

## RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR MALLAIG & DISTRICT CANOE CLUB

### Considerations for sea kayak trips and events

#### Purpose

This risk assessment guide examines the dangers inherent in the activities carried out by Mallaig & District Canoe Club. Through consideration of the means by which these dangers (risks) could be eliminated or reduced in severity or likelihood, a number of control measures have been suggested. These have been used as the basis of the Club's Health & Safety policy. Those using this risk assessment should note that the dynamic and varied nature of the sport of kayaking does not allow a completely comprehensive risk assessment to be made. Paddlers, particularly those leading or organising groups, should carry out their own informal and dynamic risk assessments before and during any canoeing activity. It is important that all paddlers are familiar with the risk assessment and it should, therefore, be published on the Club website. It must be recognised that the document will need to be updated regularly. This will be the responsibility of the nominated Health and Safety Officer. As a minimum the risk assessment should be reviewed:

- After the Annual General Meeting by the new Committee
- After any accident or 'near miss'
- When any member identifies a significant hazard not already mentioned in the document

There are 5 steps to carrying out a risk assessment:

- Identify the hazards – those things with potential to cause harm
- Identify the risks – who might be harmed and how?
- Develop control measures to either eliminate the risk or reduce it to an acceptable level
- Evaluate the probability that the risk will occur
- Record your findings on the Trip Organisers Planning Sheet.

The M&DCC Trip Organiser's Planning Sheet has been designed as an aid to assessing risk on a trip-by-trip basis.

Activity	Sea kayaking			
Hazards to health & safety	Risks posed	Who is at risk	Risk level	Mitigating actions
Remote location	Delay in emergency services arriving. Lack of phone/radio reception.	All	Medium	Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, PLB, SPOT, EPIRB, flares, spare clothing/shelter.
Deteriorating weather	Participants become cold, unable to communicate/respond effectively. Possibility of hypothermia. Difficulty continuing. Low morale.	All	Medium	Keep an eye on weather forecast, ensure group clothing suitable, abandon trip if necessary. Modify/abandon trip if necessary. Inform shore contact/coastguard if trip altered. Check on and support weaker paddlers.
Offshore wind/ gusting wind/ strong wind/ wind direction	Drifting offshore, capsize, exhaustion. Difficulty continuing. Low morale.	Paddler	Medium-High	Know/check the capabilities of group members in advance. Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, flares, spare clothing/shelter. Carry spare paddles, towline and pump. Identify escape routes. Seek shelter, keep group close together and encourage weaker paddlers. Tow if required.
Large waves, swell	Capsize, drowning, injury, loss or damage of equipment. Group getting split up. Difficulty continuing. Fear. Low morale.	All	Medium	Check forecast and sea state before setting off. Garner local knowledge of locations. Keep group close together. Raft up to rest if required/possible. Support weaker paddlers. Carry spare paddles. Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, PLB, SPOT, EPIRB, flares. Modify/abandon trip if necessary. Inform shore contact/coastguard if trip altered.
Exposure on hot day	Sun/wind burn, dehydration	All	Medium	Apply cream, wear hat, drink fluid. Ensure water is carried.

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Immersion in cold water	Drowning, hypothermia, shock, panicking swimmer.	Paddler	Medium	Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures. Ensure suitable clothing. Carry survival bag, group shelter, hot drink, food.
Wet clothing	Hypothermia, impairing ability to paddle.	Paddler	Medium	Ensure change of clothing carried. Advise suitable clothing. Carry survival bag, group shelter, hot drink.
Capsize in shallow water	Difficulty exiting kayak due to depth, drowning, panic.	Paddler	Low	Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures and righting and emptying kayak. Carry a pump.
Capsize in deep water	Panic, hypothermia, drowning, losing boat and/or paddle	Paddler	Medium	Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures. Carry spare paddles, pump and towline.
Multiple capsize	Prolonged period of time in water, hypothermia, drowning, group drifting apart, loss of boats, paddles etc.	Paddlers	High	Ensure group are familiar with capsize exercise and rescue techniques. Carry spare paddles, pump and towline. Keep group together/raft up when back in boats. Head for shore if appropriate. Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, PLB, SPOT, EPIRB, flares. Carry spare paddles.
Tides	Capsize, drifting off course. Inability to make headway.	All	Medium	Carry spare paddles and towline. Modify plan if necessary. Support weaker paddlers – tow if necessary/possible. Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures.
Rocks	Capsize, injury, damage to equipment.			Alert group to rocky areas. Don't paddle alone. Carry First Aid kit and repair kit. Ensure group are familiar with capsize exercise and rescue techniques.
Surf or rocky beach landings/launchings	Capsize, injury. Damage to boats/paddles.	All	Medium	Try to plan safe landing spots. Be aware of tides. Carry spare paddles, pump, First Aid kit, repair kit, portage straps. Exit/enter water one at a time if necessary. Assist others.
Lifting heavy equipment	Damage to back/body	All	Medium-High	Demonstrate and practise correct lifting technique. Lift/carry with 2+ people. Use portage straps or trolley with loaded boats.
Incorrect paddling techniques	Damage to body	All	Medium-High	Demonstrate and practise good stroke technique in sheltered conditions.
Tired paddler	Capsize, falling asleep, panic, drowning	Paddler	Low	Be aware of anyone falling back. Have someone experienced stay with them. Tow if required. Give encouragement. Gauge state by talking to them. Bring group together. Take breaks, food and drink.
Injury/ medical incident	Injury or illness could mean prolonged time on water or on land, possible worsening of conditions. Incapacity to paddle. Group safety may be jeopardised.	Paddler/ Group	Low	Check if any known medical problems before setting out and carry appropriate medication if required. Carry first aid kit and emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, flares, spare clothing/shelter. Make sure all group are aware and make a plan. Contact emergency services if necessary/possible.
Badly fitting boat or equipment	Damage to body, difficulty exiting kayak, poor self esteem, discomfort, drowning, panic, difficulty swimming.	Paddler	Low	Check fitting of boat, foot rests, thigh grips, hatch covers, spray deck, buoyancy aid before setting out. Make sure handle of spray deck is outside boat. Keep regular checks on club equipment
Other water users	Collision, capsize, separation of group, unexpected waves or turbulence.	Paddler/ Group	Low	Watch out for large vessels. Move out of way and gather group together if possible.
<b>COVID RISKS</b>				
	Catching/spreading Covid-19.	All	Low	Pre- trip briefings to be given online to outline ground rules and expectations. Read and abide by the Club Covid protocol and current Covid guidelines.