

# Whitehorse Canoe Club



**'Paddling Since 1969'**

## **Guidelines for Trip Coordinators and Trips**

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### ***Acknowledgement of Country***

*Whitehorse Canoe Club acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands on which we paddle.*

*We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.*

*We recognise the traditional owners' connections to the land dating back more than 60,000 years and pay respect to the ongoing living cultures of First Peoples.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

These guidelines are intended to assist the running of peer trips by Whitehorse Canoe Club (WHCC) members. A peer activity is a paddling activity where no instructional or guiding structure exists and it is the responsibility of each member of the group to ensure the suitability of their equipment and themselves for the activity.

The definition of a leader and responsibilities of the leader include:

- research likely hazards
- confirm group experience/capabilities (where possible)
- ensure that participants have the knowledge, ability, skills and equipment to participate safely
- ensure a full briefing of participants is clearly carried out and understood
- check environmental conditions (i.e. river levels, weather reports, weather forecast)
- confirm head count before departure, throughout trip and after trip
- be alert for physical and psychological condition of the group
- control the pace of the group
- rest group if necessary
- ensure, to the best of their ability, that participants do not get into situations beyond their capabilities
- designate responsibility to other leaders.

Any club instructional trip will comply with the Paddle Australia Safety Guidelines found here <https://paddle.org.au/education/safety-guidelines-v2/>.

## **TRIP COORDINATOR**

A Trip Coordinator is designated for every club trip. The trip coordinator is responsible for ensuring the trip is run in line with these guidelines. The trip coordinator is not responsible for performing all the activities or having the skills required on a trip but for ensuring that the various activities are done and that paddlers with the necessary skills are on the trip. In the spirit of a peer trip the trip coordinator should encourage participants to be involved in organising and running the trip.

## **TRIP PREPARATION**

### **Trip research**

Research the proposed river trip, looking at access, possible hazards, emergency access, rapid features, trip length, relative river levels, grading, shuttle information, water quality etc. Sources of information include:

- WHCC river maps – available of the WHCC website
- WHCC river level table – available of the WHCC website
- Paddle Australia website
- guidebooks
- previous trips – trip reports
- other experienced club members
- Bureau of Meteorology river levels available on their website.

## **Communication**

Advise club members of information about the trip including information such as:

- date of the trip
- river and section to be paddled
- river grading
- skill level required
- length of the paddle
- whether lunch or other meals need to be taken
- whether the trip is an instructional trip or a peer trip
- travel distance to the river
- any proposed transport arrangements (i.e. car sharing)
- any particular information relevant to the trip (i.e. large portage required; 4 wheel drive access etc.).

Note when finalising the details with participants ensure that they are advised of:

- meeting time and place
- contact number in case of emergency.

## **Paddlers**

In general a minimum of four paddlers is required for a trip. There is no maximum number however if the river is narrow it may be advisable to divide a larger group into small groups. Consider the following in relation to the trip participants:

- Check that interested paddlers have the skill level for the proposed trip.
  - Consider other rivers they have paddled, whether other experienced club members know their paddling level or check out their skills on an easier river first.
- Are there sufficient rescue and paddle skills amongst the group for the proposed trip?
- Are participants familiar with the proposed trip?
- Are the interested paddlers club members (and have insurance with Paddle Victoria or Paddle Australia)?
  - If not a trial permit will be required to ensure they are covered for insurance.

## **Equipment**

All paddlers are required to have the minimum equipment for a trip including:

- kayak
- paddle
- spray deck
- buoyancy vest with pea less whistle
- helmet.

The equipment must be serviceable and meet appropriate regulatory standards. Other personal equipment such as food, dry bags, dry clothes, water bottles should be taken by each paddler.

Equipment required amongst the group for a basic trip includes:

- first aid kit
- throw ropes
- knife
- carabiners
- prusik loops and climbing slings
- matches and firelighters
- map and compass
- split paddle(s)
- gaffa tape/duct tape
- torch
- static rope (length may depend on width of river)
- space blanket or similar
- spare thermals.

Other equipment which may be considered includes:

- EPIRB
- pulleys
- gps
- mobile phone/satellite phone
- UHF radio
- paddle clamp
- tow rope with quick release
- folding saw.

Note the club has equipment which can be used for trips, including EPIRB, UHF radio, split paddle.

