

# **Safety Orientation Sheet**

Before you get in that dragon boat and experience the thrill and fun that racing brings, safety should be your number one priority.

*You are ultimately responsible for your safety, should you have any concerns you are to bring them to the attention of the coach and/or team captain.*

## **1. Registration and Waiver of Liability Form**

A registration and waiver of liability form must be completed before getting on the boat at your first practice.

## **2. Attendance**

You must sign the attendance sheet before every practice.

## **3. Lifejackets**

Life jackets MUST always be worn. Although you may feel that you are a strong swimmer, your chances of making it to shore decrease with the exhaustion of practice or racing and the possibility of receiving a head injury in a capsized or collision. Today's manufacturers have many innovative designs to make the life jackets comfortable as well as functional. During race and practice sessions, most Festival Regatta Organizers will provide a lifejacket (or PFD). You may however, choose to purchase your own PFD for comfort and fit.

## **4. Boat Commands**

Be sure that you and everyone in your boat understand the basic commands of the boat. The Cox (steersperson) is in charge of your boat at all times and his/her commands must be obeyed to ensure everyone's safety.

### **SIT-UP**

Sit up in the boat, facing forward, holding our paddle across your lap.

### **PADDLES UP**

Hold your paddle at the "catch" position, ready to take the first stroke.

### **HOLD WATER or CHECK IT or CHECK THE BOAT**

Hold the paddle so that the blade is held still in the water, as a brake to slow or stop the boat's forward or backwards momentum.

### **FEATHER YOUR BLADES or STEADY THE BOAT**

Extend the blades outward from the boat, blades float on top of the water. Skim the blades back and forth across the top of the water (like spreading jelly on bread). This command provides added stability to the boat. Generally used when we are moving people around the boat, experiencing big waves or waves from power boats.

### **DRAW or WRAP IT AROUND**

Pull water towards the boat maneuvering the boat laterally (sideways).

### **LET IT RUN**

Stop paddling, paddles across your lap and let the boat glide.

## 5. Capsize or Collision Safety

Capsizing and collisions are not common during practice sessions. An incident is more likely to take place in a race. Remember, if the capsize takes place during a practice session a rescue boat may not be close at hand.

Here are some general procedures to follow during one of these situations as outline by the Canadian Community Dragon Boat Association

### Stay Calm

#### **Always listen to your Cox for direction.**

Yes, we mean always. Even if you hear "HOLD THE BOAT" when you are in the middle of a race.

### Buddy System

The simplest 'Buddy System' method is to know the person paddling in the seat beside you. In the event of a capsize you are responsible for ensuring that they have surfaced. The first and last seats in the boat must also check for the Drummer/Caller and Steersperson/Cox.

### If the Boat Rolls Over

You cannot stop it once it starts to turn. If you are on the higher side of the boat when it begins to go over try to jump clear of your seat partner to avoid injury. If you come up under the boat there will be an air pocket available for you to catch your breath and get your bearings. Feel your way to the side of the boat and then surface on the outside. Call out to your buddy to let them know where you are.

### Stay With The Boat

Stay with the boat until the rescue craft arrives. Under no circumstances should you attempt to swim to shore. Spread evenly around both sides of the capsized boat holding onto the top edge (gunnel). The boat has the capacity to support a full crew even when fully submerged (due to lightweight construction and bulkheads filled with air). If the dragon boat is upside down after capsizing spread evenly around the outside and gently roll it over. Remember there may be others trapped underneath. Look for or call out to your "buddy" and obey the instructions of the rescue boat. **Once the Rescue Boat has arrived, they are in charge.** If other paddlers are injured or having difficulty reaching the boat give them assistance and make the rescue boat aware of the situation.

### Listen to Instructions from the Rescue Boat

In most cases the rescue boat will help you to right the boat and get it bailed enough to paddle it back to shore. In the event that the boat must be towed, listen to instructions from the rescue boat as to where to proceed. Do not go elsewhere or valuable time may be wasted looking for you even though you are safe.

### Here are some other basics to help make your Dragon Boating experience safe and enjoyable

- Always carry a bottle of water with you. Dehydration can happen quickly while paddling. If you are going to be out practicing for an hour or more it may be a good idea to carry a litre or more with you.
- Dress appropriately. If you are paddling in cold conditions consider purchasing a neoprene suit. Otherwise dress in layers to insulate your body. Cotton is not a good choice due to the fact that it doesn't breath.
- Apply proper sun protection. Sunburn can happen quickly on the water and a hat for sunstroke protection is advisable on hot days.
- Keep a spare paddle on board in the event of a break.