

SAFETY PROCEDURES

Grand Masters Dragon Boat Club

The Villages, Florida

Safety is our #1 priority for any paddler to enjoy the fun and physicality of dragon boating. Each paddler is responsible for their own safety at all times while engaging in activities related to practicing and racing in dragon boats. The following procedures will be followed by all team members as part of any GMDBC team.

SAFETY PLAN

- The steer person is the person in charge of the boat, they are the safety officer. They are responsible for the boat at all times. Any command of the steer person supersedes any other commands given on the boat. For example, the coach has the team in the middle of a 300 meter race and the steer person calls, "check and hold the boat". The "check and hold the boat" command must be followed.

PRIOR TO BOARDING

1. Wear appropriate clothing for participation in a water sport (comfortable light clothing, water shoes)
2. Have a bottle of water with you. Consider an electrolyte replenishing fluid during the summer months, such as Gatorade, or Propel.
3. Apply sunscreen and wear a hat.
4. Stretching and moderate exercise is advisable before paddling.
5. Basic dragon boat commands will be reviewed by a designated team member.
6. Safety and emergency procedures will be reviewed by a designated team member.
7. Notify the team captain if a new paddler is a non swimmer. The steer person will be notified.
8. All paddlers must have a lifejacket or personal floatation device (PFD) and emergency identification on their person.

LIFE JACKETS

All paddlers must wear an approved lifejacket or PFD at all times while on the boat. Belt PFDs should be worn facing forward.

LOADING/UNLOADING PROCEDURES

1. The team captain should know the paddlers approximate weight and balance the boat accordingly.
2. The boat should be loaded row by row as directed by the team captain or steer person. All paddles and water bottles should be handed to your seat partner first before boarding. Once in the boat your partner will hand them to you.

3. Step into the center of the boat and then take the assigned seat with hips to the gunwale.
4. DO NOT step on the seats or gunwale while loading or unloading the boat.
5. Always follow the steer person's commands when loading and unloading the boat.
6. Once loaded, the steer person should remind the paddlers about the buddy system and ask them to identify their seat partner or who they should be looking out for in the event of an emergency.
7. Before leaving the dock, each person should count off to ensure an accurate count.
8. The boat will be unloaded in a similar manner with the steer person calling the rows to unload.
9. Do not throw paddles, seats or water bottles on the dock while unloading, hand those items to your seat partner who will then hand them off to you when they unload.

PADDLING COMMANDS

1. In order to control the boat and avoid possible collisions, all paddlers must know the basic paddling commands.
 1. Check the boat - (drag paddle in the water to slow the boat)
 2. Hold the boat - (paddle in the water perpendicular to the side of the boat)
 3. Let it run - (stop paddling and lay your paddle across your lap)
 4. Backpaddle - (paddle from hip to knee)

HYDRATION

The possibility of dehydration is a concern especially during rigorous training, races and during the summer months. Maintain proper hydration by drinking water or a replenishing electrolyte fluid before getting into the boat and during the times when directed during rest periods at practice.

EXERTION LEVEL

Paddling is a high intensity sport and can be exhausting. If you need to rest at any time, do so. Stop paddling and center your paddle (paddle handle on the floor of the boat between your feet with the paddle face towards the sides of the boat). Resume paddling when you feel able. If you feel unwell, notify your seat partner or steer person so you can be returned to the dock.

NOISE LEVEL

1. Paddlers should restrict talking on the boat. Attention must always be given to the coach/drummer and steer person. The coach/drummer and steer person must be able to communicate effectively from the bow to the stern of the boat. The command, "Heads in the boat" means that everyone must stop talking.
2. There should not be talking while the steer person has control while leaving or returning to the dock.

3. When on the water, emergency help can be a long way off. If someone should have a medical emergency it is imperative that everyone remain silent as the steer person gives direction.
4. An air horn is available on all boats, three long blasts will notify the dock that there is a situation on the boat.

