

TCC – Club Safety Policy

Updated at the 2014 AGM

“Safety should be a positive, not a negative, concept”

This safety policy applies to all the official organised activities of the Totnes Canoe Club (TCC). All such activities are open to all paid up members of the Canoe Club, and failure to comply with the following code of practice will result in appropriate action being taken by the TCC Safety Office or the Committee of TCC against the person or persons responsible.

The BCU Health and Safety Participation statement reads:

"Canoeing and Kayaking are 'Assumed risk water contact sports'. That may carry attendant risks. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks, and be responsible for their own action and involvement".

All club members have a responsibility to co-operate with the club officers and coaches and help to develop and maintain a general safety awareness within the Club.

1 - General Safety Rules / Guidelines

The following are the issued guidelines for all paddling activities run by TCC:

- a) When kayaking a properly fitted and operational buoyancy aid must be worn at all times, an appropriate and fitted helmet must be worn at all times when involved in moving water, surf or involved in activity which may result in head contact, e.g. Canoe Polo.
- b) Canoeing in a group of less than three should never be attempted. As the rule goes: "Less than three should never be".
- c) Every group participating in a trip should carry all the necessary safety equipment for the trip they are undertaking. It is the responsibility of the Trip leader to ensure this.
- d) Everyone on a trip should have a knowledge of their paddling ability and should not attempt rivers, rapids or surf that are far enough beyond this as to pose a risk to their or others health. And while every paddler within a group must support one another, each individual paddler must accept that it is their own decision to participate in all trips.
- e) It is the responsibility of each paddler to ensure that they are using appropriate equipment for the trip on which they are participating, e.g. many kayaks made for freestyle performance can be inappropriate for river running in certain conditions. It is up to each paddler to ensure their kayak is suitable to the conditions and their paddling proficiency. Where they are unsure, they must seek the advice of more experienced paddlers familiar with their abilities.
- f) It is the responsibility of each individual paddler to voice any questions or concerns they may have to the trip leader who shall determine the appropriate action.
- g) The use of alcohol or any other mind-altering drugs before or during a canoeing session is not permitted. It dulls reflexes, reduces decision-making ability, and may interfere with important survival reflexes.
- h) Regarding any persons under the age of eighteen, a parental consent form must be attained from those person's parents for each and every trip on which this person is to participate. This is required for insurance reasons and should be retained for immediate submission to the TCC on request
- i) Special needs are assessed on an individual basis.

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2 - Club Trips

On an official Club trip, the following people will make up the Outing Management Structure:

- **Trip Coordinator** – This is the person in charge of the actual trip being organised. This person must be a TCC Committee member who is familiar with the TCC Operating and Safety Policies.
- **Trip Leader** – This is the person who shall be in charge of the water-based activities, which shall be taking part in during the club trip. This person shall be an appropriate level BCU coach. The Trip Coordinator appoints this person in advance of the trip. (The Coordinator and Leader can be the same person).
On club trips any party who disobeys the Trip Leader will be open to disciplinary action from the TCC Committee.

The following steps **must** be enacted prior to commencement of the trip in order to ensure safety standards are met:

- a) All necessary kayaking equipment supplied by the club shall be allocated by the Equipment Officer or nominated party. This person shall ensure that all allocated equipment will be to standards necessary for each particular persons needs, own equipment is used at the individuals own risk.
- b) All members of the trip must receive a Safety Talk from the Trip Leader before final embarkation onto the water. This talk shall also include a description and demonstration of all signals to be used on the trip to all participants on the trip.
- c) The Trip Leader must also ensure that the equipment assigned to each paddler is appropriate to their needs, and physical nature.
- d) A warm up shall be carried out to ensure all paddlers have stretched before entering the water.
- e) Every person participating in a trip must have completed a swim test and capsize drill and be registered with the Safety Officer as having done so.
- f) The first person to be afloat on the water will be a coach or assistant.
- g) A filed record (the TCC - Trip Plan) of the trip including number participating, details of all Leaders and signed by the Trip Co-ordinator shall be kept in Canoe Club records by the secretary for each trip carried out. This record shall be immediately available to TCC committee members on request (it is acceptable to hold/provide an electronic copy). Records will be held for minimum of 12 months.
- h) The Trip Leader shall complete a register of participants before commencing the trip.
- i) In terms of student:coach ratios, TCC will abide by the BCU recommendations (8:1), but in the case of trips carried out on grade II or less, people who have attained their BCU 3 star proficiency shall not be counted as either part of the instructor paddler ratio unless they hold an appropriate coach level.
As regards paddlers who have attained their BCU 4 star proficiency, they shall not be included in the ratios for any club trip unless they hold an appropriate coach level.

3 – Hazard Control

The Trip Leader must ensure that the paddling party is fit for the trip before any trip is commenced (see section 2) and reviewed the Trip-Planner.

It is the responsibility of the Trip Leader to determine who, if anyone, may attempt each feature on a trip, on a feature-by-feature basis (as part of a dynamic risk assessment).

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It is the responsibility of the Trip Leader to determine the appropriate action in the event of an incident. This action may or may not involve a reduction in size of the trip, or the abandonment of the trip.

It is the responsibility of the Trip Coordinator and Trip Leader to be aware and to make all other safety personnel aware of the incident management strategy for any given trip.

4 – Communication

Advance organisation of each activity will include knowledge of all instructors and TCC members who shall be attending.

5 – Training

All paddlers shall be graded to BCU standards.

1 and 2 star (BCU) Training courses will take place on placid / sheltered water.

Kayak Safety and other courses shall be organised on a regular basis, taking place both on and off the river. These shall be provided by suitably qualified persons. Additional external courses may be provided or have their details circulated.

6 – Equipment

A log shall be kept of the clubs equipment. The Equipment Officer will oversee a full audit of all equipment, to be performed at least annually before the start of the summer training season, ideally with a second audit at the conclusion of the training season and before the start of the white water season.

The results shall be made available to the committee. In the case of equipment falling below the clubs standards this will be identified and the equipment withdrawn from use. Faulty equipment will be repaired or replaced at the first suitable opportunity and a relevant note will be made.

It is the responsibility of the Equipment Officer to recommend and oversee any extra audits of club equipment should they be deemed necessary.

All equipment shall be appropriate for the intended use in terms of fixtures and features (e.g. secure carry handles, adjustable foot rests, inherent buoyancy, effective spray deck release handle/strap etc.)

6b – Handling of Equipment

Kayaks can be difficult to handle and must be handled with care when being carried, stored in / removed from the boathouse, loaded onto a trailer or packed on a roof-rack. If in doubt about how to handle a kayak or if a member feel that they're unable to handle kayak by themselves, they should not hesitate to ask others to help – or offer help if they believe another is in difficulty.

When tying down boats to either a roof rack or to a trailer care should be taken in doing so and in the case of the club trailer all knots and ropes should be checked by another party to



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ensure they are securely fastened. The Driver must always check, as they are legally responsible for the load.

If any of the regulations specified above or any other BCU standard as regards trip running or safety aspects not specified in this document, is contravened then the Canoe Club trip must be abandoned.