



## Whitewater Canoe Club Incorporated (WWCC) River Trip Code of Good Practice

This Code of Practice is not an instruction manual but a document that highlights key safety and management issues in order to promote responsible kayaking which still allows for high levels of personal challenge and fun. This Code applies to all people who attend Club Trips, whether members or guests.

### Explanatory note:

*Some Codes of Practice have been used as evidence in legal proceedings to show that a person has failed to meet a duty of care. Failure to follow a Code of Practice does not necessarily mean that there is a failure in duty of care or personal responsibility, but if a person has not followed the Code then, in the event of an accident, it is up to that person to show that the duty of care has been met by alternative methods, which are equivalent to or better than those in the Code.*

## Definitions

<b>Member</b>	Any member as defined by the WWCC Constitution.
<b>Guest</b>	A person known to and accompanying a member such as a friend, family member or partner of a Member; or a visiting member of another club.
<b>Trip Organiser</b>	The Member who decides the logistical details of the trip, arranges access, and collates information on those who wish to participate. The role is partly provision of information and partly communication.
<b>Trip Leader</b>	The designated leader of the active river trip itself. This may include organising the shuttle, and will include ensuring the pre-trip briefing is made and for ensuring the completion of the Trip Checklist and Report. In the event of any doubt where a safety call must be made (such as go/no go), the final decision rests with the Trip Leader.

**Note:** Trip Organisers may be Trip Leaders, but not necessarily so. The two roles may be shared, or carried out by one person, but the Trip Leader has the final decision for the on-river activities.

## Resources

The WWCC has been running club trips for over 30 years and has built up a culture of protocols and procedures. There is additional reference documentation available via the club website;

1. **Contact List.** Its purpose is to enable **the Trip Organiser or Trip Leader to be able to contact SAR** and Members' contacts in the event of an emergency. This must be completed at the meeting **point before** every Club trip.
2. **Trip Checklist and Report.** The checklist must be completed by the Trip Organiser or Trip Leader prior to/at the put in (as appropriate) for every Club trip and the report after every Club Trip. The checklist serves as a reminder to those running club trips to ensure essential items are considered, and, along with the report, as a record for the club of incidents, accidents, and hazards.
3. **River Trip Code of Good Practice.** *(this document)*
4. There are many books, manuals and online resources available to kayakers and rafters and outdoor leaders.
5. A detailed set of **Recommended Training Guidelines for Members, Trip Organisers, and Trip Leaders.** This is a detailed reference document prepared by Club members as a knowledge reservoir intended for instruction and for Members' general use.
6. Members are encouraged to share knowledge with others and learn from others. This is one of the reasons this club exists.

# 1. All Trips

- 1.1. Know Basic Life Support and first aid.
- 1.2. Be aware that rivers change and new hazards can occur between river trips and particularly after floods or heavy rain.
- 1.3. Be aware of the additional hazards in flooded rivers.
- 1.4. Learn to recognise river hazards, such as overhanging trees, undercut banks, weir-like holes, vortex-style eddies, wood embedded in the river bed etc. Be particularly aware of hazards posed by constructed features obstructing the river, including weirs, bridges, fences, ropes, wire and other debris.
- 1.5. Avoid injury by stretching, warming up, staying fit and developing good paddling techniques.
- 1.6. Check your equipment for loose ropes or other snagging features, and remedy any dangerous features.
- 1.7. Find out as much as practicable about the river trip, especially portage points, emergency exit points, known hazards and acceptable flow parameters.
- 1.8. Check river flows and weather forecasts and be prepared to change plans.
- 1.9. Let someone know what you are planning and when you are expected to return.
- 1.10. Wear an approved buoyancy aid when on or near the river, check its flotation and make sure it is in good condition and the correct fit. Ensure all buckles and zips are properly fastened.
- 1.11. Wear a helmet (designed for whitewater) when on or near the river. Ensure it fits correctly and protects the temples and back of head.
- 1.12. Wear and/or carry sufficient warm protective clothing for the trip. This could include wetsuit, paddle jacket, dry top, neoprene shorts, fleece and polypropylene layers, hat and pogies.
- 1.13. Wear and/or carry footwear suitable for walking out of the river or scouting rapids. Footwear should be free of buckles or other accessories that could catch. Avoid boots and sports sandals as they can catch easily and are designed to not rip off. (Sports sandals are quite popular and are perceived as being suitable by many people but have been a contributing factor in overseas drownings.)
- 1.14. Carry equipment for unexpected emergencies and know how to use it. For example, first aid kit, spare paddle, spare clothes, food, webbing slings, throw bag, pulleys, prusiks, knife, snorkel, saw, fire-lighting equipment, thermos, survival bag, radio/cell phone, whistle and torch.
- 1.15. Don't paddle when excessively tired, physically ill, intoxicated or when using drugs (prescription or non-prescription) which affect decision-making and reflexes.
- 1.16. Ensure group members are aware of each other's strengths and weaknesses and have strategies in place to inform each other if these change (e.g. if injury develops).
- 1.17. Look out for each other and be personally responsible.
- 1.18. Work cooperatively with other river users and landowners.
- 1.19. Know the communication system and river signals that your group is using.
- 1.20. In the event of an accident think of safety ahead of speed. Do not compromise anyone else's personal safety but act quickly where necessary.
- 1.21. Club trips shall include the carrying of an EPIRB/PLB device(s). The pre-trip briefing shall include advice on the purpose and limitations of the device and its deployment, and who is carrying it (or them).
- 1.22. EPIRB/PLB devices must be carried on the person not the water craft.
- 1.23. Minimise impact upon the kayaking resource including riverbed, banks, access routes, flora and fauna.
- 1.24. All trip participants shall abide this code of practice at all times.