BOAT CAPSIZING

1. A buddy system is used in the event of a medical emergency or boat capsizing. Your buddy is the person sitting beside you in your row. The paddlers in the first row are also buddies with the coach/drummer and the paddlers in the last row are buddies with the steer person.
2. Unless instructed otherwise, paddlers should stay with the boat, hold onto it, find their partner, do not try to swim to shore and wait for help to arrive. All equipment will float and can be retrieved later.
3. You must follow the directions of the steer person and rescue personnel. Once a rescue boat arrives they are in charge.
4. If you find yourself under the boat, there is an air pocket so you can catch your breath and get your bearings. Cover your head with your hands in the event that your head may hit the bottom of the boat. **DO NOT INFLATE** your PFD while under the boat. Feel your way to the side of the boat and then surface to the outside, inflate your PFD at this time.
5. Locate your buddy if not already found.
6. If other paddlers are injured or having trouble reaching the boat, provide assistance and make others or rescue personnel aware of the situation.
7. The steerperson will make a head count.
8. If the boat capsizes, it may not right itself. The steer person will determine if anyone is trapped under the boat and will act accordingly. A strong swimmer may be asked to swim under the boat from one end to the other looking for paddlers.
9. If the dragon boat is upside down after capsizing, the steer person may ask the team to help roll the boat to its upright position. Before that, all paddlers must be accounted for.
10. Shouting and making noise will cause confusion and panic. Every paddler must be ready to follow instructions.
11. Keep others calm, do not panic, your PFD and life jacket will keep you afloat.

WEATHER

- Wind Conditions - Boats are not permitted on the water when there are whitecaps and should end practice if the lake conditions change.
- Thunder/Lightening - Boats are not permitted on the water if thunder is heard and teams should not return to the water until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder heard.

- Fog

Lake Miona; If the shoreline opposite the loading dock cannot be seen, boats should not be on the water.

Lake Sumter; if the lighthouse cannot be seen from the loading dock, boats should not be on the water. Boats are not permitted beyond the lighthouse if the bridge cannot be seen from the loading dock.

If the weather adversely changes while on the water, the team must return to the dock and terminate practice.

Practice should be canceled in advance if the weather conditions are questionable. Use resources in advance of practice to check for wind and possible storm conditions; weather.com, weather underground app or the weatherbug app for lightening strikes.

BOAT STABILITY

To maintain boat stability, make no sudden movements while on the boat. Any movement on the boat should be fore and aft not side to side. Stay seated in the boat at all times. In the event of waves caused by passing boat wakes or large waves continue paddling as usual. The boat will wallow less if it is being propelled forward. Do not panic and stop paddling. Do not lean into the boat.

SWAMPING

If the boat should swamp (taking in water due to waves or wakes) it will not sink. Do not abandon the boat, keep paddling, use the bailers or your cupped hands to get as much water out as possible.

ILLNESS ON THE BOAT

If you feel ill while paddling, stop immediately. Tell your seat partner who will notify the steer person, or use the sign of distress by holding the paddle up with the face of the paddle visible to the steer person.

The Steerperson must have a cell phone available while on the boat in the event of a medical emergency. 911 will be called as soon as possible.

911 Lake Miona - Sumter County Medical Emergency -
City of Oxford - 10501 County Road 115, Lake Miona Park Boat Ramp.

911-Lake Sumter - Sumter County Medical Emergency -
Waterfront Inn (352-753-7535), 1105 Lakeshore Drive. -Lake Sumter Landing Boat Dock.

The emergency addresses are located on the fore and aft of all boats.

Team members not on the boat are asked to keep the boat under observation to be alert for a possible emergency. If 3 long air horn blasts are heard, the boat is returning with an urgent need.

Should first responders be required, the members on shore should assist in directing EMS to the location of the boat. At Lake Miona, fisherman on the dock or in other boats are asked to be on the alert for an audible signal of an emergency to assist if they are able.

There are Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) available at each dock. If a paddler is NOT BREATHING, leave the lake at the nearest safe shoreline, remove the person from the boat and begin CPR immediately. CPR cannot be attempted on the boat. Use the app, "Where Am I". To give emergency services an address closest to where you are located.

These procedures must be reviewed with all GMDBC team members and least twice yearly.

New members must review these procedures before boarding the boat for the first time.

Adapted from suggestions of the GMDBC members and the Philadelphia Dragon Boat Safety Plans

Revised: 4/2/23
Safety Procedures
M. DeFranco