



## **Annex. 4. to IDBF Safety Procedures**

# **SAFETY STANDING PROCEDURES** **FOR DRAGON BOAT CLUBS & CREWS WHEN TRAINING**

(See also the IDBF Water Safety Policy, Annex A – Crew Training)

### **Preamble**

**Crew Training Situations.** Risk Assessments should be considered for all training locations and an Accident Book should be maintained by dragon boat clubs. The Accident Book should be available for inspection any time by the Safety Official of the IDBF Member concerned.

The IDBF also recommends, that when on the water in a training situation, especially in temperate winter conditions, Dragon Boat Clubs and organisations should maintain a log of those crews on the water. The log should contain the following information:-

- \* number of people afloat.
- \* direction and details of journey.
- \* estimated time of return.

For crews that train without the provision of a rescue boat, that is, **unescorted**, or when individual paddlers train in Outrigger Kayaks all participants are advised to wear PFAs. When training in adverse temperate summer weather conditions, particularly when unescorted, Novice adult crew members and any crew member under the age of 18, are recommended to wear PFAs.

In cold water (temperate winter) training conditions, when a crew is operating 50 metres or more from a shore, river bank or other landing point, without rescue cover, then the Helm should ensure that the wearing of PFAs, by all crew members is mandatory. It is particularly important that a crew log is maintained in such circumstances.

**All Dragon Boat Clubs (Crews) that train regularly on a defined area of water should produce a Safety Standing Procedures document (SSP) for all crews to abide by.**

When training away from a Crews normal location, as a minimum, a Risk Assessment must be carried out for each training location used, by a qualified Dragon Boat Coach or in the absence of a Coach, the Boat Captain or Helm of the Crew concerned.

The Safety Standing Procedures (SSPs) that follow are based on those used by the Dragon Boats Alive DB Club, based in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Club uses a large inland sea water/harbour area to train on. They also hold introductory dragon boating sessions for Novice Crews.

**The Dubai SSPs cover the basic areas of safety consideration and qualifications applicable to Dragon Boat Crews, anywhere in the world, when in a training situation.**

**However, local conditions will always need to be considered, so Clubs (crews) adopting these SPOs as a 'model' for their own use, need to adapt them and enhance them where necessary, to meet their local training environment.**



**Dragon Boats Alive (UAE)**  
Fully affiliated with DIMC  
Dubai

**Policy:**

To ensure that the property owned by Dragon Boats Alive (UAE), DBA, is used appropriately and in compliance with the direction of DIMC through standardized procedures thereby allowing approved persons to take control of a boat during a training session or during a competition so that assets and personal safety is maintained.

**Procedure:**

A spreadsheet is to be kept and updated within a reasonable time after any training or competition showing who was on the water during the session and who the **authorized DBA Safety Official 'Of the Day'** was.

**The Day Safety Official** will be a qualified Dragon Boat Coach (IDBF Foundation Coach, is the recommended level) or a DBA qualified person with experience of operating dragon boats on the water area concerned, such as a *DBA Boat Captain*. There may a number of personnel qualified to act as a Day Safety Officials, who are appointed by the Club Safety Officer.

**The Club Safety Officer** will hold an appropriate Coaches Award (IDBF Participation Coach, is the recommended minimum) or have a similar qualification or experience of conducting Dragon Boat training sessions, on the water concerned and/or other areas of dragon boat activity.

**All Dragon Boat Helms will be appropriately qualified.** The IDBF Crew Helm Award or a similar DBA qualification, is the recommended minimum. A Dragon Boat Helm with competitive Dragon Boat Racing experience may act as a Crew Helm if authorized by the Club Safety Officer.

**It is important for all to understand that no individual or group may use Club equipment without a suitably qualified *Boat Captain* being present on the boat during the training or practice session.**

**This means that the person in charge of the vessel will need to demonstrate safe boating practices with regards to manning it, assessing sea conditions, and in carrying out safe onboard boating practices.**

In the event of a vessel swamping or capsizing, the *Boat Captain*, is required to manage the situation to minimize the chance of injury or loss of life. For Novice crews taking part in a Dragon Boat introductory session, the *Boat Captain* will normally be the designated Helm for the Crew.