### **Weather**

Monitor the weather forecast for the period of the trip from the Bureau of Meteorology website. Rain/storms may make access difficult or prevent access. A major rain event may result in the river flooding and being too dangerous to paddle.

### **Risk assessment**

A risk assessment should be conducted for the trip. A copy of the risk assessment matrix is in Appendix 1. Examples of previous risk assessments are in Appendix 2. Involve the trip participants in the risk assessment and circulate the assessment prior to the trip to ensure everyone is aware of the risks, the controls and their responsibilities. For an impromptu trip organised at short notice a verbal risk assessment by trip participants at the river may be more practical.

### **Intention forms**

Consider completing the trip intention forms if the proposed trip:

- is in a remote area
- involves overnight stay on the river
- involves being away for more than 2 days within a region, and where rivers (sections) to be paddled are to be determined at the location and on the day (e.g. a safarai type trip).

Individual intention form are located in Appendix 3 and should be completed by each person on the trip.

The trip coordinator should leave information with a responsible person such as the WHCC committee outlining plans for the paddle such as:

- River and river section to be paddled.
- Summary of trip (experience of team, knowledge of this river).
- Document risks and mitigation steps (cold, time/distance, remoteness, paddling standard, blockages, high or low river level, large or small group).
- Group equipment.
- Put in point. and date.
- Pull out point and date.
- Details of the members' car registrations and if a shuttle bunny is used.
- Members of the group.

The 'responsible' person should contact the police or appropriate person if they have not heard from a member of the paddling group in line with the agreed time lines.

### **Transport**

Liaise with the trip participants to coordinate transport for the trip. Identifying who wants to share transport and the location they are coming from will assist coordinating transport. The number and type of vehicles (i.e. four wheel drive) involved in transport may need to be considered in relation to the car shuttle. Note the club trailer may be a good option to consider. Also it may be very advantages to utilise the services of a shuttle bunny.

### **ON THE DAY OF THE TRIP**

#### **Meeting point**

Attempt to contact anyone who fails to turn up at the meeting point.

Bakeries are a popular place to meet so that participants can pick up lunch etc

#### **Car shuttle**

Coordinate the car shuttle. Consider:

- Number of vehicles required at the end to transport people and kayaks.
- Whether it is better to meet at the pull out point, consolidate people and kayaks into vehicles and drive to the put in point. This is the preferred option if the car shuttle is long, there is a small group of paddlers and/or the pull out point is on the way to the put in point from where most paddlers in the group have come from.
- Whether it is easier to meet at the put in and organise the drivers to drop sufficient vehicles at the pull out. This is the preferred option if the car shuttle is short and/or there are lots of people.
- Whether particular vehicles are needed (i.e. four wheel drive and where it might be best to have them).
- Whether to place a vehicle at an access point during the trip. This may give weaker paddlers the option of pulling out during the trip.
- Encouraging or organising a shuttle bunny. Remember that shuttle bunnies are gifts from God/s and should be treated accordingly.

### **Trip briefing/equipment check**

A trip briefing outline is included in Appendix 4. Basically the briefing should include:

- Ensure all participants have basic paddling equipment in a serviceable condition.
- A description of the river trip, the general nature of the river, the pull out point and any particular points of interest (i.e. major rapids, compulsory portages, bridges etc.).
- The hazards that are likely (i.e. trees, logs, farmer's fences, hunters etc.).
- Ensure participants are known to each other.
- Participants experience on that river and paddling in general.
- Equipment being carried by each participants and ensure that the equipment required for the trip is being carried.
- Any particular considerations (i.e. cold re hyperthermia, poor water quality etc.).
- How the trip will be run:
  - lead paddler: appoint lead paddler (needs to be an experienced paddler)
  - sweep paddler: appoint sweep paddler (needs to be an experienced paddler)
  - plan for scouting rapids
  - plan with respect to paddling rapids (i.e. one at a time)
  - keeping in sight of each other
  - plan for lunch.
- Consider appointing a 'buddy' to less experienced paddlers.
- Going over paddle, hand and whistle signals (see link for demonstrations <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xd1XqkAFwfo>).
- Consider other hazards identified in the risk assessment and make sure that participants are aware of the controls and their responsibilities.

### **During the trip**

Monitor the participants during the trip in relation to:

- Number of participants (make sure everyone is accounted for at all times).
- Paddling ability.
- Physical and psychological condition.

