



# Capital Lakes DragonFest Safety Plan

## Safety for Dragon Boat Paddlers

Before you get into the dragon boat and experience the thrill and fun of paddling, safety should be your number one priority. The list below provides the safety policy for Capital Lakes Dragonfest to help you and your teammates not only to have fun but to be safe. This Safety Plan is a part of the waiver you sign when you register, posted on the Festival website, and available at the event.

### A. Key Concepts

- Each team member is responsible for his or her own safety at all times while engaging in activities related to practicing and racing in dragon boats.
- The safety and emergency procedures will be covered during the coached practice session; the race director will review these with the team captains during the captain meeting the morning of the festival, and the lead marshal will remind the team of these procedures when the team lines up for its first race before going onto the dock.
- The steersperson is in charge of and responsible for your boat at all times. His/her commands must be obeyed to insure everyone's safety. Always listen to your steersperson for directions, even if you hear "Hold the Boat" and you are in the middle of a race
- A buddy system is used in the event of a medical emergency or capsizing

### B. Before Boarding

1. Dress appropriately for the weather conditions. Avoid loose fitting clothing, flip flops and jewelry.
2. Apply proper sun protection, and/or wear a hat
3. Warm up before going through any strenuous paddling to avoid strains and exertion injuries. Stretching and moderate exercise is advisable before paddling.
4. The team should review the paddling commands with the steersperson.
5. The steersperson has the authority to ask you to remove yourself from the boat if they feel you are a danger to the other teammates or teams.

### C. Life Jackets

1. Everyone must wear an approved lifejacket (PFD – Personal Floatation Device) at all times while on the dock and in the boat. An approved PFD will be provided for each paddler and drummer. If you choose to furnish your own PFD, it must be approved by race officials prior to the start of the festival.
2. After your practice or race, please return your paddles & PFD to the designated area.

### D. Swimming Ability

If you are a non-swimmer, you should inform your Team Captain, and you or your Captain must inform the steersperson, drummer, and your buddy.

## **E. Loading Procedure**

1. Your Captain should have an idea of each paddler's weight and balance the boat accordingly. If you need assistance with this let the steersperson know at the coached practice session.
2. Loading procedure should be done row by row. The steersperson will direct the loading of the boat. Only one person should be getting in or out of the boat at a time.
3. Once loaded, the steersperson should remind the paddlers about the buddy system and ask them to identify their buddy
4. For unloading, follow the directions of the steersperson.

## **F. Boat Commands**

1. To be able to control the boat and avoid collisions, all paddlers must know the paddling commands. You will learn these commands at your coached practice session.
2. The commands should be reviewed with your steersperson at the dock each time you go out
3. **Commands:** Hold or Hold the Boat (paddle in the water with blade perpendicular to the boat to stop the movement of the boat), Let it Ride (stop paddling and rest with the paddle on your lap), and Back Paddle (paddle backwards by changing the direction of your stroke).
4. The steersperson will give the commands and these may be repeated by the drummer to be sure all paddlers hear the commands. Commands from the steersperson need to be followed and take precedence at all times.

## **G. Paddling**

**To help maintain boat stability, make no sudden moves such as shifting weight in the boat and remain seated at all times.**

When returning to the docks (or anytime when approaching a stationary object), always keep hands off of the boat gunwales. Failure to do so may result in serious injury to your fingers or hand if they are trapped between the boat and the stationary object

## **H. Hydration**

Maintain hydration by drinking non-alcoholic fluids such as water and/or sports drinks throughout the day. Alcohol is not allowed at the dock area or in the boats.

## **I. Exertion Level**

Paddling for 300 meters is not easy and can be exhausting. If you need to rest at any time, then do so. Take your paddle out of the water and hold it up above your lap while you rest.

