



# Canoeing/Kayak Safety

## How to Prevent Canoeing/Kayak Accidents

### What is the Problem?

In the United States, hundreds of lives are lost, thousands are injured, and millions of dollars of property damage occurs every year due to preventable recreational boating accidents.<sup>1</sup> It is vitally important when an emergency arises, to use common sense and follow all safety rules at all times. Recreationists should examine the area, water, and weather conditions before embarking upon a canoeing or kayaking trip as rapid changes to the water system can occur during thunderstorms or snowmelt.<sup>2</sup> It is also necessary to be a strong swimmer because one might have to swim underwater or through moving water.<sup>3</sup>



### Prevention Tips

Understanding the boating rules of the area and preparing with adequate skills, knowledge, and equipment are the keys to preventing canoeing or kayaking accidents.

- Wearing a life jacket is the most important step you can take to ensure your safety on the water (life jackets could have saved the lives of over 80% of boating fatality victims).<sup>4</sup> Always wear a personal floatation device/life jacket that has a whistle attached.<sup>5</sup>
- Never paddle alone. Notify someone of your plans and when you expect to return.<sup>6</sup>
- Invest in appropriate clothing for the climate.
- Never mix alcohol or drugs with boating.<sup>7</sup>
- Inquire about qualified instruction to learn proper paddling techniques, water safety and basic first aid before using a canoe/kayak by yourself.<sup>8</sup>
- Avoid standing in the canoe or kayak.<sup>9</sup>
- If the boat capsizes, stay with the watercraft. In an emergency situation, remain calm. Panicking will only make the situation worse.<sup>10</sup>
- Always bring plenty of water and food. Dehydration can cause a plethora of health problems and increase the risk of accidents occurring.<sup>11</sup>



### Plan of the Week (POW):

Take the time to learn and understand the boating rules of the area and prepare with adequate skills, knowledge, and equipment in order to prevent canoeing or kayaking accidents. It is a necessity to be a strong swimmer because one might have to swim underwater or through moving water<sup>12</sup>. To prevent recreational boating accidents **ALWAYS** wear your personal floatation device/lifejacket<sup>13</sup>, never paddle alone<sup>14</sup>, never mix alcohol or drugs with boating<sup>15</sup>, and learn the proper paddling techniques, water safety, and basic first aid.<sup>16</sup>

### References

- 1,4,12,13 Boating Safety Resource Center. U.S. Coast Guard. <http://www.uscgboating.org/>. Updated 20 March 2013. Accessed 13 May 2013.
- 2, 6, 9, 10,14 Canoeing and Kayaking Warnings and Safety Precautions. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). <http://nd.water.usgs.gov/canoeing/warnings.html>. Updated 24 May 2012. Accessed 13 May 2013.
- 3,5 Canoeing/Kayaking Activity Card. BAM! Body and Mind. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://www.cdc.gov/bam/activity/cards/canoeing.html>. Updated 22 January 2013. Accessed 13 May 2013.
- 7,8,11,15,16 There are basic safety rules that all boaters should follow. Ocean Kayak. Kayaking Safety. [http://www.oceankayak.com/kayaking\\_basics/basic\\_safety\\_rules/](http://www.oceankayak.com/kayaking_basics/basic_safety_rules/). Accessed 13 May 2013.

### Additional Canoeing/Kayaking Safety Information

Ocean Kayaking Safety for the Pacific Northwest,  
[http://www.uscg.mil/d13/dep/kayak/Ocean\\_Kayaking\\_Safety.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/d13/dep/kayak/Ocean_Kayaking_Safety.pdf)

U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Page, <http://www.uscgboating.org/>

### NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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