If more than one boat is being used, each boat will require a *Boat Captain*. The *boat captains* will consult with each other and the Day Safety Official before launching the boats.

Regular swamping and capsize drills will be held throughout the year for the benefit of all Club Members, regardless of crew membership.

Any paddler can participate in these safety drills at any time. The drills will be recorded cumulatively as training sessions toward the certification of an authorized *DBA Boat Captain*, if not a qualified Coach as summarized above. Note: Some drills require a minimum number of Crew Members on shore.

**A brief and debrief is required for each session by the person controlling the session.**

**Training & Competition Practice Areas.**

The area that DBA boats are allowed to practice in is defined by the white lines in the Picture A below, essentially the area from the end of the Marina to the Palm Jumeirah which is approximately 350 x 1200 meters.

**A.**



**B.**



For the more experienced teams wanting to practice 1500 meter lengths, dependant on \*W<sup>4</sup>, they have authorization to paddle to the RED Buoy near the marina entrance as indicated in Picture B.

In conjunction with DIMC representatives, it has been agreed that the areas which are best for training dependant on W<sup>4</sup> conditions are as shown in Picture C below by the Red lines area.

DIMC



**C.**

For JBH Harbour 300m (D), and Jumeirah Beach Hotel area 500m (E) and 1000m (F) practices



**D.**



**E.**

**F.**



\* **W<sup>4</sup>** = Wind, Water, Wave and Weather conditions.

## **Requirements to be met by Boat Captains - not holding a Formal Coaches Award are:**

1. To carry out a Risk Assessment of the weather and water conditions, equipment and personnel at the venue.
2. To be able to conduct a "safety brief"
3. Understand the requirements of first aid treatment on the water and its associated Risk.
4. To complete a swimming test of at least 50 meters
5. To have completed a "Swamping drill"
6. To have completed a "Capsize drill"
7. To be able to demonstrate "Basic Helming" abilities.

These criteria must all be met before operating as Coach or Helm using DBA equipment. Taking into account previous experience, some concessions may be given at the start of this programme and subsequently for new but experienced Dragon Boat paddlers joining the Club. However, before being authorized to act as a *Boat Helm or Captain*, without 'on the water' supervision, all initiates MUST demonstrate and pass the tests outlined below to the satisfaction of the DBA Committee or hold the IDBF Foundation Coach Award.

### **1. Risk Assessment.**

#### **A Risk Assessment is to be done of the weather and water conditions, equipment and personnel at the venue**

The purpose of this training is to ensure that personnel are not placed in any danger and the club's assets are not compromised.

Before any DBA boat is taken onto the water, the authorized DBA *Boat Captain* will take into account the following:

- **DBA assumes that there are NO rescue boats available during training, therefore obligating the team to ensure their own safety and first aid.**
- The boat to remain within 50 meters of the shore where and when practical.
- Wind, water, wave and weather (W<sup>4</sup>) conditions at the venue are suitable for paddling. If the wind is OFF SHORE pay particular attention to its speed and direction. Check if rescue boats are on the water. Advise rescue boat captains of your intended session duration and location.
- Be aware that during winter it is possible to become hypothermic if you are exposed to the wind while in wet clothing.
- Note the condition of the boat to ensure that all safety equipment is available and in good condition.
- Assess the physical condition of the paddlers, note their experience and any possible health risks they may have.
- All paddling is to be done during DAY LIGHT hours, as there are no navigation lights on the boat, therefore, training programs must take into allowance the time of sunset and finish practice BEFORE DARK and not be on the water after sunset.
- **No paddling** is to take place if electrical storms are forecast or when there is fog heavy enough to obscure a landmark 80 meters away (at DIMC we should be able to see the Dhow and Anchor restaurant)

**NOTE ~ If anyone suffers an injury, or if damage is done to DBA equipment a "Safety Incident Notification" form must be filled out by the *Boat Captain* at the time.**

## 2 ~ Conduct a "Safety Brief"

The DBA *Boat Captain* applicant must be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the DBA committee a proper **Safety Brief**.

