

RUNNING A PADDLESPORTS EVENT
Appendix 7: 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 recommendation is a good idea, but perhaps not as critical.

Prior to the Event

- Use a structured approach to plan the event (refer to **Event Planning**). (*Should*)
- Consider developing a formal “event planning grid” (refer to **Event Planning Grid**). (*Consider*)
- For an instructional event, or where otherwise appropriate, conduct remote (e.g., online) teaching of topics. (*Consider*)
- Consider how such interventions as controlled movement, staggered arrival times, and so forth could be used to minimize interpersonal contact. (*Consider*)

Group Check In

- Locate hand sanitizer dispensers, and small boxes of tissues, at key common areas such as the group check in location. (*Consider*)
- Post signs with key reminders such as maintaining social distance, wash hands frequently, one-way traffic patterns (if appropriate), and so forth.
- Conduct “health screening” (refer to **Health Screening Tool**). *It is critical 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*)
- Confirm that participants have appropriate boats and gear. Specifically confirm that participants have the specified PPE (refer to **PPE**). Inspect for appropriate level of

cleanliness. If not acceptable, provide gear, clean if appropriate/feasible, or exclude from the event. **(Should)**

- Consider designation of an “Infection Control/Safety Officer” for the event. *(Consider)*
- Break larger groups into pods. *(Consider)*
- Designate who may approach whom (e.g., family members), or if necessary, designate buddies for the day. **(Should)**
- Color code (or otherwise mark) boats to facilitate who may approach whom. *(Consider)*
- Consider designating assigned rescuers (refer to **Assisted Rescue**). *(Consider)*
- Conduct a formal risk assessment with the group, including, but not limited to, issues related to COVID-19 (you might wish to use the model described in **Risk Assessment, Appendix 6**, or you might choose to use a different model). **(Should)**
- Based on the above, make “Go/No-Go” decision and determine risk management interventions (refer to **Risk Management**). **(Should)**
- Conduct pre-launch safety brief with “normal topics” (e.g., weather, route, etc.) but also with explicit discussion of infection prevention and control (refer to **Infection Prevention and Control Interventions**) **(Should)**
- Specifically discuss that activities are “Challenge by Choice” and that COVID-19 might raise the risk level in certain activities.
- Conduct ashore activities with social distancing, and other appropriate infection prevention and control interventions (e.g., controlled movement, positioning with respect to wind), in place. If there is a likelihood of losing social distancing, then PPE, such as mouth/nose coverings, should be worn. **(Should)**

Launch

- All paddlers perform hand hygiene prior to launching – especially if assistance may be needed. **(Should)**
- All paddlers (unless medically contra-indicated) should have mouth and nose protection (e.g., a neck gaiter) on, prior to launching. Double check that the PPE is covering the mouth and nose, if assistance is going to be used. **(Should)**
- Launch in a manner to minimize interpersonal contact. **(Should)**

- If launching assistance is needed, consider how to minimize paddlers being downwind from each other (this may not be possible to achieve). (*Consider*)

Underway

- Perform an assessment, as soon as possible, to validate that participants do, in fact, have the necessary skills to safely engage in the event (e.g., everyone should demonstrate a roll, if going into more challenging environments). Depending upon the results of this assessment, it may be necessary to change the plans for the event and, in some cases, it might be necessary to request that a participant withdraw from the event. (*Consider*)
- Maintain both mandated social distancing, and mandated boat separation (as per local or state boating laws). (*Should*)
- Use boat positioning to minimize paddlers being downwind from one another. For example, positioning boats to be abeam of each other (sometimes called a “chorus line formation” in sea kayaking) may be more appropriate with wind head on, whereas boats being lined up bow to stern (sometimes called an “inline formation” in sea kayaking) may be more appropriate with the wind abeam. In both of these formations, boats need to be appropriately separated. (*Consider*)
- Perform hand hygiene periodically (during on the water breaks). (*Should*)
- Perform hand hygiene any time there has been interpersonal contact or equipment has been shared. (*Should*)
- Group leader, infection control/safety officer, and all other paddlers should continually monitor for appropriate use of infection prevention and control interventions. (*Should*)
- Continually assess risk and modify plans (or terminate event) as needed (refer to **Risk Assessment** and **Risk Management**). (*Should*)
- Continually minimize chance of needing a rescue – especially an assisted rescue. If an assisted rescue is needed, do it in a way to minimize risks (refer to **Rescues**). (*Should*)

Landing

- All paddlers perform hand hygiene prior to landing – especially if assistance may be needed. (*Should*)
- All paddlers should (unless medically contraindicated) have mouth and nose protection on, e.g., neck gaiters, prior to landing. Double check that people’s mouths and noses are covered if assisted landing is going to be used. (*Should*)

- Land in a manner to minimize interpersonal contact. *(Should)*

Conclusion of the Event

- Do not lose focus once people have landed and the event is “over”. Vigilance regarding infection prevention and control must be maintained until all participants have left. *(Should)*
- Once finished with PPE, it should properly handled. If it is going to be disposed of, it should be put inside of a plastic bag, and tied off, before being put in the trash. *(Should)*

Miscellaneous

- Consider using a contact tracking log for the event (refer to **Contact Tracking Log**). This could either be filled in, during the event (e.g., by the “Infection Control/Safety Officer”), or each paddler could be responsible for providing this information, at the end of the event. *(Consider)*

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