

SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR AQUATIC PROGRAMMING

In order to insure the safety of participants in our aquatic interpretive programming services, the Division of Parks and Recreation has established guidelines for staffing, planning and conducting these services.

I.) Boating and Canoeing

A. Staff Training Requirements

Each canoe or boating trip must be accompanied by at least one park staff member who has successfully fulfilled the following Prerequisite skills, holds the appropriate Program Leader certification (for Flatwater/Moving Water, Class II White Water, or Boating), and maintains a minimum leader/participant ratio of one leader per ten participant boats.

1.) Prerequisite Skills Criteria

- a) Have a minimum level of swimming skills at the Intermediate or Level IV of the American Red Cross, AND
- b) Be able to successfully complete the following swim test: tread water fully clothed in deep water for a minimum of two minutes, then take off his/her shoes and swim 50 feet, put on a life jacket and swim back to shore (a minimum of 50 feet) on his/her back, AND
- c) Be currently certified in CPR and have knowledge of basic first aid. In the case where a ranger has not yet taken BLET, which includes first aid and CPR training, the Superintendent of State Parks may give permission for the ranger to attend a Canoe Program Leader training course as long as other prerequisites are fulfilled. This ranger's Canoe Program Leader certification will remain incomplete until he/she successfully completes basic first aid and CPR training.

2.) Canoe Program Leader Flatwater/Moving Water Training Criteria

- a) Successfully complete the American Red Cross "Fundamentals of Canoeing" (15 hours), OR . . .

An American Canoe Association Course such as "Moving Water Course" (24 hours), or "Introduction to Flatwater Paddling/ Introduction to River Paddling" (16 hours total), AND

- b) Successfully complete additional training in trip organization, maintenance of equipment, and water rescue techniques. This training should be provided by the American Red Cross, American Canoe Association, Nantahala Outdoor Center, or other organization as approved by the Superintendent of State Parks.

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3.) Canoe Program Leader Class II/ Whitewater Training Criteria

Note: Division sponsored trips will not run Class III or above rapids.

a) Successfully fulfill the above listed training for Canoe Program Leader Flatwater/Moving Water, AND

b) American Red Cross Basic River Canoeing (canoeing in Class I and II whitewater), 20 hours, OR . . .

American Canoe Association Whitewater course (canoeing in CLASS I and II whitewater), 24 hours, OR . . .

Equivalent training by another approved agency, one which fulfills the requirements of the Division and which substantially duplicates the training provided by the American Red Cross or American Canoe Association. Approval is given by the Superintendent of State Parks.

4.) Boating (non-powered) Program Leader Training Criteria

Each Boating Program Leader must receive appropriate certification such as American Red Cross Basic Rowing, 12 hours, plus additional training hours in program leader skills such as trip planning, maintenance of equipment, and water rescue techniques.

B. Certification

1.) Certification will be provided by the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation upon successful completion of the appropriate Program Leader training.

2.) Certification must be renewed annually (on the calendar year) according to the following criteria:

a) Participate in a minimum of **ten hours** of boating/canoeing activities within the Program Leader's certification area. Participation may be during duty hours or personal time and may involve division sponsored programs and activities, activities by other organizations, or personal.

b) The park superintendent must verify continuing experience and recommend certification continuance on form PR-63. Refer to the Operations Management Calendar for information on when these reports are due.

C. Safety Equipment

1.) U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets will be worn by participants and park staff at all times.

2.) Participants should be advised that appropriate footgear and clothing will be

worn while on or in the water at all times.

3.) Equipment will be maintained properly while in use or stowed.

4.) All boats will be fitted with sufficient buoyancy to support the full-permitted crew and equipment when waterlogged. For flatwater canoeing, the normal flotation built into the boat is usually sufficient.

5.) The trip leader is responsible for all required group equipment. The trip leader should review the list below and use the items that are appropriate for his/her trip or body of water. Suggested equipment:

- first aid kit
- repair materials
- throw rope or throw bag
- 10-foot piece of webbing (to be made into a loop using a "water knot" and used as a "sling step" to allow one to re-enter the canoe in open water)
- two carabiners for use in river rescue; i.e., boat retrieval (white water programs)
- extra paddles
- extra life jackets

D. Safety Procedures

1.) Each trip must have a park staff member who has completed the appropriate training and holds a current NC DPR Canoe or Boating Program Leader certificate. This person is the designated trip leader and is in charge of all water activities.

2.) A participant boat to trip leader ratio of no greater than 10:1 should be observed. If the group is larger (more than 10 boats), divide into smaller groups and assign a certified trip leader for each group.

3.) Prior to each trip, staff should check all life jackets and other equipment, and reject those items which are unsatisfactory.