*Guidance note: 1.22 - PLB can be either a privately owned device, or one supplied by the Club.*

## 2. Personal Kayaking

In addition to the All Trips points:

- 2.1. Think carefully about the suitability of your boat for the particular river conditions you are paddling, know the strengths and limitations of your kayak design.
- 2.2. Check the safety of your kayak. Check usability, security and strength of grab-loops (all kayaks should have these). Check that the kayak's buoyancy is securely fastened and all screws and bolts are tight. Check the security of your footrests or bulkhead.
- 2.3. Check that your kayak has flotation adequate to ensure the kayak will float when full of water. This should include airbags in both ends unless your kayak has a sealed bulkhead and water-tight hatch system or is a playboat without a moveable footrest/plate system.
- 2.4. Check that you can release yourself from the kayak.
- 2.5. Ensure that your spray skirt has a pull-cord for release.
- 2.6. Ensure your spray skirt will not release unless you want it to.
- 2.7. Be proficient in self rescue, including the skills of whitewater swimming techniques and a reliable roll – particularly when paddling Class III/Grade 3 water or harder.
- 2.8. Be proficient in river rescue techniques appropriate for the trip being undertaken and practice them regularly.
- 2.9. Paddle in control. Avoid entering unknown rapids that have not been scouted from the river or the bank. Consider portaging when you cannot see what obstacles lie ahead.
- 2.10. Be aware of your personal paddling ability and be prepared to portage rapids beyond this ability.

## 3. Group Kayaking

In addition to the All Trips and Personal Kayaking points:

- 3.1. Have sufficient emergency gear with you for the number of kayakers in your party. Know who has what and ensure emergency equipment is shared out amongst members.
- 3.2. On overnight or wilderness trips it can be useful to carry laminated topographic maps of the section being run. If GPS mapping devices are available to participants they should be encouraged to bring them.
- 3.3. Designate a leader for the trip. Casual groups are hard to co-ordinate unless somebody assumes this role.
- 3.4. Divide a large group into manageable sized groups. 4 to 6 kayakers per group is a good guideline. Group paddlers according to the conditions on the day and the mix of skills and experience. Appoint a leader and, where appropriate, a Tail End Charlie for each group. An overall TEC should also be designated.
- 3.5. The Trip Leader will ensure completion of the checklist and ensure a safety briefing (Annex A) (and a helicopter safety briefing if necessary (Annex B)) is conducted.
- 3.6. Buddy people up if there are some less-experienced paddlers or paddlers whose experience is unknown.
- 3.7. Be prepared to suggest that some people may be better portaging some rapids.
- 3.8. Each person should keep the person behind them in sight.
- 3.9. Hazards or rapids with new features: All participants should be encouraged to consider those following by signalling to others to eddy out to scout, or to signal a safe route.
- 3.10. When a harder rapid is reached utilise appropriate risk management strategies, possibly including consideration of available time, daylight, or worsening conditions.  
These may include but are not limited to:
  - 3.10.1. Scouting the rapid from boat and/or bank. Remember that different perspectives can show up different problems or different lines.
  - 3.10.2. Select the line and discuss with others.
  - 3.10.3. Watch the most competent person paddle the rapid first.
  - 3.10.4. Portage if necessary.
  - 3.10.5. Strategic placement of people with throw bags and paddles.
  - 3.10.6. Strategic placement of paddlers in eddies.
  - 3.10.7. If rafts are present, paddlers and/or boats may be carried on rafts if considered appropriate.
  - 3.10.8. Having more-skilled kayakers paddle the boats of those who wish to portage.
- 3.11. The Trip leader will ensure completion of the Trip Report at the end of the trip.
- 3.12. **Trip Leaders may ask a participant to exit the river if they are endangering themselves or the group.**

## 4. Rafts on Club Trips

In addition to the All Trips, Personal Kayaking and Group Kayaking points:

