



RESPONSIBLE WATER BASED ACTIVITIES

PREAMBLE

Water based activities can be deceptively dangerous with incidents and accidents often happening quickly. It only takes three minutes for a person to drown. Water can be powerful and hidden objects can cause impact and puncture injuries.

Where there is running water, noise can make any calls for help hard to hear. If the party is scattered help may be too late.

The purpose of this document is to offer some guidelines to leaders and participants to help ensure safety. It includes packrafting, liloing, swimming, snorkelling, canoeing, kayaking and other activities which include water immersion.

Activities involving powered craft are not covered by current club insurance. Should powered watercraft be used, then participants must be advised about lack of insurance in the activity description. Night water activities are discouraged.

All usual bushwalking precautions should be employed. The following checklist is obviously dependant on activity type and situation. Where risks are higher the more closely the checklist items should be followed....

Checklist for water-based activities

- Prior to trip and when such information is available, weather forecast, tides, currents and river water levels should be checked on the appropriate website. Local conditions and expected changes in conditions, eg wind and tide changes, as well as expert local advice should be taken into account.. The Waterways guide has recommended low, good, high and flood levels as well as the current river level from the BOM web site.
- Trips should be planned with 'escape routes' in mind. Snorkelling trips should be planned to go into winds and currents and return by drift.
- If the trip involves negotiation of grade 3 or above rapids, the leader must be appropriately qualified and only experienced members should participate
- All participants should be competent and confident swimmers. All participants should have received at least some informal training, including rescue techniques, and practiced the activity prior to tackling any high risk obstacles.
- Personal floatation devices, of current standard, must be worn- unless the activity is swimming or snorkelling.
- Party size of between four and eight participants is recommended. Each participant must have at least one designated buddy. Participants must stay sufficiently close to their buddies to be able to observe and communicate - unless otherwise determined by the leader. Buddies should be selected to ensure each pair includes a mixture of experienced and inexperienced, fit and less fit members.
- The party must be kept close together so that they can regroup rapidly and be able to assist until all participants have passed any higher risk obstacles. Regrouping at each prominent position is recommended.

- Participants must stop prior to entering high risk areas, examine the situation and agree a well understood plan of action. No participants should continue further along the route until the leader clearly agrees – This is usually when all participants have successfully passed any high-risk areas. If a portage around a hazard is identified by the group at least one person must remain at the exit point until all members of the group have exited at that point and started the portage.
- Gear should include extra food, warm clothing
- Helmets are required to be worn when paddling or portaging around white water
- If the environment is noisy each participant should have fast access to a whistle and know how to use it to both communicate and to get help. The trip briefing should include instruction in visible and audible signals and use of terminology.
- The party must carry a rope (throw bag), a sharp knife, a PLB, be able to securely stow all gear for watercraft activities. Where relevant participants must be able to use gear appropriately, eg tie bowlines, clove and highwayman's hitches and release spray decks. Loose ropes should be properly stored. Glasses straps are recommended.
- Participants must carry sufficient warm clothes and extra high energy foods and take precautions to prevent hypothermia, in case of delay or immersion.
- Special precautions may be required to prevent sunburn, windburn
- Valuables should be kept in waterproof containers and secured to watercraft to prevent loss
- The party, when using inflatable equipment, should carry at least one adequate pump and at least one wet repair kit
- The leader, at least, must be aware of exit points and recognition of those points.
- Participants should be aware of emergency procedures eg Man Overboard, stopper blocks, puncture wounds, rock impacts and drowning,
- All members of the party should be aware of changing conditions, eg currents, weather and wave action and act accordingly