



Lagan Dragons Safety Booklet

Safety Always Comes First

1: IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

In the event of an emergency, dial '999' and inform the emergency services of where you are:

Lagan Dragons club site, River Lagan, Belfast (between Stranmillis and Albertbridge)

and give them brief details of what has happened and the number of persons involved. The club first aiders have access to our first aid box.

2: EXPECTATIONS

It is expected that all members of the dragon boat crew will heed the safety advice given.

PERSONAL CHOICE = PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IF IN DOUBT, DON'T GO OUT!

These guidelines have been written in accordance with those published in the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) Water Safety Policy – Edition no. 4, issue 1, effective from January 2004.

Anyone wishing to have a full copy of the IDBF Water Safety Policy should request one from the Club Safety Officer or it can be downloaded from the IDBA's website: www.dragonboat.ie.

PLEASE NOTE! EVERY MEMBER OF THE CLUB HAS A RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY BOTH OF THEMSELVES AND ALSO THEIR FELLOW PADDLERS

3: FITNESS TO PADDLE

Each crew member is required to be medically and physically "fit to paddle". All dragon boat activities involve physical effort which at times may be more than you are used to and may put greater strain on joints and muscles than you normally experience. Embarking and disembarking the boat also requires a certain level of physical capability and people with certain physical limitations may find this difficult. In addition, there is also a risk of contact with Lagan water which carries a risk of infection (see below).

While the likelihood of a capsize is very low, contact with river water will invariably occur via normal splashing in the boat, so any impaired immunity may be a safety issue.

Health declaration forms must be completed by all new paddlers, and any change in health circumstances which may influence fitness to paddle requires notification either to the helm/coach or via a new form. If you are in any doubt about your fitness to paddle, it is your duty to inform the helm before you venture into the boat.

Members who have had recent surgery should seek the advice of their surgeon as to when they are fit to paddle. Members should not paddle if they have open wounds and caution is required if on immunosuppressive drugs. Members who have received chemotherapy or radiotherapy are advised not to paddle until 3 months after completion of treatment (excluding Herceptin, Tamoxifen, Goserelin or Aromatase inhibitors such as Arimidex, which do not significantly influence the immune system) unless after discussion with their oncology team. If in doubt, please ask a member of the coaching team.



4: WATER-BORNE DISEASES

The following should be noted:

WEIL'S DISEASE

Weil's Disease is a bacterial infection carried in the kidneys of rodents, commonly rats. Their urine contaminates water and wet river banks. It can enter the human body via cuts, swallowing or mucous membranes of eyes, nose and mouth. Although a rare disease, it can be caught by anyone involved in water sports. Humans have to be quite heavily exposed before they become infected.

Symptoms are often flu-like to begin with. The best form of prevention is to cover any cuts and ensure you wash or shower after training.

CYANOBACTERIA / BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

Cyanobacteria (also known as blue-green algae, blue-green bacteria, and Cyanophyta) are water-borne bacteria which are more often found in enclosed waters and is a phylum of bacteria that obtain their energy through photosynthesis. Sometimes a mass reproduction of cyanobacteria results in algal blooms. It is from these that toxins can be released which are very toxic to humans. Common symptoms are sickness and diarrhoea. If blue-green algae is found in the training area, ensure that your face and hands are thoroughly washed after training.

5: SWIMMING ABILITY

Each club member taking part in dragon boat activities should be confident when floating in cold water and wearing a buoyancy aid (BA). Ideally each member should be able to swim at least 50m unaided when dressed in light clothing and tread water without a BA for at least 3 minutes.

6: USE OF BUOYANCY AIDS (BAS)

BAs must be worn by ALL crew members, regardless of personal experience in the sport. Please note that, even for established dragon boat teams, the IDBA currently advises that the wearing of BAs for all club training should be considered at each session, particularly when a crew is without the provision of a rescue boat and when the dragon boat operates more than 50m from any point of landing.

7: CLOTHING

Each crew member should be suitably dressed for the weather, water and race conditions. In warmer weather, suitable clothing could include:

- Shorts
- T-shirt
- Suitable footwear (flat, with grips / non-slip, eg boat shoes or trainers, flip-flops)

Too much clothing in warm weather could lead to over-heating. Consider removing layers during paddling if necessary.

In colder weather, suitable clothing could include:

- Thermal base layer
- leggings
- light waterproof jacket and/or trousers
- woolly hat
- Suitable footwear
- Gloves if desired

On-water training in winter or early spring can be very cold and your body temperature can fall quickly if not adequately dressed.



Lymphoedema is an obvious concern for some of our paddlers who have had breast cancer and for this reason compression sleeves are strongly recommended for all paddlers in recovery following axillary node surgery – advice should be sought from your Breast Care Nurse, surgeon or oncologist.

