

Bristol Canoe Club - Risk Assessment

White Water / Moving Water

V1.0 (2nd April 2018)

The following risk assessment covers typical paddling trips on wild rivers in the UK and abroad. The hazards present and their severity will vary depending on the river. This risk assessment is also relevant to paddling on artificial courses, but see the notes within the table.

These risk assessments are used as the basis of the Club's safety policy. Those using this risk assessment should note that the dynamic and varied nature of the sport of canoeing does not allow a completely comprehensive risk assessment to be made. Paddlers, particularly those leading groups, should carry out their own informal and dynamic risk assessments before and during any canoeing activity. River leader(s) should have appropriate experience and equipment to lead on the the grade of river and conditions present. Paddlers should have appropriate experience and equipment to paddle on the grade and conditions present. Leaders and paddlers should be aware that conditions and the situation may change dramatically during the trip and be prepared to alter plans, take action as the conditions and situation require.

Hazard	Risks	Probability	Control measures	Notes
Travel	Road accidents	L	Follow the Highway code.	
	Insecure loads on roof-racks	M	Train members to secure boats (2* training). Check roof racks before travel.	
	Trailers	L	Tow at correct speed and take extra care.	
Long days	Exhaustion	L	Adjust trip length to suit participants. Carry food and drink.	
	Hypothermia (cold)	M	Dress correctly for the conditions. Ensure that appropriate supplies are carried within each group: hot drinks, spare clothing, group shelter and/or exposure bags.	
	Hyperthermia (overheating)	L	Carry cold drinks on hot days.	
Water	River grade	M	Ensure that the river paddlers are aware of the grade of the river, and that the chosen river is appropriate for each paddler's experience. Take current water and weather conditions on the day into account. Ensure that the group size is appropriate for the river and for the river leader.	

Hazard	Risks	Probability	Control measures	Notes
	Accelerated / Immersion Hypothermia	M	Rescue swimmers quickly. Teach rolling.	
	Drowning	L	Require that all members are competent swimmers. Instruct on capsize drill, rolling and swimming in moving water. Teach rescue techniques. Carry appropriate rescue equipment.	
	Waterborne diseases	L	Try not to ingest water. Wash hands as soon as practicable when off the water. Ensure that any existing cuts and wounds are covered up. Take further precautions when there is a known problem.	
	Stoppers, and other river features	M	Avoid by good leadership and paddling. Teach methods for paddling through and in stoppers. Paddlers should know about swimming in and rescue from stoppers.	
	Changing water and weather conditions	M	Be aware of the weather conditions likely during the trip, especially with regard to changing water levels.	
Rocks	Knocked unconscious	L	Wear a correctly fitting helmet. Adopt correct position when capsized and when swimming.	
	Injury	M	Wear a correctly fitting helmet and buoyancy aid. Avoid rocks by use of good technique. Carry first aid kit within each group.	
	Pinning	M	Avoid rocks by good leadership and paddling. Know how to cope with broaching on a rock. Group leaders know how to rescue from pins.	
	Entrapment	L	Use correct technique when swimming.	
Shallow channels	Impact on river bed	M	In artificial courses extra care should be taken in the many shallow areas. Wear a correctly fitting helmet.	
Weirs	Injury, entrapment	M	Note that weirs, locks, bridges, and other man-made features can sometimes present a hazard greater than their first appearance. In particular they can have hidden entrapment features and powerful recirculations. Treat all weirs with caution.	
Trees	Caught in strainer	L	Avoid trees, both overhead and in the river, by good leadership. Knowledge of swimming techniques.	

Hazard	Risks	Probability	Control measures	Notes
Equipment	Entrapment in boat	L	Inspect equipment. Teach capsize drill. Keep area between legs clear.	
	Breakage or loss	H	Inspect equipment and use appropriate equipment for conditions. Carry spare paddles (splits) within each group.	
	Entanglement	M	Learn how to use throw-lines and chest harnesses properly. Carry a knife.	
	Manual handling injuries	M	Take care when lifting boats, particularly onto roof-racks. Teach good technique at all levels. Ask for assistance when required.	
River bank	Falling & slipping on bank and/or into river	L	Wear helmet and buoyancy aid always. Wear appropriate footwear. Take care.	
Other water users	Collisions & impact injuries	L	Ensure that paddlers within a group are well spaced out. Do not mix paddlers with swimmers. Watch out for other craft. Move out of the way of other water users.	
Artificial courses	Collisions & injuries	L	Ensure that all group members have read and confirmed the centre's own safety policies, and have been made aware of any specific risks. Note that some artificial white-water centres can be very busy, especially with rafts.	
Communication	Group becomes split up	L	Use the initial briefing to ensure that the group members understand the day's plan and understand how to identify the exit point(s).	