

Risk Management

One of the primary purposes of training is to improve safety and reduce injury. Risks are real! Trained, conservative paddlers who recognize and respect the risks rarely have a problem.

Ideas to Reduce Risk:

Receive skills training appropriate for the selected water and equipment used.
ALWAYS wear a PFD when paddling.
Move slowly and think about what you are doing.
Wear a helmet in all swiftwater, and in rocky conditions in flat water.
Wear a helmet when climbing or descending the riverbank.
Don't exceed your skill level.
Advance in river difficulty with trusted guide/instructor and take small steps.
Dress for water temperature and exposure.
Be prepared for changes in weather.
Learn to swim in swiftwater and catch eddies. Take initial SWR training.
Learn basic rescue techniques. Take initial SWR training.
Learn to avoid foot entrapment. Take initial SWR training.
Learn to swim a rapid safely. Take initial SWR training.
Learn to use a rescue bag or throw rope. Take initial SWR training.

Required Personal Safety Equipment:

*** All**

Proper type boat with flotation that can be rescued
PFD (rescue PDF preferred, training needed)
Helmet or hat appropriate for conditions (whitewater = helmet always)
Whistle – reachable with either hand
Serrated Rope Knife – reachable with one hand

*** Whitewater**

Rescue bag – 5/16 in or 3/8 in, 60-75 foot. 1/4 in is too small for SWR.
4 locking carabineers
25 foot of 1 inch or 1/2 in webbing

*** Flat Water (deep water)**

Paddle Float & Pump – requires deep water rescue training & proficiency
Deck rigging suitable for paddle float rescue
Flotation in bow and stern
Suitable waist worn towrope – 1/4 in is OK, need length of bungee cord also
Legal lighting – for nighttime
Marine radio in some areas

Suggested Collective Group Safety Equipment & Emergency Plan:

*2 First Aid Kits in two boats

Extra Paddle

*4 3/8 inch rescue bags in four boats. More for wide rivers

*4 rescue pulleys

Extra paddle

*75 foot of 1 inch or 1/2 in webbing spread in three boats

*12 locking carabineers spread in three boats

Cell phone, satellite phone as appropriate

GPS and map of area

Emergency plan – emergency names and numbers and/or the best plan for the remote area

*applies mostly to swiftwater or whitewater

Suggested Collective Group Experience/Training:

All types – at least one person with first aid and CPR training or with wilderness first aid training. Two would be better.

Whitewater - One more person than would be needed to perform a complex rescue such as a stabilization line and simple synch, or a “V-lower”. This dictates 5 or more in a group of whitewater paddlers.

Whitewater – 2 experienced paddlers with SWR training and rescue equipment. This way one can lead the rescue if the other becomes a victim.

Good ratio of experienced boaters/instructors to novices – vary with conditions and experience level. Probably 2 to 3 novices per experienced paddler/instructor.

Revised: June 7, 2007 by Chris Collins