### Definitions:

**LIFE JACKET** ~ This vest consisting of a sleeveless jacket of buoyant or inflatable design will turn the person over onto their back in the water unaided. It normally comes with a grab strap on the back and protection around the head.

**BUOYANCY AID** ~ Any device that supplements the wearer's buoyancy. Suitable types are used for kite surfing, canoeing, wind surfing, etc and tend not to have cells on the sides of the jacket. They may also include gas-operated jackets.

**A Safety Brief does not address paddling technique nor is it a coaching session;** those details should be demonstrated prior to talking about boat safety. Consideration needs to be given if the full Crew is regularly in attendance; however, if there is one new paddler on the Crew a full safety brief must be given to all.

**A Safety Brief should be carried out IMMEDIATELY before going onto the water**

*These rules are designed to ensure that all are safe in the boat on the water.*

Important rules that MUST be adhered to:

1. NO person who has a smell of alcohol or drugs on their breath, or who seems to be impaired in any way, is allowed to paddle in a DBA boat
2. No children under the age of 10 are allowed on the boats, unless by prior approval
3. Children up to the age of 15 must be accompanied by a consenting adult, who will take care of them in the event of an emergency situation. (Allowance will be made for school teams as required).
4. The maximum number of children under 15 is 6 per 12 adults, and less if fewer adults are on board so that the ratio is 1:2.
5. All paddlers must observe the safety rules and if at any time the *Boat Captain* is concerned about the conduct of any paddler, that person must be taken back to shore.
6. **At the DIMC Venue ALL paddlers MUST wear** a "BUOYANCY AID" if they can swim or a "LIFE JACKET" if they cannot swim. The Jacket must be kept on and fastened correctly during the on-water training.

### **SAFETY BRIEF for all new paddlers**

- Identify all NON-SWIMMERS, these paddlers MUST wear life jackets – weak swimmers may wear Buoyancy Aids (PFD)
- Identify all persons who have First Aid training
- Identify all paddlers with previous paddling experience.
- Identify any paddler who has a medical condition (asthma, strained muscles, etc, **those with heart conditions or epilepsy will not be allowed to paddle**)
- Pair paddlers according to height, weight and experience and place in a line side-by-side
- **Place those experienced in other water-sports at the front and rear if possible**

- Place non-swimmers in front of swimmers where possible.
- Number off paddlers starting from front left then front right then second row left to the back of the boat. 1,2,3,4,.....If there is a Drummer they are Number 1 and the first paddler is Number 2. The Helm (Cox) always has the last number.
- Have the paddlers number off again.
- Explain that they are responsible for their seat buddy firstly, to those in front of them secondly, and thirdly, to those behind them. The Drummer is assigned to the FRONT most pair of paddlers and the Helm to the REAR most pair of paddlers
- Give instruction that their number will remain theirs during the session.
- If the boat capsizes the *Boat Captain* (normally the Helm) will ask the crew to call their numbers (have the paddlers call their numbers again).
- Instruct that the *Boat Captain* has the full authority on the boat.
- Explain what may cause the boat to swamp or capsize and instruct how to prevent it.
- Instruct the Crew that in the event of a capsize everyone should release their paddles and attempt to recover them once they are clear of the capsized boat. Demonstrate how to take up the fetal position, i.e. with their hands on the top of their heads. Should the boat hit them this position will help to ensure they stay on the top of the water.
- **CONFIRM THAT THEY HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE BRIEF**
- Explain that to board the boat the paddler steps into the middle of the boat – not on the Seat, and then sits down.
- If possible, board the boat from front to rear, paying attention to position.
- Explain why it is necessary to keep hands OFF the gunwale beside the wharf.
- Explain the two main strokes for safety “Brace the Boat” (or “flat paddle”) and “Emergency Stop”

