



GBOCA Health and Safety Policy

1. Introduction

All sport involves some risk and those involving water carry increased risk. This document aims to set out a number of guiding principles to raise awareness of those risks and to set out various health and safety guidelines for those using outrigger canoes.

2. Policy statement

GBOCA has a duty to safeguard all its members involved in its activities from harm.

3. Policy aims

The aim of the GBOCA Health and Safety Policy is to promote good practice by:

- providing all paddlers with information about appropriate safety and protection whilst preparing to go on the water and whilst paddling
- allowing all members of the Association to make informed and confident responses to specific issues.

4. Promoting good practice

The safety of our members is paramount as is the safety of any members of the public that come into contact with our sport and to whom we owe a duty of care. We should ensure that we pass on good safety principles to those who are new to the sport and to encourage good practice at all times.

5. Guiding Principles

- Your welfare and safety is paramount
- If you are worried about going out in an outrigger canoe – don't go
- Use a personal flotation device with a whistle attached – this is recommended practice although not compulsory.
- Check your canoe thoroughly before going out – bungs, lashings, ropes, lights.
- Ensure that people know where you are going and give timings of departure and expected return
- Review Huli procedures with all paddlers.

6. General Health and Safety

- a. Hydration – keep hydrated at all time whether in hot or cold climes. It is very easy to become dehydrated. Use a hydration system or at least have a bottle of water or isotonic drink with you.
7. Climate – dress sensibly whatever the weather. It is too easy to get chilled when it is cold (especially if it is raining or windy at the same time). Wear layers that can be easily added or removed and something to keep the wind and rain off such as a windcheater. Likewise when the sun is shining. Water reflects the sun's rays and it is especially easy to get burnt. Use the appropriate protection factor sunscreen.

8. Water Quality

The water quality of our rivers is not the best despite major improvements in cleanliness over the last few years. If you use your common sense you should come to no harm but here are a few things to look out for:

- a. Any immersion in the water should be followed by thorough washing.
- b. Be careful if you have any cuts or open wounds – if in doubt do not go near the water. Cover minor wounds with waterproof plasters or dressings before going out.
- c. Wear appropriate footwear to prevent slipping and to stop your feet getting cut or scratched.

Also be aware of Weil's Disease (otherwise known as Leptospirosis) which is an infection carried in the urine of rats. Clearly rats get everywhere but where there is slow-moving or stagnant water there is a great risk of contamination. The disease can get into your body not only through cuts and grazes but also through the membranes of the mouth and eyes.

It is rare but it is very serious and requires hospital treatment. It is also a notifiable disease so should you suffer flu-like symptoms with a few days of paddling go to see your doctor and tell him that you have been in contact with river water and the location. The treatment is via antibiotics and a blood test will quickly tell whether you have contracted the disease.

Blue-green algae is also sometimes present in stagnant or slow moving-water. Please follow the advice of your local authority if this presents itself.

9. Insurance

If anything happens that is a potentially notifiable event for insurance purposes please contact our insurers at gboca@wwsi.co.uk and GBOCA at info@gboca.org as soon as possible.