4.) The trip leader will have a thorough knowledge of the water body that is used for the program and be aware of how possible changes in season, weather and condition of the water can affect the difficulty of the trip. The trip leader should gain this knowledge firsthand, from one or more float trips along the route of the intended activity. Whenever possible, these "scouting" trips should be conducted in the company of someone experienced on the body of water.

5.) The Park Superintendent must approve each boating activity. The trip leader will establish and file a safety plan with the Park Superintendent before starting the trip. This plan will include estimated arrival and departure times from certain areas. Checkpoints will be established along the way at which radio contact could be made if necessary. Note that trips in whitewater above Class II are not permitted.

6.) With assistance from the District Interpretation and Education Specialist, the trip leader should determine the rules of conduct and required skills necessary for

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participation in each boating trip. These rules and required skills should be clearly explained to the public when registering for the program and should also be read to the participants before beginning the trip (ADA requirements).

7.) Before the actual trip begins, the trip leader should provide an opportunity for basic instruction on boating and should assess the skill level of the participants in maneuvering their boats. Adjustments of instructions should be made to insure the safety of both individuals and the group.

8.) A trip leader may prohibit any participant from joining a trip if the trip leader feels the participant's safety or the safety of others might be jeopardized by the participant's inclusion in the trip. This decision should be based on the leader's observation of the participant in relation to the rules of conduct and required skills previously established for each boating program.

9.) The trip leader will inform participants of expected water conditions, explain safety procedures, and outline any emergency procedures.

10.) Should an accident or injury occur during a boating program, the park staff designated as the trip leader is responsible for ensuring that the necessary first aid and evacuation procedures are completed.

II.) Other Types of Water-based Activities

A. Staff Training Requirements

1.) Each aquatic program must be accompanied by at least one park staff who has successfully completed the appropriate training for the activity. An example of an activity for which there is appropriate training is snorkeling.

2.) For activities that have no identified training or certification requirements, the Park Superintendent will designate program leaders based on their programming experience, knowledge of the physical area to be used, general safety awareness, and leadership skills. Program leaders could include permanent staff, seasonals, or trained volunteers. (It is recommended that the Park Superintendent consult with the District Interpretation and Education Specialist for assistance with training.) Park Superintendent designation will be restricted to aquatic programs which are inherently low risk activities such as seine pulls, stream walks, and swamp stomps. For programs which do not fit these low risk criteria, park staff must receive specific authorization from the District Superintendent in order to lead such programs.

B. Safety Equipment

All aquatic programs must have a park radio and a first aid kit available. Other safety equipment needs are program specific and include items such as throw floats, life jackets, probing sticks, and flashlights.

C. Safety Procedures

- 1.) Each program must have a leader who has completed the appropriate training or has adequate experience and knowledge to lead the program.
- 2.) Each program must have a completed safety plan approved by the Park Superintendent prior to program implementation (See section D below).
- 3.) The Park Superintendent will determine the number of staff required for the activity and the program leader to participant ratio.
- 4.) The program leader must have a knowledge of the water body being used for the program and be aware of how water and weather conditions might change to adversely impact the program.
- 5.) With assistance from the District Interpretation and Education Specialist, the program leader will develop nondiscriminatory rules of conduct or required skills necessary for program participation. These rules should be clearly communicated to the public; this would be especially important when they call the park to sign up for a program (ADA requirements).
- 6.) The program leader will organize the participants into family groups or the buddy system to help guarantee the safety of all individuals.
- 7.) The program leader should communicate the rules of conduct and required skills (if any prerequisite skills are needed) to all participants before beginning the program. The program leader must also inform the participants of the water conditions and review appropriate safety concerns and procedures. Safety concerns might include dangerous organisms, exposure to UV rays, water currents, number of participants in the water at one time, human-made hazards (glass shards, fish hooks, trash), etc.

D. Example of an Aquatic Safety Plan

- 1.) Activity - Seine Pull
- 2.) Location - Tidal pools within 200 meters of an access area
- 3.) Staff requirements
 - a) Number of staff - Two
 - b) Certification - None
- 4.) Requirements for Participation (Examples)
 - Ages six through adult; children under age six must be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult.
 - Ability to negotiate uneven terrain such as mud or sand
 - Ability to comprehend and follow basic aquatic safety rules such as no horseplay in the water, no wading in water above the knees, no swimming.

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5.) Safety Equipment

- at least one park radio
- one rescue bag
- one first aid kit
- one ring buoy or other flotation device

6.) Safety Concerns

- jellyfish
- other dangerous marine organisms
- currents
- approaching storms
- exposure to harmful UV rays
- heat exhaustion, heat stroke

7.) Safety Procedures

- Group size - maximum of 20 participants
- Do not exceed a water depth of greater than three feet.
- Group leader will inform participants of water conditions and safety concerns such as no small children in the water, no touching of dangerous organisms, etc.
- Should an accident or injury occur, all participants will be required to leave the water. The emergency medical service system (first aid at the scene or higher) will be activated and the Park Superintendent notified.