- 4.1. If a trip consists of only rafts then the Group Kayaking points are applicable.
- 4.2. When rafts are present on club trips, they are to be considered as an integral part of the trip and are subject to Group Kayaking recommendations, as appropriate.
- 4.3. Each raft shall have a Raft Leader with skills and experience appropriate to the difficulty of the river trip. Raft Leaders shall successfully complete a Club training course and subsequent refresher courses. These skills are typically to Raft Guide Grade 2 or higher. [www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/doc/21282.doc](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/units/doc/21282.doc) or equivalent.
- 4.4. Rafts on Club Trips shall be limited to Grade 3 with sufficient flow for raft passage without undue risk of damage or incident, or Grade 4 with conditions as for Grade 3 provided there is a pro guide leading at least one of the rafts or another raft on the same trip. [NOTE: This will be a judgement call based on assessment of conditions prior to and at the time of the trip. If in doubt, err on the side of caution.]
- 4.5. Raft paddlers may be Members or Guests, and no paddler shall be younger than 13 years old on the day of the trip. Paddlers between the ages of 13 and 18 shall be accompanied by a parent or designated care-giver.
- 4.6. Rafts, whether owned by the club, hired or borrowed, or owned by individuals or groups on the trip, shall be fit-for-purpose for the trip being undertaken, and shall be in good condition. Good condition means, at a minimum:
  - 4.6.1. Being able to maintain air pressure.
  - 4.6.2. Having grab lines around the entire perimeter of a passenger raft that are tight and do not create an entrapment hazard.
  - 4.6.3. Having D-rings that are securely adhered to the raft to allow for rescues.
  - 4.6.4. Having bow and stern lines at least 10m long on passenger rafts.
- 4.7. Each raft must carry a minimum of the following equipment. Throw rope, 2 spare paddles or oars, first aid kit.
- 4.8. Each raft group must carry a minimum of the following equipment: Repair kit for all fabric types on the trip, pump, and rescue equipment sufficient to rescue a trapped raft on the river being paddled.
- 4.9. Raft paddlers shall be equipped to the standard outlined in Personal Kayaking above.
- 4.10. Raft Leaders and paddlers are subject to the decisions of the Trip Leader.
- 4.11. Raft paddlers must receive a safety briefing from their Raft Leader or a group safety briefing from a Raft Leader at the put in.
- 4.12. **Cataracts** and **rowed rafts** are considered to be rafts, and the person rowing is to be considered a Raft Leader if passengers are carried, or as equivalent to a Personal Kayaker if rowing solo, and therefore to follow the points under Personal Kayaking above. A person rowing a Club raft needs to be a Raft Leader or equivalent.

## 5. Instructional Kayaking

In addition to the Personal and Group Kayaking points:

- 5.1. The purpose is to teach/mentor kayaking skills to people of lesser skill or experience.
- 5.2. The Instructor should have attended a suitable River Rescue course and be proficient in these rescue techniques.
- 5.3. The Instructor should consider personal currency in kayaking. (Maintaining a logbook of personal and instructional experience is a good way of doing this.)
- 5.4. The Instructor takes on the responsibility of looking after the learner group.
- 5.5. The Instruction Team should plan the trip carefully and be aware of the exit point and emergency exit points.
- 5.6. The Instruction Team should organise equipment so that there is spare equipment at the end of the trip.
- 5.7. Instructors should be familiar with the river trip.
- 5.8. The Instructor is responsible for checking quality and suitability of the learner's equipment.
- 5.9. Consider the rescue equipment that should be carried for the trip. Depending on the trip this could include a first aid kit, spare paddle, spare clothes, food, webbing slings, throw bag, pulleys, prusiks, knife, snorkel, saw, fire-lighting equipment, thermos, survival bag, radio/cell phone, whistle and torch.
- 5.10. The ratio of Instructor to learners is dependent on river, skills of leader and clients, but as a guideline 1:4 is a practical number from which to make adjustments.
- 5.11. The learners should have covered some appropriate progressions before being taken onto the river; these could include capsized drill, rescue drill, rolling, forward paddling, sweep stroke, low brace, river signals, white water swim position.
- 5.12. The learners should be taken on water that they can be reasonably expected to paddle safely or swim without injury.
- 5.13. The Instructor is responsible for analysing river hazards and minimising the risk to learners by alerting learners to any problem, avoiding the hazard, and positioning themselves and others to minimise consequences.
- 5.14. The experience should be positive, improve skills and stimulate enthusiasm for kayaking.
- 5.15. The Instructor/Instruction Team should consider risk management strategies and develop an emergency response plan.

The above information is for those instructing on an "ad hoc basis" For further information on the standards required of professional Instructors in New Zealand, contact the NZ Outdoor Instructor's Association, and read the NZOIA Kayak Instructor's Handbook.

Version 2.1, August 2015 (Replacing Version 2005)