

Shuswap Dragon Boat Society

Safety Guidelines

Dragon boating is a fun and safe sport when conducted with due consideration for the risks inherently associated with an outdoor water sport, however, there is a risk of personal injury from collision and drowning. Personal safety is paramount and all members of the boat are responsible for assessing environmental risks and establishing the appropriate safety procedures to minimize those risks. Everyone in the boat is responsible for assessing their personal skills and the outcome of the decisions and actions they take.

These guidelines have been developed for the Shuswap Dragon Boat Society (SDBS) for use on Shuswap Lake, however, they are also applicable to any lake or river where the SDBS (Friends Abreast) team is on the water.

Local safety

Although the water temperature in Shuswap Lake is generally quite moderate, it can be cold in the spring prior to summer heat. As such all those aboard the boat must be aware that submersion in cold water is extremely dangerous causing rapid loss of heat, possible loss of muscle function, and mental confusion within minutes.

- ***The steersperson is in charge of the boat and is responsible (along with the coach) for the safety of the boat and all aboard.***
- *All members of the boat are responsible for checking the on-board equipment and ensuring that weather conditions are suitable and there are sufficient paddlers to ensure the safety of the boat and those aboard before leaving the float.*
- *All those aboard the boat must be knowledgeable of the procedures to recover a crew member who has fallen overboard.*
- *Anyone who has concerns with the safety of the boat operations should bring that to the attention of either the coach or steersperson.*

Emergency Communications

- ***In the case of emergency call 911***
- *There should be at least two cell phones on the boat at all times – one at or near the front of the boat and one at or near the back.*

Hazards

- *The main hazard that members of the SDBS will encounter on Shuswap Lake will be weather related. The steersperson (as well as all the other members of the boat) must always be watching for storms, rough water, floating debris, and other vessels.*

Safety Equipment

Emergency equipment must be up to date and maintained in good working order and readily available in the boat and include:

- First aid kit
- Personal Floatation Devices (PFD's) of appropriate size complete with a sound-signalling device for all persons on board.
- Throw lines
- Mooring lines

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- Boarding ladder or rope sling.
- *Bailing cans or buckets*
- *Lights as required by Transport Canada when paddling in reduced light.*
- *Thermal blanket*

Operations

- *As noted above, the steersperson is in charge of the boat and is responsible for the safety of the boat and all aboard and should hold the Transport Canada approved pleasure craft operators card.*
- *Paddling before sunrise and after sunset is discouraged, particularly where there are other vessels using the waters at those times, and should not be practiced without proper navigational lights.*
- *The coach and steersperson are responsible to ensure that all aboard are informed of safety procedures and abide by them. The coach and the steersperson, along with the paddlers are responsible to evaluate the weather conditions to determine based on crews' capabilities and limitations, whether it is safe to go out on the water*
- *It is the responsibility of the coach and steersperson to provide information to the paddlers on the operation of the boat, as well as instruction for paddling technique so that no person in the boat puts the boat and crew at risk when on the water. Safety drills should be conducted from time to time pertaining to capsizing and other on-water accidents.*
- *The "buddy-system" is important and all paddlers must be aware who their "buddy" is upon entering the boat.*
- *In case of accident, all aboard are to stay with the boat rather than attempt to swim to safety. The boat, unless seriously damaged, can be considered a life raft and crewmembers should get as much of their body out of the water as possible by draping themselves over the hull. Crewmembers should also "buddy-up", two holding on to each other until rescued to provide mutual support and to help ensure that all are accounted for. Row 10 is responsible for the steersperson; row 1 is responsible for the drummer/coach.*
- *It is important that some members of the team are familiar with lifesaving and resuscitation procedures.*
- *PFID's are to be on and buckled up upon entering the float and the boat.*

Weather and Water Conditions

- *All aboard the boat should wear clothing appropriate for the season and weather/water conditions.*
- *In hot temperatures the use of sun block with high SPF is encouraged.*
- *Drink plenty of water before, during and after exposure to hot weather.*
- *Address any symptoms of heat stress or hypothermia immediately.*
- *Everyone on board is encouraged to wear a hat or head cover in hot weather.*

Health Conditions

Any team member having a fear of water, difficulty swimming, or any medical condition to notify the coach and steersperson prior to going on the boat.

Identification

Everyone aboard the boat should carry some form of written identification including whom to contact in case of emergency