

# **Busting Out Ottawa Dragon Boat Club Health and Safety Policy**

**Team Name:** Busting Out Ottawa Dragon Boat Club

**Location:** Ottawa, Ontario

**Effective Date:** March 19 , 2026

**Reviewed:** Annually or as needed

**Approved By:** Board of Directors

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## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this Health and Safety Policy is to ensure a safe environment for all dragon boat team members, coaches, volunteers, and visitors. This policy outlines responsibilities, preventative measures, emergency procedures, and practices in compliance with the **Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)** of Ontario and with other governing bodies that are relevant to health and safety.

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## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all team members, including paddlers, alumni, steerspersons, coaches, volunteers, and any individuals involved in team activities, practices, races, or events held under the banner of the team.

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## **3. Responsibilities**

### **Team Executive / Health and Safety Committee**

- Ensure implementation and review of this policy.
- Monitor weather and water conditions prior to practices; apply relevant weather and water policies as needed.
- Provide training or orientation on safety procedures and practices.
- Maintain records of incidents and safety concerns.

### **Coaches / Steersperson / Festival Captains**

- Supervise practices and ensure compliance with safety protocols.
- Steersperson will perform a seat count off (buddy system\*) at the beginning of each practice.
- Assess weather and water conditions and adjust practice intensity accordingly.
- Steersperson will ensure safety and emergency equipment is on the boat.

## **Paddlers / Participants**

- Complete the mandatory water safety assessment and other safety activities.
  - Notify coaches of any medical conditions that may affect participation.
  - Ensure personal flotation devices (PFDs) are worn properly and at all times while on the water.
  - Comply with all team policies/procedures.
  - Maintain awareness of your seat mate, (buddy system\*)
  - Paddlers must follow all commands from the coach and steersperson promptly and without question.
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## **4. General Safety Rules**

- All participants must be comfortable in the water and wear approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) at all times while on the water.
  - Alcohol or drug use before or during any practice, event, or race is strictly prohibited.
  - No paddler may participate if feeling unwell, injured, or impaired.
  - Practices will be cancelled or postponed if weather or water conditions are deemed unsafe (e.g., lightning, high winds, strong currents). Refer to the Heat/Humidity and Air Quality policies for further details.
  - Thunder and lightning policy will be deferred to the Rideau Canoe Club. Refer to the Rideau Canoe Club Safe Paddling Policy.  
[rideaucanoecub.ca/policies.html](http://rideaucanoecub.ca/policies.html)
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## **5. Equipment Safety**

- Boats, paddles, PFDs, and safety gear must be inspected annually or on an as needed basis.
- Any damaged or malfunctioning equipment must be reported and taken out of use immediately.
- Safety equipment on board must include:
  - Whistle
  - First aid kit

- Bailers
  - Throw rope (buoyant heaving line)
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## **6. Emergency Procedures**

### **Capsize or Paddler Overboard**

- Perform a seat count off (buddy system\*) of paddlers after capsizing to account for all paddlers.
- Remain calm, quiet and stay with the boat, unless directed otherwise by steersperson or emergency services. Do not attempt to go after personal belongings.

### **Medical Emergency**

- First aid will be administered by trained personnel.
  - Emergency services (911) will be contacted immediately if needed.
  - An Incident Report Form will be completed and submitted to the Director of Paddling Operations email address.
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## **7. Training and Education**

- All paddlers must follow an annual safety review as provided by the Health and Safety Committee.
  - Preventative instructions in regard to on-water safety (e.g., capsizing) will be conducted at least once per season.
  - First aid/CPR training is encouraged and (supported) for team leaders and volunteers.
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## **8. Incident Reporting**

- All injuries, near misses, capsizing, paddler overboard or safety concerns must be reported to the coach or safety committee member or an executive board member immediately.
  - A written Incident Report must be submitted within 24 hours to the Director of Paddling Operations at [vice-chair@bustingoutottawa.ca](mailto:vice-chair@bustingoutottawa.ca).
  - The executive board in collaboration with the health and safety committee will review incidents and implement corrective actions.
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## 9. Contagious Illness Protocols

- Follow all public health directives as issued by Ottawa Public Health or provincial/federal authorities not limited to Covid 19, RSV, flu or cold.
  - Notify the Health and Safety committee and stay home if experiencing symptoms or after exposure to a contagious illness. As a general rule, return to normal activity once all symptoms have subsided for at least 24 hours.
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## 10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following a serious incident, change in legislation, or changes in team structure.

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### \*Footnote

1. The **buddy system** is a procedure in which two individuals, the "buddies", operate together as a single unit so that they are able to monitor and help each other. "Buddies" are confirmed in count off and need to include steersperson, coach and drummer.