

CANBERRA DRAGON BOATS ASSOCIATION INC
COMPETITION REGULATIONS AND RULES OF RACING
SAFETY ON THE WATER GUIDELINES

THE RESPONSIBILITIES

The broad areas of safety responsibility are:

The Crew Members. It is the responsibility of the crew members to ensure that when racing, they are adequately dressed for the weather conditions and comply with all instructions given to them.

The Sweep (Helm). It is the Sweep's responsibility to make the final check to ensure that the boat is waterworthy and in racing condition and that all crew members are correctly briefed on boat handling and capsizing drills. **When on the water,** the Sweep shall ensure that collisions with other craft are avoided. In the event of a Crew capsizing, the Sweep shall ensure that the capsizing drills are carried out and that all competitors are accounted for and rescued. **The Sweep is normally also the Boat Captain.**

The Crew Manager. It is the Crew Managers responsibility to ensure that all the crew members can swim to the required standard; that any weak swimmers are provided with buoyancy aids; that the Crew List is completed and lodged with the Race Secretary; that the crew is briefed on the Racing Rules and safety on the water; and that at all times they are fit to race. This means that it is the Crew Manager's responsibility that 'socialising' does not adversely affect the performance of the crew on the water.

The Chief Official. It is the Chief Official's responsibility to ensure that during the racing all safety boats are in place and briefed; that in adverse weather conditions personal flotation devices are worn by known weak swimmers; and, that in all conditions, all the safety procedures laid down in the Racing Rules are complied with.

The Safety Officer. It is the Event Safety Officer's responsibility to ensure that all Race Officials and Crew Managers are aware of, and briefed on the day, regarding safety on the water and any notifiable diseases. The Safety Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Chief Boat Marshal is made aware of any known weak swimmers or competitors with medical conditions that may affect their ability to race. The Safety Officer is responsible for producing a safety plan for the competition, to include a water circulation system for crews going to the start or 'warming up'.

The Chief Boat Marshal. The Chief Boat Marshal shall determine if a crew is 'fit to race' or not, and will keep a record of the number of people embarked in each boat, in each race. The Chief Boat Marshal shall ensure that all boats and equipment are in good racing condition before the first race of the day and that they remain in good racing condition throughout the competition.

The CDBA Executive Committee. It is the CDBA Executive Committee's responsibility to ensure that adequate safety boats, rescue personnel and Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) are obtained for the event; that First Aid cover is provided off the water, toilets are provided; and that they and all temporary structures comply with all regulations on such matters. Changing rooms and warm showers should be provided where possible. The CDBA Executive Committee shall ensure that, before the event, Crew Managers are sent basic information on all safety matters pertaining to the competition.

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THE DETAIL

Swimming Standard required

All members in a dragon boat crew should be able to swim at least 50 metres unaided in race attire or wear a personal flotation device.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

In **all** conditions, Crew Managers **MUST** ensure that PFDs (such as Life Jackets and Buoyancy Aids) are worn by any crew member under the age of 12 and any weak, or non-swimmers. In adverse racing conditions, Crew Managers should ensure that all those uncomfortable in such conditions wear PFDs.

SAFETY ON EMBARKATION

Boat Balance. Before embarking from the loading area, the Boat Captain (normally the Sweep) should ensure that the boat is well balanced. That is, that each pair of racers are of a similar weight and height and that, generally, the heavier pairs are seated in the boat's middle section. The Boat Captain should know the number of people in the boat.

Buddy, Buddy system The crew should be 'numbered off', from the front of the boat and made aware that they are each responsible for the person they are paired with (across the boat) and, that in the event of a capsize, their first responsibility is to ensure that their partner is safe and well. This is called the 'Buddy, Buddy' system and it gives each person in the boat a specific responsibility for another. The 'stroke pair' (first pair No 2 left and 3 right) in the boat are responsible for the Drummer (No 1) and the rear pair (last pair) for the Sweep.

Steadying the Boat. A boat will feel 'tippy' if the crew is out of balance or moving about in an uncoordinated manner. To steady the boat in such circumstances (and when sideways on to the wind or wave pattern) the crew should be instructed by the Sweep to slightly lean out over the side of the boat and place their paddle blades flat on the water. With all of the paddles on the water in this manner (10 either side) the boat is effectively stabilised. This is called a paddle brace and the Sweeps command should be **'Brace the boat'** or **'Paddles flat'**.

Stopping the Boat. When manoeuvring, turning or racing the boat it may be necessary to stop suddenly, say to avoid a collision with another vessel. It is important that the crew reacts quickly but safely. When the Sweep calls **'Stop the boat'**, **'Dig water'**, or **'Dig in'**, all paddlers should place their paddles into the water and hold them steady. The vertical paddle acts as a brake thereby stopping the boat.

SAFETY BOATS

The recommended minimum number of safety boats is two (2) boats per event, ideally being capable of rescuing a complete crew between them.

At least one safety boat should follow each race down the course. This boat may double as an Umpire's boat. The other safety boat(s) should be placed down the race course but not following the race.

Capsized Dragon Boat

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In the event of a Dragon Boat capsizing, each pair of paddlers should account for their buddies. The Boat Captain should immediately ensure that all crew members are accounted for by calling out the pair numbers and noting the response.

The crew should initially stay with the boat and leave it in the capsized position. **No attempt should be made to turn the boat upright** as in the overturned position it can be used as a floating platform, provided the crew members space themselves evenly around the capsized boat. The Boat Captain should remain in control of the crew and await the arrival of the Safety Boats. Meanwhile, the crew members should, if their paddles are within easy reach, attempt to retrieve them and hold on to them.

On the arrival of the Safety Boats, the crew should move as directed by the operators of the boats, with the Boat Captain remaining in the water until all members of the crew have been rescued. Up to six crew members can remain with the boat and start to 'swim it' to the nearest shore. This should only be done under the Boat Captain's control and only if the swimmers are capable and not at risk. Once all the crew have been rescued a Safety Boat may be used to move the dragon boat to the shore.

Recovery of Craft. As soon as the dragon boat is alongside the water's edge, all crew members must again be accounted for on the land and any injuries dealt with immediately. The boat may then be turned the rightway up (still in the water) and bailing out of the water commenced. The boat **SHOULD NOT** be dragged out of the water unless there is only a small amount of water left in it, as this puts a considerable strain on the hull of the boat. Once the boat is almost empty of water, it may be lifted on to the bank and checked for damage and the boat's equipment accounted for; that is, Head, Tail, Drum, Drum Sticks, Paddles and Sweep Oar.

IN CONCLUSION

- **Safety is the concern of every crew member.**
- **The overall responsibility for the crew off the water is the Crew Managers and on the water the Boat Captains.**