Consider, together with participants, breaks and meal breaks, safety considerations with respect to particular rapids, rescue plans, recovery plans and any contingency plans required. This is a peer trip so participants should all be taking responsibility for their own decisions and work together to get safely down the river.

### **End of the trip**

Ensure that everyone is off the river and that everyone is accounted for. Organise the car shuttle to collect any vehicles at the put in point.

Report back to the committee for recording at the next committee meeting. Key items to note include:

- river and section paddled
- number of participants
- date of trip
- river level
- any information which may assist other trips i.e. hazards etc.

Consider preparing a trip report and photographs/video for the club's blog site of trip reports.

**APPENDIX 1: RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX**

Risk rating matrix (likelihood x consequence = risk rating)

LIKELIHOOD		CONSEQUENCE				
		(Minor) 1	(Important) 2	(Serious) 3	(Major) 4	(Catastrophic) 5
Eliminated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlikely	1	1	2	3	4	5
Possible	2	2	4	6	8	10
Likely	3	3	6	9	12	15
Almost Certain	4	4	8	12	16	20
Certain	5	5	10	15	20	25

**Legend**

Score	Assessment of risk	Priority of action
1-2	<b>LOW</b>	Address or repair if low cost. Schedule for action after other risks have been controlled.
3-7	<b>MEDIUM</b>	Further improvements required: assess feasibility for risk controls; management sign-off required if the risk/s are to be accepted.
8-12	<b>HIGH</b>	Risk controls required as soon as possible.
+13	<b>EXTREME</b>	Immediate attention required. Consider shutdown or cessation of process until additional risk controls are implemented.

**RISK RATING MATRIX (Qualitative)**

**1. Likelihood (probability and indicative frequency of exposure)**

Descriptor	Rating	Description
Eliminated	0	Risk eliminated.
Unlikely	1	May occur, but only in exceptional circumstances.
Possible	2	Might occur at some time.
Likely	3	Will probably occur in most circumstances.
Almost certain	4	Is expected to occur in most circumstances.
Certain	5	Is expected to occur in all circumstances.

**2. Consequence (likely outcome of exposure)**

Descriptor	Rating	Description
Minor	1	No injuries, bruising, temporary rash/irritation, low financial loss. Dealt with by people on site, no environmental damage.
Important	2	First aid treatment, outside assistance considered and possible, irritation, cuts and bruises, minor burns, fractures, discomfort, nausea, on-site release immediately contained and minor financial loss.
Serious	3	Medical treatment and evacuation required, unconsciousness, medium financial loss, some environmental damage.
Major	4	Extensive injuries, permanent disability, major financial loss.
Catastrophic	5	Death, huge financial loss.

Hazard description (without risk control)	Likelihood loss / injury before controls	Consequence of severity before controls	Risk rating before controls	Controls that will be evident on this paddle to reduce the risk as far as is practical	Likelihood loss / injury after controls	Consequence of severity after controls	Risk rating after controls	Who is responsible	Initial and Date

APPENDIX 2: RISK ASSESSMENT – EXAMPLES

WHITEWATER EXAMPLE

Hazard description (without risk control)	likelihood loss / injury before controls	Consequence of severity before controls	Risk rating before controls	Controls that will be evident on this paddle to reduce the risk as far as is practical	Likelihood loss / injury after controls	Consequence of severity after controls	Risk Rating after controls	Who is responsible	Initial and Date
<b>Cold temperature weather and water</b>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring weather prior to trip.</li> <li>Group and personal equipment.</li> <li>Briefing prior to departure going through equipment.</li> <li>Water shedding clothes/ insulating clothes such as thermals &amp; spares, gloves, skull cap, beanies, space blankets (bag), fire starters and ignition source.</li> <li>Food.</li> <li>Spare dry clothes.</li> <li>Food placed in car left at destination point.</li> <li>Communication devices mobile phones.</li> <li>EPIRB.</li> </ul>	2	2	4	All	
<b>Log jam strainers/sieves rocky outcrop</b>	3	5	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scout river.</li> <li>Have lead person.</li> <li>Appropriate distance between paddlers.</li> <li>Understanding of signals.</li> <li>Group to stay within eyesight of each other.</li> <li>Set upstream and downstream safety.</li> <li>All members of trip to have whistle.</li> </ul>	2	1	2	All	
<b>Lack of available natural light</b>	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the weather.</li> <li>Know daylight hours.</li> <li>Research trip times.</li> <li>Monitor progress.</li> <li>Know paddlers capabilities and fitness levels.</li> <li>Have light source.</li> <li>Have alternate pull out points and communication with ground crew.</li> <li>Have river maps.</li> </ul>	1	1	1	All	

