan) prior to departure?

Appendix H: Australian Canoeing Safety Code

This Safety Code is for any current or prospective paddler written by Australian Canoeing Inc.

Purchasers of Kayaks, Sit On Tops or Canoes

- Decide what you want to do with your canoe or kayak. You may want to:
 - paddle in lakes and lagoons
 - paddle in the sea
 - paddle in white water
 - buy a craft for your children.
- Seek advice about which craft you will best do what you want from endorsed canoeing experts. Any canoe club or its members will be eager to assist.
- Check the craft for fixed buoyancy, comfort when sitting, strength and quality.
- Don't expect to do more with your craft than the purpose you bought it for. Kayaks and canoes are quite specialised.

The Paddler

- Be able to swim confidently and be confident in water, even with the clothing you will wear paddling.
- Always wear a Personal Flotation Device (either Type 2 or 3).
- Be honest with yourself about your ability. Paddling a canoe on quiet water doesn't qualify you for more difficult trips or conditions.
- The waters of rivers, lakes and oceans are all very different, and demand knowledge and skill. Develop your paddling incrementally, preferably with people more skilled than yourself. Clubs are wonderful.
- Beware of cold water and weather extremes. Swimming ability and PFDs cannot counteract for long the effects of very cold water. Wetsuits may sometimes be essential for safety.
- Be equipped for the conditions that could occur. Secure your spectacles, have appropriate footwear, allow for protection against the sun, wind, and rain.
- Learn how to capsize, to rescue yourself and others and learn first aid, so that you are prepared for an emergency.
- Seek training. We recommend the AC Basic Skills Award as a minimum. AC Instructors are available through many canoeing clubs and other bodies.
- Before accepting an invitation to undertake a trip, enquire about:
 - the group organising it
 - the leader
 - the trip itself

If you accept, give the leader a frank assessment of your skill and experience and your full cooperation.

Equipment

- Make certain you have the right craft for the trip!
- Test new and unfamiliar equipment before undertaking hazardous assignments. This includes alterations to gear.
- The craft must be in good condition before starting a trip.
- If sea kayaking, carry a spare paddle in a position where you can get at it quickly.
- The craft, when filled with water, must be able to support its crew and sodden gear in deep water. Use expanded plastics, buoyancy bags or sealed airtight compartments.
- Use spray covers whenever there is any possibility that water may come into the craft in quantity. The cover release must be immediate and function perfectly.

- Carry appropriate repair equipment, torch, map, compass and survival kit on wilderness trips. Leave a plan of your trip with a responsible person and an expected time of arrival at your destination.

The leader

- The leader should describe the conditions that could be experienced to prospective participants, prior to acceptance of invitations.
- The leader should not allow persons to participate beyond their proven ability, nor allow inappropriate craft to start.
- The leader must know the range of weather conditions which may occur and their influence on the water conditions
- Before starting and at any appropriate time, the leader should make it clear that his or her decisions in the interest of safety are final.
- The leader nominates the functions of other group members and the formation on the water.
- By example the leader should impart knowledge, skill and confidence.

On rivers

- Each participant should be aware of group plans, formations, the general nature of the river ahead, the location of any special gear and the signals to be used.
- The lead boat crew scouts all doubtful parts of the river, sets the course, and is never passed.
- The rear boat is equipped and trained for rescue.
- Each craft has a responsibility to the craft behind. It should not lose visual contact. It passes on signals, points out obstacles and tries to prevent its own errors being repeated.
- The party needs to be compact. Large formations should sub-divided into independent groups with an overall plan.

On lakes or the sea

- Do not travel beyond a returnable distance from shore under the worst conditions possible.
- Know the weather range. Have a current forecast. Conditions can change within minutes. Beware of off-shore winds
- Have a sound knowledge of the effects of tides.
- Formation positions should be nominated to prevent craft from being dangerously dispersed.
- Kayak paddlers, prior to an ocean expedition, should practise rolling, and all canoeists should perfect team rescue drill so that a capsized craft can be righted, emptied and the crew re-embarked.

In the event of a capsize

- Keep calm but very much alert.
- Stay on the upstream side of your craft.
- Be aware of your responsibility to assist your partner (in the case of pairs).
- Follow your rescuers' instructions.
- Leave your craft only if this improves your safety. If rescue is not close at hand and the water is dangerously cold or worse rapids follow, then swim in the appropriate direction for the nearest point of personal safety. The loss of the finest craft is not worth even the risk of personal safety.
- If swept into a rapid, then swim feet first on your back. Keep your head clear of the water for good visibility.

As a rescuer

Go after the crew. The craft can wait until the crew and you are safe.