The paddlers must be able to understand the IDBF starting commands, even though the local commands may be different. When in the boat on the water they are:

1. **ARE YOU READY?** This is a negative command - any paddler who is not ready should state so now
2. **ATTENTION.** Get into the paddle position
3. **GO.** Start to paddle

All must know the IDBF paddling commands

- **GO** ~ Start to paddle
- **BRACE THE BOAT** ~ Hold the paddle out over the water with the blade flat on the surface to brace the boat laterally, this can be enhanced by asking the paddlers on each side of the boat, to lean outwards when placing the paddle on the water.
- **STOP PADDLING** ~ all paddling is stopped and the paddles are placed in the flat paddle position allowing the boat to continue to move slowly.
- **STOP THE BOAT** ~ The boat is stopped quickly by a reverse stroke

### **3 ~ Understand the requirements of First Aid on the water and its associated risk**

**The DBA boats are NOT equipped with First Aid Kits, these are located in the Lifeguard House at DIMC.**

**In the unfortunate event of injury or accident, assist the person(s) to shore as soon as possible. This is the reason it is recommended to stay within 80 meters of the shore at all times** and the reason for ensuring shore-based patrols are notified in advance.

It is believed the greatest possibility of injury is from a boat capsizing and accordingly it is better to manage the risk before this type of incident occurs in order to prevent injury.

Other possible medical problems may be associated with a heart attack, which requires that CPR be carried out - this is best done on the shore. Minor cuts or bumps from paddles may also occur, but once again, this can be prevented through training BEFORE the paddlers get onto the water and by correct positioning of novice paddlers in the boat. Dependent on the severity of an injury, the situation may require the team be taken back to shore. For cuts, pressure should be applied to the general area to stop the bleeding.

### **4 ~ Achieve a swim of at least 50 meters**

All persons wanting to qualify as an authorized DBA *Boat Captains* must be able to demonstrate they can swim ably enough to save themselves.

***Captains of the water rescue boats and the life guards working in the area should be informed before this drill is carried out.***

From the Dhow and Anchor restaurant wharf to the beach is approximately 250 meters. Enter the water wearing either a life jacket **OR** a buoyancy device opposite the middle ramp to the Marina and swim to the shore. This is approx 50 meters – Red Line in the picture below (Left).



At the Jumeirah Beach Hotel, swim from the hotel side of the wharf to the shore as indicated (80 meters) – White Line in the picture above (Right)

If the life jacket OR buoyancy device is one that is operated by a gas bottle it must be inflated to simulate the restrictions that these devices cause.

It is beneficial to swim on one's back while wearing the life jacket OR buoyancy aid and to swim in pairs (using the buddy system) while paying attention to your position in the water relative to the shore.

## **5 ~ Complete a "Swamping drill"** (this can be done in conjunction with the Capsize drill)

This is the most likely event to occur when on the water and the risk of this can be reduced by proper **RISK ANALYSIS** and consultation with other users of the water.

Dependant on the height and pitch (crest to crest distance) of the waves, the *Boat Captain* (normally the Helm) needs to determine the best angle to avoid swamping or capsizing the boat.

When waves are higher than normal the *Boat Captain* should ensure that the boat is at approximately 45 degrees and under paddle power OR that the boat is braced by the BRACE THE BOAT command. He or she should be looking out for other boats in the area, especially those travelling at speed or heavy causing large wakes.

**BEFORE** the boat is taken to the water the *Boat Captain* should ensure that adequate equipment is on board to bail the boat, if necessary during the training or practice session.

**Note. 1:** Providing that the 'in rush' of water is not too great or fast, it is possible to bail out a boat whilst it is being swamped and, if not fully swamped, the boat can be slowly paddle to the nearest shore, where the bailing out can be completed.

As part of the **Safety Brief**, awareness of the boat swamping should be pointed out along with what is expected of the paddlers.

