

EVENT PLANNING

Appendix 1: Paddlesports During the Age of COVID-19

May 22, 2020

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to present a set of suggested paddlecraft practices, based on currently available information. These suggestions are provided to assist paddling instructors and event organizers and do not replace guidance from federal (e.g., CDC), state, and local authorities (e.g., health departments). In certain cases, it also may be advisable to check with your health care provider, attorney, insurance representative, and other appropriate experts. Local risk will depend on numerous factors. Individual instructors and event organizers are responsible for appropriate risk assessment and risk management. Note that each suggestion includes a “weighting.” In particular, “*Should*” means that, if at all possible, the suggestion should be carried out. On the other hand, “*Consider*” means that the suggestion is a good idea, but perhaps not as critical.

Initial Information Gathering and Analysis

1. Retrieve current COVID-19 guidance from federal (e.g., CDC), state, and local authorities. (*Consider*)
2. Note that, in addition to “healthcare” type guidance, it may be advisable to check employment related guidance; e.g., <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>. (*Consider*)
3. In addition, it is advisable to retrieve current recreational boating guidance. For example, the State of Florida is now specifying a minimum separation of 50 feet between boats, under certain circumstance (Executive Order 20-09). This may have implications for paddlecraft. Boating regulations are issued at local, state, county, and federal levels – all of which may be relevant. (*Consider*)
4. In locations outside the U.S., it is advisable to check guidance from the appropriate national and local authorities. (*Consider*)
5. In addition, it is advisable to check current paddlecraft guidance (e.g., from the ACA website). (*Consider*)
6. In addition, it is advisable to check guidance from your current insurance carrier. (*Consider*)
7. It is recommended that the above guidance be printed out and retained, for a minimum period of three years, since it serves as a reference, and can serve as part of the legal record. (*Consider*)

8. Based on current guidance, develop a clear understanding of current specifications, recommendations, and limitations. **(Should)**
9. Pay particular attention regarding to the following items:
 - a. Group size
 - b. Activity limitations
 - c. Required separation between people (social distancing)
 - d. PPE
 - e. Open/closed hours and curfews
 - f. Required separation between boats (this may be larger than social distancing)
10. Identify any inconsistencies in recommendations, e.g., more versus less stringent. *(Consider)*
11. Consider the impact of the availability, or lack thereof, of potential rescue resources, if it should become necessary (for example, in certain areas, emergency services are currently not performing back-country extractions). *(Consider)*
12. Consider the potential impact on the local community were the event will be held (e.g., if participants are going to be coming from around the country, could this lead to a local outbreak in the community?) *(Consider)*
13. Based on the above, make an initial GO/NO-GO decision. **(Should)**

Second Phase Information Gathering and Analysis

1. Gather baseline health status information on potential participants (see **Health Screening Tool**). It is important to remember that a significant percentage of people who are infected with COVID-19 may be asymptomatic – but still capable of transmitting the disease. *(Consider)*
2. Gather information from potential participants regarding boats, equipment, and skill level. *(Consider)*
3. Pay particular attention to the following items: **(Should)**
 - a. Suitability of each paddler's experience and skill for the planned paddling event (especially the likelihood of capsize and ability to self-rescue). All activities should be in conditions which are well below the capabilities of all the paddlers.
 - b. Suitability of each paddler's boat for the potential paddling event.
 - c. Suitability of each paddler's kit, for the potential paddling event.
 - d. PPE kit for each paddler (see **PPE**).
4. Based on above, make GO/NO-GO decision for the entire event, or if need be, for specific paddlers. **(Should)**

Event Paperwork and Planning

1. Send potential participants a pre-event communication listing the following elements:
(*Consider*)
 - a. There are no guarantees. COVID-19 transmission is always a possibility, no matter which/how many precautions are taken.
 - b. Participants will fill out a health screening, and temperatures will be taken, prior to, and during, the event. Depending on the findings, paddlers may be excluded from the event, at the sole discretion of the organizer. If this occurs, there will be a refund.
 - c. Specify what the expectations are regarding participants bringing their own boats, and equipment. Be explicitly clear that *sharing will not be allowed*, and participants will be excluded from the event if they do not bring boats and equipment, as specified.
 - d. Provide paddlers with a general outline as to what infection prevention and control interventions will be used and state that all paddlers **MUST** comply with these interventions.
 - e. Paddlers should experiment with their gear (for fit and interaction with other equipment) prior to the event. In particular, helmets may interfere with wearing of other PPE, such as mouth/nose protection.
 - f. Advise potential participants that they should **NOT** attend the event if they are sick or may have been exposed to COVID-19.
 - g. It is expected that boats and gear will be thoroughly cleaned prior to arrival at the event.
 - h. An assessment of safety related skills (e.g., the ability to self rescue) will be done immediately upon launching for all participants. Depending upon the results of the assessment, it may be necessary to modify event plans or, potentially, ask a participant to withdraw from the event.
2. In addition, consider sending a document specifying the refund policy for the event.
(*Consider*) For example:
 - a. Will refunds be issued if people are sick, or believe they are getting sick? Note that offering refunds may decrease the likelihood that someone who is infected will show up at the event.
 - b. Will refunds be given if people show up without the proper equipment? In this case, offering a refund may encourage less than desirable behavior.
3. It would be desirable if, in advance, each participant sends in a written acknowledgment that they understand and agree to the above. In addition, they should sign and return an event waiver in advance. It would be best if the waiver includes specific language regarding COVID-19, e.g., <https://www.sadlersports.com/sample-waiver-release-communicable-diseases-including-covid-19/>. It would be best if this paperwork is completed electronically – in advance of the event. (*Consider*)

4. Plan out the event considering such critical factors as: (**Should**)
 - a. What sorts of infection prevention/control interventions may be useful/applicable? (refer to **Infection Prevention and Control Interventions**)
 - b. How will logistics, such as shuttles, be managed to minimize contacts?
 - c. How will launching and landing be handled to minimize contacts?
 - d. How will the group be managed on the water, to minimize “stacking up” of boats, while also maintaining close enough proximity to observe infection prevention and control practices and maintain communications?
 - e. In addition to the above, how else will social distancing be maintained?
 - f. What communications techniques will be used to manage the group (including infection prevention and control feedback and instructions)?
 - g. How/when will hand hygiene be performed?
 - h. How/when will PPE be deployed?
 - i. How will the need for assisted rescues be minimized?
 - j. How will assisted rescues be conducted if needed?
 - k. Will ashore activities be conducted inside, outside, or both. There are hypothetical advantages to doing activities outside (e.g., less constrained airflow), but there are also hypothetical advantages to doing activities inside (e.g., minimizing the unpredictable effects of wind). The science on this is not yet clear and, accordingly, we cannot make any specific recommendations.
5. Smaller groups are preferable to larger groups. (*Consider*)
6. Consider breaking a larger group into smaller pods, to decrease the amount of interpersonal contacts. (*Consider*)
7. Consider staggered start times, for large group events, to decrease congregation/crowding. (*Consider*)
8. Use a formal “Event Planning Grid” (see **Event Planning Grid**). (*Consider*)
9. For events which require travel, consider such factors as transportation, lodging, meals, etc. (*Consider*)
10. Double check to ensure that the event is planned in a way which is consistent with federal, state, and local guidelines, industry standards, and any relevant policies and procedures of the organization. (**Should**)

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