It is recommended that, whatever the time of year, a dry set of clothing should be brought to put on after training. Crew members should NOT wear any personal accessories, equipment or jewellery when embarked in a dragon boat which may impede their ability to escape from a capsized boat or swim unaided once in the water.

8: EQUIPMENT

Before each water session the Helm should carry out a check to ensure that the boat is seaworthy i.e. no leaks in the hull; head, tail drum, drummer's seat (when relevant) and steering oar are all properly secured; fenders and painter lines are attached to the boat and bailers and a throw line are carried in the boat.

9: EMBARKING / DISEMBARKING THE BOAT

After warm-up, paddlers should get into line as quickly as possible to facilitate efficient boat-loading. Stand in your preferred right/left position in your usual paddling position (front / back or middle) and the helm / coach will then move paddlers around to balance the boat where necessary.

Each paddler should ensure that their BA fits neatly and is fully fastened before starting to descend the steps to the pontoon. Only two paddlers should be on the steps at any one time.

Our pontoon is a light, non-fixed structure and a maximum of 2 paddlers should be standing on it at one time.

When instructed to load the boats, the front pair of paddlers should walk down the steps to the boat. The paddler on the left side boards first.

Stepping onto the boat – always make sure no-one else in the boat is standing up before you embark, and if the boat is rocking, wait until it is steady before you step in. If it starts rocking when you have stepped in, sit down in the middle of a seat until it is steady. If instructed by the helm or the coach, step into the middle of the boat and continue to step up the middle, stepping over seats until you reach your own seat. The left-side paddler should sit in the middle of the seat until joined by her right-side boat buddy.

Once in the boat with your boat buddy, sit with your hip right out to the side of the boat and stay still to facilitate boat-loading for those entering the boat behind you. Listen for instructions from the helm.

When instructed, untie the boat (always keep a rope in the boat) and bring in the fenders; hold onto the pontoon until instructed by the helm to “push off from the side”.

Disembarking – this normally occurs from the back of the boat forward but take instruction from the helm.

Remember that surfaces (slipway, pontoon, steps and boat) are likely to be slippery with water and/or algae and

CAUTION MUST BE EXERCISED AT ALL TIMES

What You Should Know Before Your First Outing in a Dragon Boat:

- What clothing to wear in the boat – see above
- Use of buoyancy aids – make sure someone helps you the first time putting one on • How to embark / disembark – see above
- How to paddle (see separate document)
- Commands used by the Helm (see separate document)
- Buddy System / Capsize drill – see below
- Who the coaches / helms are – this should be apparent but if not, ask!
- Your own ability / fitness / swimming ability



10: CAPSIZE DRILL – THE BUDDY SYSTEM

In dragon boating we operate the BUDDY SYSTEM. The person sitting next to you is your buddy and you are responsible for that person, as they are for you. The stroke or front pair is responsible for the drummer and the back pair for the helm. This means each person in the boat has someone looking out for them in a capsized situation.

When sitting in the boat, the crew members are numbered off from the front (from one up to twenty-two), one being the drummer, two - front left stroke, three - front right stroke, and so on with the helm taking the last number. If there is no drummer on board the front left stroke becomes number one.

In the Event of a Boat Capsizing:

DON'T PANIC

Check to see that your buddy is there. Each pair should account for their buddy. The helm should immediately ensure that all crew is accounted for by calling out for a crew count and noting the response.

If you are held under the boat, you will have plenty of light and air. Do not panic, listen carefully and your helm will ensure that you are released safely when the boat is turned over again by other paddlers. Do not try to exit from under the overturned boat as your BA will hinder your ability to do this.

Do not attempt to turn the boat into the upright position. The overturned boat makes a good floating platform. Do not climb on the boat as it may roll round and possibly trap someone.

The crew should space themselves evenly around the upturned boat holding onto the gunwales and wait until the rescue boat arrives. The crew should then wait to be directed by the operatives of the rescue boat.

If no rescue boat is available, the whole crew should swim the boat to the nearest safe landing, as directed by the helm or Boat Captain. If conditions are not suitable, the crew should leave the boat and swim to shore in pairs using the Buddy System. The boat can be rescued later by other means.

As soon as the boat is stationed alongside a landing station, all crew members must be accounted for and any injuries dealt with.

The boat should be turned the right way up and the water bailed out.

Last but not least all equipment should be accounted for i.e. paddles, head, tail, drum, drum seat, steering oar.

11: SAFETY QUALIFIED MEMBERS

Current members with safety / first aid or clinical qualifications, IDBA qualified helms and coaches are displayed in the Nissen hut. Details of First Aiders are noted on the First Aid Safety Station in the Nissen hut.

12: CLINICALLY TRAINED MEMBERS

- Dr Clodagh Loughrey
- Dr Aaroon Sadler
- S/N Randa Troughton
- S/N Lorraine Collins