## **J. Noise Level**

1. Paddlers should restrict talking in the boat. They need to pay attention to the directions given by the steersperson and repeated by the drummer. The noise makes it difficult for other paddlers to hear. The steersperson must be able to communicate effectively from the bow to the stern of the boat.
2. When on the water, help can be a long way off. If someone should have a heart attack, stroke, or other medical emergency, it is imperative that the steersperson be notified immediately and everyone remains silent as the steersperson gives directions.

## K. Boat Capsizing

1. Dragon boats can capsize.
2. Remain calm. Unless otherwise instructed, paddlers should stay with the boat, hold onto it, do not try to swim to shore, and wait until help comes.
3. You must follow the directions of the steersperson and rescue personnel. The steersperson will remain in charge of the team until rescue personnel arrive. Once the rescue boat has arrived, they are in charge.
4. Use a buddy system. Your buddy is the person sharing your seat. The paddlers in the first row (seat 1) of the boat are also buddies with the drummer, and the paddlers in the last row (seat 10) are buddies with the steersperson.
5. If you find yourself under the boat, use the air pocket the boat creates to catch your breath and get your bearings. Feel your way to the side of the boat and then surface on the outside.
6. Locate or call out for your buddy and be sure he/she is safe. Hold on to each other to provide mutual support.
7. If other paddlers are injured or have difficulty reaching the boat, give them assistance and make the rescue boat aware of the situation.
8. The steersperson and rescue personnel will take a head count.
9. If the boat capsizes, it may not right itself. The steersperson will determine if anyone is trapped under the dragon boat, and act accordingly.
10. If the dragon boat is upside down after capsizing, the steersperson may ask the team to help roll the boat to its upright position. Before that can be done, all paddlers must be accounted for. A strong swimmer may be asked to swim under the boat from one end to the other looking for paddlers.
11. People shouting and making noise will cause confusion. In the event of an emergency, every paddler should remain calm and follow instructions.

## L. First Aid

1. There will be a First Aid tent on the premises with qualified personnel.
2. Any injuries sustained as a result of participating in the races or practices must be reported immediately to the first aid tent. Any injury requiring more than basic first aid will be documented on an Incident Report. Incident Reports are available at the first aid tent.
3. **If a medical emergency occurs while in the boat, the person's buddy should raise their paddle with the blade straight up in the air.** This will alert the steersperson that there is an emergency.
4. If you or another participant experience symptoms of heat stress, notify the First Aid tent immediately.

## M. Severe Weather/Lightning/Evacuation Plan

Dragon Boating is a water sport. You will get wet. The Capital Lakes DragonFest will be held rain or shine. There is no "rain date." The on-water dragon boat races cannot occur, however if either or both of two conditions prevail:

- High Winds
- Thunder and Lightning

Race officials (primarily the Race Director and the Race Management Team) will monitor the weather forecasts and satellite radar readings in advance of the Festival and throughout the day in order to be advised of the possibility storm activity and will make appropriate suggestions for proceeding.

**Suspension of Race Schedule**

Should lightning occur that is within a 20-30 minute range of the Festival site, all racing will be suspended until the lightning/storm activity has passed over.

**Evacuation of Festival Site**

If severe inclement weather is observed on the satellite radar systems and such severe weather is approaching within 20 to 30 minutes of the Festival Site OR if the severe weather pattern is clearly discernible, then the Festival Site will be evacuated. The decision to evacuate will be made by the Race Director in consultation with the Race Management Team.

**Notice to Participants/Spectators**

The decision to evacuate the Festival Site will be communicated as follows:

- Loudspeaker announcements (Festival announcers and entertainment tent announcers)
- Festival personnel/volunteers will visit each site in the Team's Village to advise of the evacuation order and direct to evacuation sites.
- Festival personnel/volunteers will canvass the spectators' area to advise of the evacuation order and direct to evacuation sites.

An Emergency Action Plan has been developed to handle incidents at the festival. If you need to report a safety incident other than first aid, please ask for the On Site Incident Coordinator.