**It is important that the crew remain calm and take direction from the *Boat Captain***

Demonstrate to the satisfaction of the DBA committee the Swamping Drill:

**Note.2:** *Captains of the water rescue boats and the life-guards working in the area should be informed before this drill is carried out.*

**During this exercise the *Boat Captain* needs to remain vigilant of the water conditions, other water-craft operating nearby and their position relative to the shore, and keep the boat under control by utilizing the paddlers as required.**

After the **RISK ANALYSIS** is made a **Safety Brief** is carried out with regard to this particular exercise

### **Drill Brief:**

- There will be a minimum requirement of 10 persons in the boat for this drill.
- Take the boat into shallow water (approx 1.5 meters) and slowly fill the boat.
- The boat should be kept into or down the wind/wave direction.
- It is not necessary to fill the boat completely but there must be at least 200mm in the hull, this can be done by bucketing the water in and **NOT** by allowing the water to come in over the gunwale.
- After the boat has sufficient water onboard, paddle and manoeuvre the boat carrying out a figure of eight near the shore.
- Bring the boat close to the shore again and proceed to bail the boat until the water has been removed.

## **6 ~ Complete a “Capsize drill”**

This is unlikely to occur and the risk of this can be reduced through a proper **RISK ANALYSIS** and by a consultation with other users of the water.

Dependant on the height and pitch (crest to crest distance) of the waves, the *Boat Captain* (normally the Helm) needs to determine the best angle to avoid swamping or capsizing the boat. When waves are higher than normal the *Boat Captain* should ensure that the boat is at approximately 45 degrees and under paddle power OR that the boat is braced by the BRACE THE BOAT command. He or she should be looking out for other boats in the area, especially those travelling at speed or heavy with large wakes.

**NOTE.1:** It is possible an injury may occur during this exercise so a full briefing of what to expect during the drill MUST be made along with the **standard SAFETY BRIEF**.

**NOTE.2:** During normal training or race practices, it is not recommended that any paddlers leave the boat unless they are easily able to reach the shore. The **COMMAND** to abandon the boat will be given by the *Boat Captain*. This forms part of the **SAFETY BRIEF** and **RISK ANALYSIS** (covered in this document) given immediately **BEFORE** any on-water activity. It is recommended that all paddlers stay with the boat, holding onto the side if possible.

***Captains of the water rescue boats and the life guards working in the area should be informed before this drill is carried out.***

**During this drill the *Boat Captain* needs to remain vigilant of the water conditions, other water craft operating nearby and their position relative to the shore, and keep the boat under control by utilizing the paddlers as required.**

### **Capsize Drill Brief:**

In accordance with the **SAFETY BRIEF** each member will first be responsible for finding their seat buddy. Within 15 seconds of turning over the *Boat Captain* will call for a number count to begin. This will ensure that all the Crew is accounted for.

**If there is anyone unaccounted for, the buddy will look under the boat for their ‘Buddy’ as directed by the *Boat Captain*. Other crew members may be required to assist as directed by the *Boat Captain*.**

**The *Boat Captain* will next ascertain if there are any injuries that need attention and care for these as required.**

**NOTE.3: All paddlers must stay with the boat at all times, holding onto the gunwale, unless directed by the *Boat Captain* to abandon the boat and swim to the shore or to a rescue vessel.**

It has been demonstrated that it is possible in certain water conditions to bail a boat that has been capsized, therefore always ensure that all bailing containers are attached to the boat by a string that will easily break, so that the bailers can be used. (i.e. builders line string with 10 lb breaking strain)

If possible take the boat into shallow water (1.5 meters or less) and roll the boat over. At this time the participants should be able to stand beside the boat and commence bailing it out. If the boat is in water over 2 metres deep, then either swim the boat to shore, if a beach or bank is within 20 metres or commence righting the boat, if water/ weather conditions allow.

