

ACKC Trip Coordinator Guidelines

The Ahwaga Canoe and Kayak Club (**ACKC**) is organized as an American Canoe Association (**ACA**) Paddle America Club. ACKC is therefore bound to trip operational guidelines as set for by the ACA.

The following General Risk Management Requirements are taken directly from the ACA Risk Management Requirements document:

- Lifejacket Wear: All participants in ACA-insured activities must wear properly-fitting U.S. Coast Guard-approved lifejackets (Personal Flotation Devices, or PFDs) at all times during on-water activities, except for two narrow exceptions described below. Clubs are responsible for enforcing this requirement, and should understand that **if a participant removes his or her lifejacket and an injury or death occurs, the insurance company may deny coverage to the club and/or its members.**
 - All lifejackets must be in serviceable condition. USCG-approved Inflatable lifejackets are acceptable for activities that do not involve paddling in surf zones or on whitewater rated at Class I or above. Inflatable lifejackets provide a useful alternative for flat-water paddling in hot weather.
 - Stand Up Paddleboards: The U.S. Coast Guard has determined that Stand Up Paddleboards operating outside the surf zone are “vessels” for purposes of the USCG regulations, and therefore must carry one lifejacket for each person on board. In addition, the ACA requires persons using Stand Up Paddleboards at ACA-insured events to wear their lifejackets at all times while on the water.
 - The only exceptions to the ACA’s lifejacket wear requirements are for: (1) Pool sessions where a certified lifeguard is present and (2) Elite-level competitions, with written permission from the ACA National Office.
- Managing the Group: Clubs should follow these rules in conducting ACA-insured activities:
 - Before the activity begins, develop a float plan and leave it with someone who is not participating.
 - Make sure the group has the appropriate safety equipment for the activity. Before starting, inventory the available safety equipment and make group members aware of who is carrying it. ACKC recommends that, as a minimum, the leader be responsible for a first aid kit and one throw bag be included in the safety equipment.
 - Make sure each participant brings adequate food and water for the activity. During the activity, make sure participants stay well-hydrated, and eat enough food to maintain their energy levels.
 - Prepare the group for the challenges of communicating effectively while on the water. Wind and water sounds can make hearing others difficult. Encourage participants to carry whistles. Review hand and whistle signals before the trip begins.
 - Whistle Code
 - 1 Blast – Attention, or continue after a stop
 - 2 Blasts – Safely stop your boat
 - 3 Blasts – Paddler in the water. Move to assist if in immediate area of swimmer. Otherwise, safely stop your boat and await further guidance.
 - Paddle Signals
 - Paddle held vertically – Paddle Forward
 - Paddle held overhead with blade to river left – Paddle to River Left

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- Paddle held overhead with blade to river right – Paddle to River Right
- Paddle held horizontally overhead – STOP
- Designate a “sweep” boat to bring up the rear and make sure the group does not lose stragglers.
- Remind participants, particularly novices, to not stand up in a canoe or kayak, and to avoid weight shifts that may cause capsizes. Advise them to keep three points of contact with their boat at all times.
- Remind all participants to pay attention to signs and safety warnings.
- Do not leave loose rope in or dangling from boats, since these ropes can rapidly become entrapment hazards. Do not tie any person in or to a boat.
- During the trip, set a reasonable pace so everyone can stay together. Recognize when group members are tired or having difficulty and adjust the group’s pace accordingly.
- Constantly scan for changing weather conditions, and be prepared for weather changes.
- Be aware that federal regulations restrict paddling near military vessels and installations, and anticipate that there may be restrictions near bridge pilings and other areas.

ACKC requires the following in addition to the above:

- The trip coordinator will designate the meeting place and time, and plan the easiest way to accomplish any needed shuttle.
- The trip coordinator will screen all persons wanting to participate in a trip to ensure that they are ACKC members or their guest, and have the requisite skills and equipment for the trip.
- All participants **must sign** an approved trip signup sheet. *Send to TripReports@Awaga.org*
- If, for any reason, the trip coordinator is unable to lead the trip an alternate leader should be found or the trip cancelled. Everyone who has signed up for the trip shall be notified in the event of a cancellation. Should there be any participants that cannot be reached for a notice of cancellation, the trip leader or designee should be at the meeting place at the appointed departure time.
- The trip coordinator must see that **ALL** participants are off the water and reunited with their transportation at the conclusion of the trip.
- The trip coordinator shall have final authority for all decisions during the trip.