



## BOURNEMOUTH OUTRIGGER CANOE CLUB

### SAFETY POLICY

The outrigger canoe is designed primarily for use on the sea. It is used in open sea crossings, waves and surf. For the outrigger club to train in conditions that they may race in it is therefore necessary to experience these conditions. The canoe can be righted in the event of a huli (capsize). This safety policy therefore takes account of this need and how we manage safety. The policy relates to normal training sessions from the club base at Teddington. Risk assessment of other locations that the club may operate from should be undertaken by the crew captain or coach.

The Club Risk Assessment takes account of a range of risks and measures taken to minimize them. In addition to the Generic Risk Assessment, a dynamic risk assessment will be undertaken for each session at which time there are five factors to consider.

1. Water flow
2. Temperature of water
3. Weather conditions
4. Visibility
5. Experience of the crew

#### Water / river / tide Flow

##### High flow

It is common practice for rowing and canoeing activities to carry on during medium conditions. Medium and high flows simulate the tidal conditions experienced in outrigger races on open water and are suitable training conditions for experienced crews.

As part of their training steerers are made aware of the hazards of manoeuvring near obstructions such as bridges, large moored boats, etc. and of the local dangers. The Club will use its experience of conditions when conducting a dynamic risk assessment of the flow in these conditions. The Club has found that 'low to medium' conditions - produce conditions that a reasonably experienced Outrigger crew would be comfortable with. In high flow & big tide conditions only experienced crews should exit the run at Mudeford Harbour into open water. Only Level 3 steerers should take the boat out in these conditions.

#### Temperature of the Water

Winter river temperatures would reduce the speed at which a crew could manage a capsize. It is not practical for the Club to measure the water temperature – however, a guide would be that when it is below 10° then this would be an important consideration. This combined with high flow would present a much higher risk factor



in the event of a capsize. In these conditions the boat should stay nearer to the club so that it is not far to paddle back if necessary – recommended no further than Mudeford harbour entrance.

### Weather Conditions

Cold air temperature and strong wind combined with any of the other factor will increase the risk. Strong winds will affect the ability of the steerer to control the boat and care should be taken for falling branches and wind blown debris. In strong winds any paddling should be undertaken closer to the club and the crew briefed on ama watch. In winds above Force 6 (30mph or 27 knots) only very experienced crews with level 3 steerers should go out. Above 35 knots the canoe should not go out.

In very hot conditions the crew should be reminded of heat stroke – using sun screens and taking with them plenty of fluid.

### Visibility

When paddling in the dark the boat should have a light facing forward and back. This can be mounted on the iaku's or the bow and stern. The stroke and steerer should maintain a careful watch for other water users who may not have lights or have a clear vision – and should not assume that the outrigger has been seen. Clear verbal warnings should be given to other water users and should be acknowledged by the steerer.

Fog – when visibility is reduced so that the opposite bank cannot be seen then boat should not go out.

### Experience and Ability of the Crew

The crew should have received instruction in capsize drill and receive a safety briefing. An experienced crew will be better able to cope with higher risk conditions from any of the five factors listed above. The steerer should make an assessment of the condition of the crew and their ability to undertake difficult conditions. Paddlers should take responsibility for their own safety and notify the coach or steer person if there is any reason that they may not be 100% fit to paddle.

### Personal Safety

Buoyancy Aids (PFD) - Coach/steerer should always carry out risk assessments before going afloat, and advise crew members regarding the need for PFDs. This will be based on the five factors listed above. Buoyancy aids should be appropriately fitted to the paddler – the condition of the buoyancy aid is the responsibility of the paddler. Consideration should be given to very cold water temperatures and the risk of sudden emersion drowning as part of the risk



assessment in the event of a capsize.

Clothing – the paddlers should be advised of suitable clothing for outrigger paddling for both hot and cold weather conditions.

Swimming Ability – all newcomers to outriggering should be asked to confirm their swimming ability.

Medical conditions -Members are asked to declare medical conditions to the Club on joining (via the membership form). This information is maintained by the Club Secretary and passed to the Club Captain/Coach. Newcomers who have not yet

joined will be asked verbally by the coach to declare any conditions that they should be aware of. This will be done in confidence.

### Capsize Drill

Capsize of a canoe is a normal occurrence and is not in itself of high risk. The risk would increase according to the Five Factors listed above and should be taken into consideration by the steerer at the start of the session.

New participants will be given a safety briefing including instruction in the capsize drill theory (including the numbering-off “buddy” system). The club will aim to provide an opportunity to practice capsize drill in a safe controlled environment in appropriate conditions. The boat should always carry a bucket to assist bailing of the boat in the event of a capsize.

### Equipment and Maintenance

- o The Club will follow the policies on the provision and maintenance of First Aid boxes.
- o Accidents will be recorded in the Accident book.
- o Steerers are responsible for ensuring equipment is fit for use prior to each outing
- o Steerers should ensure that safety or spare equipment is carried in the boat according to conditions. In high flow a mobile phone or VHF should be carried.

### EMERGENCIES

In the event of an emergency during an outing the steerer should dial 999 for help or use the VHF Mayday call.

Depending on the nature of the emergency and the location of the incident the Coastguard at Mudeford (RNLI) would provide a rapid on water response.

PADDLING OFFSITE (see Offsite Safety Policy)



When a crew attends another venue or race the crew captain will be responsible for undertaking a risk assessment of that venue and checking with appropriate authorities/information on the likely conditions relating to tides, flow, conditions and weather. They should then make appropriate recommendations to the crew with respect to equipment, clothing and safety.

## CHECKING CONDITIONS

The following websites provide information on flow, river and weather conditions:

<http://www.environmentagency.gov.uk>

Weather conditions can be updated through the BBC website -

[www.bbc.co.uk/weather](http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather).

## COMPETENT STEER PERSONS

There is no official qualification for steering an outrigger canoe. Paddlers will generally learn through experience supported by a Level 3 steer persons. As the steerer progresses through the levels they will be assessed on competence in steering the boat and safety. The assessment of steer person will be undertaken by a current Level 3 steerer.

Steer persons will be classified as:

1. Trainee steerer
2. Steerer Level 1
3. Steerer – Level 2
4. Steerer - Level 3
1. Trainee Steerer

These paddlers should only steer when a Level 2 or 3 steerer is in the boat to support their training and take over control if required. In these occasions the Level 2 or Level 3 Steerer is responsible for the crew and safety.

2. Steerer – Level 1

These have been assessed and are able to take the crew out in low flow (no river warnings) and daylight conditions.

3. Steerer – Level 2

These have been assessed and have sufficient experience to take the crew out in medium flow (yellow flow conditions) and darkness.

4. Steerer – Level 3



These are our most experienced steer persons who can take the boat out when the river is on red and in the dark. Current Level 3 Steerers are:  
Pete Holliday / Tim Harley / Barry Short