

Paddle Smart, Paddle Safe

1 - WEAR A LIFE JACKET

- Everyone, even strong swimmers, needs to be wearing a life jacket at all times. It is extremely difficult to put one on once you fall into the water. Even a light wind can blow any paddlecraft away from you, faster than you can swim.
- Buy (and wear) a comfortable Type 3 or 5 life jacket specifically designed for paddlesports.

2 - WEAR AN ACTIVITY APPROPRIATE LEASH ON STAND UP PADDLEBOARD

- A leash should be worn to keep your SUP with you when you fall off. Do not wear an ankle leash for surf, swift currents, or conditions where being tied to the board could prove dangerous. It is not a life jacket.

3 - PADDLE SOBER AND SMART

- Don't go paddling if you should not be driving. Coast Guard and state BUI laws apply to all vessels. This includes canoes, kayaks, SUPs and rafts.

4 – STAY CLEAR OF ALL OTHER VESSELS

- Know the “Rules of the Road” Navigation Rules that govern all boat traffic and stay out of the way of all other vessels.
- Never assume that power boaters can see you. Avoid high-traffic areas whenever possible. Proceed with caution when you can't avoid them. Dress for visibility.

5 - DRESS FOR IMMERSION, NOT AIR TEMPERATURE

- Your body loses heat much faster when immersed in cold water than it does when dry.
- Avoid cotton clothing like t-shirts and jeans: they retain water and accelerate cooling when wet. Synthetic fabrics, or wool, are generally a better choice. If the water is very cold ($\leq 60^{\circ}$), you should wear a wetsuit or drysuit.

6 - CHECK THE WEATHER

- Plan for changing weather conditions. Prepare for the worst case.
- Don't forget to check tide, currents, or river levels.

7 - CARRY A WHISTLE (AND A LIGHT FOR NIGHT USE)

- Every paddler should have a whistle attached to his/her life jacket.
- Carry a light at night. Consider carrying a distress signal device.

8 - CARRY A WATERPROOF VHF RADIO, CELL PHONE ONLY AS BACKUP

- A handheld VHF marine band radio allows you to communicate with the Coast Guard and other boat traffic. Use Channel 16 only for hailing and emergencies. The radio should be waterproof, because it is virtually certain to get wet.
- A cell phone, even if in a waterproof case or sealable bag, might not work, so don't rely on it as the primary means of emergency communication.

9 - KNOW THE LOCAL HAZARDS

- Check navigation charts before you launch.
- Check with those who have local knowledge of manmade and natural hazards, e.g., low-head dams; sweepers, strainers and undercuts; tides and currents; and rocks and shoals.

10 – EDUCATION: GET SOME!

- Take a paddling safety course from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, American Canoe Association (ACA) or other reputable source.
- Take a boating safety course from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadrons® or your own state's boating agency.
- Take on-the-water skills training.



These tips are offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the uniformed, volunteer component of the U.S. Coast Guard. This is not a substitute for taking a safe boating course.

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