

RMCC Requirements and Recommendations for ACA-Sanctioned Events

RMCC is an American Canoe Association (ACA) Paddle America club. We are associated with the ACA because they are both an important conservation organization and advocate for paddling sports. Through our association, the club, officers, trip coordinators, members, and all event participants have liability insurance for ACA sanctioned group events. (Note: this is NOT personal accident insurance nor is it liability insurance for solo trips.) In order for the ACA liability insurance to protect us from lawsuits, we must follow certain basic boating safety measures required by ACA. These **REQUIRED** measures address personal minimum skill levels, practices, and equipment. In addition, our club members have decades of collective experience with paddling, paddling instruction, and river rescues. Consequently, we have **RECOMMENDATIONS** for additional equipment that will help us all to have pleasant and safe boating experiences.

RMCC events, including paddling trips, are coordinated by a designated Trip Coordinator or Co-Coordination. These RMCC volunteers do not lead/guide trips. Therefore, everyone is responsible for their own safety during events and to that end, individual participants are responsible – first and foremost – for judging their own skill level and providing the required equipment for events. Because our events are group events, however, we all look out for the safety of others. Trip Coordinators have the final decision in who can participate in a particular event based on both skill level and appropriate equipment.

This document, including its summary table, is intended to help all participants to understand the requirements/recommendations for RMCC paddling events. It includes a summary of ACA requirements with an emphasis on equipment, but is not an exhaustive list of trip equipment – just the bare necessities for ACA-sanctioned trips. In addition, some Rivers/Paddling Venues have specific equipment requirements that should be checked and communicated to event participants by the Trip Coordinator.

For the complete ACA Risk Management Requirements, see the RMCC Trip Organization page under the Resources tab of our website, or go directly to:

http://rockymountaincanooclub.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ACA_Risk_Mgt_Requirements_20.pdf.

ACA REQUIREMENTS RE: SKILL LEVELS AND PRACTICES

SKILL LEVELS:

- *Clubs* should maintain a culture that recognizes and respects varying participant skill levels, and does not place participants in situations for which they are not prepared.
- *Trip coordinators and activity coordinators* should know the skill levels required for the activity they are organizing, and should use reasonable screening techniques to ensure that participants have the skills necessary for the activity. To avoid awkward situations, coordinators should disclose skills requirements to potential participants before they travel to participate in an activity.
- *Individual participants* should know their skill levels, and should avoid conditions for which they are not prepared.

PRACTICES:

- *Drug and alcohol use before or during on-water activities:* The ACA does not allow persons under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs to participate in ACA-insured on-water activities. Clubs and activity coordinators should not allow participants to consume any alcohol or illegal drugs immediately before or during an on-water activity or event. Clubs and affiliate organizations must disqualify any participant under the influence of alcohol or drugs from participation and ask them to leave immediately.
- *Appropriate Clothing:* All participants must be dressed in clothing appropriate for the venue and conditions of the activity. Participants should always be prepared to get wet, flip over or go into the water. Participants should dress appropriately for both the air and water temperature.

ACA REQUIREMENTS and RMCC RECOMMENDATIONS

RE: PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

LIFEJACKET: Required: All participants in ACA-insured activities must wear properly-fitting U.S. Coast Guard-approved lifejackets (Personal Flotation Devices, or PFDs) (Type I, II, III, V) at all times during on-water activities, except for three 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. (ACA)*

ACA Exceptions: The only exceptions to the ACA's lifejacket wear requirements are for: (1) Pool sessions where a certified lifeguard is present (2) Stand Up Paddleboard ocean surfing courses, assuming the participant is a competent swimmer and (3) Elite-level Sprint, Outrigger and Dragon Boat training and competitions, with written permission from the ACA National Office.

Recommendation: PFD should be tightly fitted

HELMETS: Required: Class II and above: Participants must wear properly-fitting paddling helmets. Bicycle helmets are not acceptable. (ACA)

Recommendation: If you don't have an acceptable helmet, ask the Trip Coordinator or Quartermaster before the trip if loaners are available.

FLOTATION: Required: Participant must have an appropriate level of additional flotation in their boats for the venue. (ACA).

Recommendation: If you don't know whether your flotation is "appropriate", talk to the trip coordinator before the trip.

Recommendation: If you don't have flotation, ask the Trip Coordinator or Quartermaster before the trip if loaners are available.