## **RIGHTING THE BOAT ~ the *Boat Captain* will control this action**

- Use the crew to position the boat at right angles to the waves.
- Generally select three largest/tallest crew who will be pushed up onto the hull from the same side and reach across to the opposite side, holding the gunwale.
- On command from the *Boat Captain*, roll the boat upright. Caution to be given to the crew in the water as they will be assisting.
- Stabilize the boat ensuring all crew members are accounted for.
- At this point the boat will be full of water.
- Brace the boat by placing the crew members evenly on both sides of the boat and holding onto the gunwales (sides).
- The Boat Captain will select the first crew member to enter the boat.
- The preferred method is to lie at right angles to the boat, legs extended and kick and pull oneself over the submerged gunwale into the centre of the boat.
- The selected Crew members sit in the centre of the boat on the floor, NOT on the seat.
- Ensure that the boat does not roll over at this time and that it is kept directed into the waves.
- If possible and as directed by the Boat Captain, continue to board the boat until 4 persons (2 at the front and 2 at the back) are on board, the others will be holding onto the sides.
- As directed by the Boat Captain, paddle the boat to the shore with those in the water stabilising the boat and kicking to aid this process.

**OR**

### **'Bailing Out the Boat'**

**If water\and weather conditions are favourable,** the *Boat Captain* may instruct the crew members already re-boarded in the boat to start bailing the boat out.

As more and more water is bailed out of the boat, the *Boat Captain* will direct one or more paddlers to re-board the boat and assist with the bailing process. Paddles are also useful in helping to bail out a Dragon Boat.

This process of bailing out and paddlers re-boarding shall continue until the boat is no longer unstable and in danger of a further capsize, at which time any remaining paddlers should re-board, as instructed to by the *Boat Captain* and the boat paddled back to the nearest shore or return to its starting base, if it is safe and timely to do so.

## **7 ~ Demonstrate "Basic Boat Helming"**

Without basic Helming skills the paddlers and equipment may be placed in an unsafe position. If a Helm or *Club Boat Captain* does not hold the appropriate IDBF Coaches Award, they must as a minimum, be able to demonstrate their ability to manoeuvre a Dragon Boat competently.

The *Boat Captain's* function is to command the Dragon Boat. He or she must be strong in character and compassionate of others.

The *Boat Captain* must be aware of his surroundings and see the 'big picture' and not focus only on what is happening in the boat, this is particularly important if the *Boat Captain* is also coaching.

If the *Boat Captain* is also coaching he or she should assign one paddler to take the lookout function while they are talking or working with the rest of the paddlers.

The *Boat Captain* needs to recognize when a paddler is having difficulty and slow the pace as required in conjunction with coaching practices. If needed, he or she must be able to take the boat back to shore, quickly and efficiently if the weather conditions change or a crew member is injured or becomes ill.

The *Boat Captain* is responsible for discipline on the boat and while this should not normally be an issue, he must recognise it and have the paddlers understand their function before they board.

The *Boat Captain* is responsible for the paddlers and the safety of the boat while seeking the correct course to navigate, and he must be aware of any other craft on the water or, when near the shore, any swimmers.

When Helming, the standard method is to stand bracing oneself against the sides of the boat, this is done with the Steering Oar blade set deeper into the water, this can cause the Helm to over-balance, if the crew causes the boat to tip to one side unexpectedly or the wind has caused choppy wave conditions or there is a heavy swell. It is also possible to steer (helm) the boat whilst sitting, twisting the handle to make small corrections or to push or pull the steering oar for larger movements.

The *Boat Captain* will continuously be making decisions based on Risk Analysis assessments and in this way keep possible problems at bay

### ***Boat Captains* and Helms must be able to demonstrate the following:**

- Manoeuvre the boat in a figure of 8 at speed.
- Manoeuvre the boat sideways.
- Turn the boat in its own length.
- Carry out an emergency stop (stopping the boat within one boat length)
- Keep the boat straight for 500 meters beside the buoys in the bay at DIMC.
- Back up the boat in a straight line for two boat lengths.
- Bring the boat alongside a loading dock, floating pontoon or shore-side bank.
- Embark and disembark a crew correctly, speedily and safely.