Hazard description (without risk control)	likelihood loss / injury before controls	Consequence of severity before controls	Risk rating before controls	Controls that will be evident on this paddle to reduce the risk as far as is practical	Likelihood loss / injury after controls	Consequence of severity after controls	Risk Rating after controls	Who is responsible	Initial and Date
<b>Group geographically challenged</b>	1	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maps.</li> <li>• GPS.</li> <li>• Compass.</li> <li>• Research trip.</li> </ul>	0	1	0	Trip coordinator	
<b>Equipment malfunction/break age</b>	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check gear prior to trip for weakness.</li> <li>• Training in how to use gear.</li> <li>• Assign responsibility for communal gear.</li> <li>• Spares taken where practical.</li> <li>• Equipment repair kit.</li> </ul>	2	2	4	All	
<b>Paddler without skills for river level</b>	2	4	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All paddlers vetted prior to trip.</li> <li>• Monitoring of paddlers during trip.</li> <li>• Paddler skills to be matched to river level.</li> <li>• Trip coordinator has final say on who goes on a trip.</li> </ul>	2	2	4	Trip coordinator	
<b>Lost participant / group</b>	1	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants should remain within visual or audible contact with each other.</li> <li>• Trip coordinator will ensure that a lead and a sweep group management system will be designated for all relevant activities.</li> <li>• River maps will be provided.</li> </ul>	1	2	2	All	
<b>Serious medical issue</b>	2	5	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants to advised of any potential medical issues.</li> </ul>	1	3	3	All	
<b>Severe weather</b>	1	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip coordinator will check the weather forecast prior to the trip.</li> <li>• If severe weather warning is current group discussion will take place on action required, if any.</li> <li>• If weather is a cause for concern, a plan of action will be discussed.</li> <li>• Group will have mobile phone.</li> </ul>	1	2	2	Trip coordinator	
<b>Heavy rains cause localised flooding</b>	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip coordinator will monitor prior to trip to assess likelihood of heavy rains.</li> <li>• Should the forecasted rain make it likely that the river will flood, an alternative venue or plan will be discussed.</li> </ul>	2	2	4	Trip coordinator	

Hazard description (without risk control)	likelihood loss / injury before controls	Consequence of severity before controls	Risk rating before controls	Controls that will be evident on this paddle to reduce the risk as far as is practical	Likelihood loss / injury after controls	Consequence of severity after controls	Risk Rating after controls	Who is responsible	Initial and Date
<b>Bushwalking /walkouts</b>	2	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip coordinator will have river map highlighting the terrain to be travelled through.</li> <li>• Equipment carried includes GPS and compass.</li> </ul>	1	2	2	Trip coordinator	

**FLATWATER EXAMPLE**

Hazard description (without risk control)	Likelihood loss / injury before controls	Consequence of severity before controls	Risk rating before controls	Controls that will be evident on this program to reduce the risk as far as is practical	Likelihood loss / injury after controls	Consequence of severity after controls	Risk rating after controls	Who is responsible	Initial and date
<b>Equipment malfunction/breakage</b>	2	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check gear prior to trip for weakness.</li> <li>• Training in how to use gear.</li> <li>• Spares taken where practical.</li> </ul>	0	1	0	All	
<b>Children without floatation device</b>	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every paddler/participant must wear buoyancy vest when on the water.</li> <li>• Buoyancy vest appropriate for the age of the child must be worn.</li> <li>• All parents must supervise their children at all times.</li> </ul>	0	3	0	Parents	
<b>Paddler affected by alcohol</b>	2	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paddlers to be advised of consequence of alcohol consumption and water activities.</li> <li>• All paddlers to ensure they behave responsibly re consumption of alcohol.</li> </ul>	0	2	0	All	
<b>Lack of available natural light</b>	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip coordinator to monitor progress during the day and ensure group meeting time.</li> <li>• Paddling lines.</li> <li>• Trip coordinator to be aware of time of sun set.</li> </ul>	0	1	0	Trip coordinator	
<b>Paddler without skills for river level</b>	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paddlers without basic skills to be monitored by experienced paddlers during trip</li> </ul>	0	1	0	Trip coordinator	
<b>Driving accident</b>	1	5	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All drivers will follow traffic rules and regulations, regarding the vehicle they are operating.</li> <li>• Individuals will only drive vehicles that they are licensed to operate.</li> <li>• Participants will be instructed to use seatbelts provided.</li> <li>• Breaks after certain uninterrupted periods of driving time (in accordance with legislated timeframes), or switch drivers.</li> </ul>	1	5	5	Individuals	
<b>Lost participant / group</b>	1	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants should remain within visual or audible contact with each other.</li> <li>• Trip coordinator will ensure that a lead and a sweep group management system is implemented for all relevant activities.</li> <li>• Maps will be provided within group.</li> </ul>	1	1	1	Trip coordinator	
<b>Serious medical issue</b>	1	5	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants to advise of any potential medical issues (within group).</li> </ul>	1	3	3	All	