THROW ROPES: Required: Class II: For groups of up to 10 participants, there must be at least two (2) throw-ropes. For groups of more than 10 participants, there must be one (1) throw-rope for every five participants. (ACA)

Class III and above: Groups of up to eight (8) participants must carry at least two (2) throw ropes. Groups larger than eight (8) participants must carry at least one (1) throw rope for every four (4) participants.

- **Recommendation:** Every boat should have a throw bag
- **Recommendation:** Every adult boater should have a throw bag – and practice using it

BELONGINGS SECURED TO THE BOAT: Recommended: Class II and above: All gear should be secured in the boat so that it does not cause entanglement or hinder escape and such that gear will not dangle below the gunnels if the boat is flipped.

Recommendation: If you don't know how to secure your gear, ask the trip coordinator for advice before the trip.

Recommendation: Take the Packing and Tripping Class

WHISTLE: Recommended: All boaters should have a water-safety whistle (i.e., does not have a pea) attached to their PFD and accessible for use.

Recommendation: Do not attach it to the PFD zipper and do not use a long cord that can be an entanglement hazard.

EXTRA PADDLE: Recommended: Each boat or at least one (1) in every three (3) boats on a trip should carry an extra paddle.

Recommendation: Rig at least a short or telescoping paddle into the flotation lashing of an open boat.

Recommendation: If you don't have room for an extra paddle on your boat, consider trading paddle-carrying for treats or post-paddling beer with another boater.

PAINTERS: Recommended: Secure a painter to the bow and stern.

Recommendation: Use 3/8" thick, floating rope.

Recommendation: Recommended length is 1 -2 feet longer than the boat, although longer painters may be useful for multi-day trips. Shorter painters or no painter are common for playboating.

Recommendation: Secure the painters so that they are accessible, but not an entanglement risk or dragging in the water.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS, which may be requirements on specific water bodies:

All boats and paddles should be marked with a name and phone number.

ACA Personal Equipment Requirements and RMCC Recommendations Summary

SAFETY ITEM	Notes	Class I	Class II	Class II+	Class III and up
ACA Required:					
Appropriate skills for venue		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No alcohol immediately before or during a trip		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Class I, II, III or V PFD, properly worn*		1 per person	1 per person	1 per person	1 per person
Suitable clothing for weather and water conditions	Dress to flip	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Helmet for watercraft (not bicycle helmet), properly worn			1 per person	1 per person	1 per person
Throw rope	Every boat should have a throw bag; length recommendations differ for venues		Greater of 1 for every 5 participants or 2 per group	Greater of 1 for every 5 participants or 2 per group	Greater of 1 for every 4 participants or 2 per group
Flotation (displacement bags) appropriate to the venue		RMCC: If needed for venue	RMCC: Yes, unless exception made by Trip Coordinator	Yes	Yes

SAFETY ITEM	Notes	Class I	Class II	Class II+	Class III and up
RMCC Recommended:					
Belonging secured in the boat	Gear should not dangle below the gunnels in a flipped boat		Yes	Yes	Yes
Water whistle	Attached to PFD near mouth; not attached to PFD zipper; attach on breakaway chain, not long tether	1 per person	1 per person	1 per person	1 per person
Painters	12-20' long (1-2' longer than boat); 3/8" thick, floating rope; secure to avoid entanglement	Bow and stern on canoes	Bow and stern on canoes	Bow and stern on canoes	Bow and stern on canoes
Spare paddle per:	If no room for a spare, trade favors with another boater to carry an extra paddle	1 per every 3 boats	1 per boat or at least 1 per every 3 boats	1 per boat or at least 1 per every 3 boats	1 per boat or at least 1 per every 3 boats
Clothing					
Hat and sunscreen		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rain jacket and pants		As needed for weather	As needed for weather	As needed for weather	As needed for weather
Wet suits or dry suits	Bring dry clothing regardless of weather/water conditions	As needed for weather + water + locale	As needed for weather + water + locale	As needed for weather + water + locale	As needed for weather + water + locale
Identification		Name and phone number on boat and paddles	Name and phone number on boat and paddles	Name and phone number on boat and paddles	Name and phone number on boat and paddles
* Three ACA exceptions are: (1) Pool sessions where a certified lifeguard is present (2) Stand Up Paddleboard ocean surfing courses, assuming the participant is a competent swimmer and (3) Elite-level Sprint, Outrigger and Dragon Boat training and competitions, with written permission from the ACA National Office.					

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