Hazard description (without risk control)	Likelihood loss / injury before controls	Consequence of severity before controls	Risk rating before controls	Controls that will be evident on this program to reduce the risk as far as is practical	Likelihood loss / injury after controls	Consequence of severity after controls	Risk rating after controls	Who is responsible	Initial and date
<b>Severe weather</b>	1	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trip coordinator will check the weather forecast prior to the program on the BOM site and will inform participants of the anticipated forecast.</li> <li>• If severe weather warning is current, group discussion will take place on action required, if any.</li> <li>• If weather is a cause for concern, a plan of action will be discussed.</li> <li>• Group will have mobile phone.</li> </ul>	0	1	1	Trip coordinator	
<b>Collision/swamping from motorboats</b>	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No ski/motorboat events on during trip.</li> <li>• All paddlers to keep a look out for motorboats.</li> <li>• All paddlers to keep to right side of river.</li> <li>• Paddlers to be advised of ski zone.</li> <li>• All paddlers to angle craft at right angles to waves.</li> </ul>	1	3	3	All	

**APPENDIX 3: INDIVIDUAL WHCC TRIP INTENTION FORM: PERSONAL**

- Name:
- Contact number:
- Car type and rego number (if taking on trip):
- Any critical medical conditions worth noting:  
(This is an opportunity to provide information that might assist medical personal in the event of an emergency. Any information provided will be appropriately destroyed after the trip and not kept in any form)
  
- Next of Kin (to be contacted if over due or in an emergency)
  - Name:
  - Relationship:
  - Contact number:

**Indicate the supplies that you carry**

First aid kit. Basic or comprehensive	Boat and spray deck repair kit
Water filter / pump	Throw rope
Spare thermal clothes	Boat rescue kit
Sleeping bag	Rope knife
Tent	Repair tape / Duct tape / T Rex waterproof tape
Tarpaulin	Aquaseal
Matches or lighter	Stove
Torch	Fuel for X days or X meals
Whistle	Spare paddle
Compass	GPS
Map(s)	Satellite phone: (#)
Cag\jacket colour	Mobile phone: (#)
Boat colour	EPIRB / Personal Locator Beacon (PLB)
Buoyancy vest colour	Split paddle
Pin kit	UHF radio
Folding saw	Jumper leads / Jumper starter battery
I have first aid training, Yes / No Level =	
Other	

Please note that you are responsible for your own actions during the trip.

## **APPENDIX 4: TRIP BRIEFING**

### **Type of Trip**

- Peer trip or instructional trip and implications.

### **The Trip**

- Description of the river, general nature of the river, the pull out point and any particular points of interest (i.e. major rapids, compulsory portages, bridges etc.).
- The hazards that are likely (i.e. trees, logs, farmer's fences, hunters etc.).
- Any particular considerations (i.e. cold re hyperthermia, poor water quality etc.).

### **The Paddlers**

- Ensure participants are known to each other.
- Participants experience on that river and paddling in general.

### **Equipment/Gear**

- Ensure all participants have basic paddling equipment in a serviceable condition.
- Equipment being carried by each participants and ensure that the equipment required for the trip is being carried.

### **How the trip will be run**

- Lead paddler: appoint lead paddler (needs to be an experienced paddler).
- Sweep paddler: appoint sweep paddler (needs to be an experienced paddler).
- Plan for scouting rapids.
- Plan with respect to paddling rapids (i.e. one at a time).
- Keeping insight of each other.
- Consider appointing a 'buddy' to less experienced paddlers.

### **Paddle, Hand & Whistle Signals**

- Going over paddle, hand and whistle signals.