

## **Group Leader / Coach Safety Guidance for Ocean Racing and Ocean Race Training**

This safety guidance is one of four documents specifically aimed at supporting paddlers, coaches and event organisers for ocean racing. The four documents are listed below:

- Paddler Safety Guidance for Ocean Racing and Ocean Race Training
- Event Safety for Ocean Race Organisers
- Ocean Race Course Grading
- Group Leader / Coach Safety Guidance for Ocean Racing and Ocean Race Training

This document aims to provide safety guidance for all those holding or having the responsibility of a group leader. Such a role could be during a coached session, a formal leader, or someone within a group of paddlers that takes on the role as the leader.

### **Checklist**

The list below is to act as a checklist for the 'leader' ensuring that appropriate points have been considered and specific actions carried out:

- What is the agreed objectives of the group, and aligned to individuals ability
- A weather forecast and tidal information has been obtained
- A plan has been developed and shared with everyone in the group
- A full briefing to the group has been provided and setting an appropriate supportive culture
- Personal equipment and kit checks are carried out and that individuals are wearing and carrying the appropriate equipment (see Paddler Safety Guidance for Ocean Racing and Ocean Race Training document)
- A communications check with all paddlers is carried out
- Assistant leaders / Sweepers / Safety paddlers are identified and briefed as per their role
- Ensure appropriate ratios for the group and environment
- Check the competency of all group members including assistants, safety and paddlers
- Set up buddy systems and paddling together whilst on the water
- Ensure the shore crew are appropriately briefed and understand the plan, including timings, escape routes and access points.

When on the water due to the nature of ocean racing and the environment it is important to have strategies for group control and set up appropriate frameworks such as:

- The use of faster and competent paddlers to circle back through the group to minimise spreading of the group
- Way points / muster points for group members to regroup
- Go and no-go areas or lines.
- Use of signalling or communications carried (agreed VHF channel used for group communication)
- Set up parameters and brief out to the group to stay within, use navigation buoys or transits.

## Notes

1. It is important that group leaders create a culture that paddlers are prepared not to paddle if the conditions are worse than expected or there is a change to timings, entry or exit points, which give you or others such as your support crew concern.
2. It is strongly recommended that paddlers notify the Coastguard of their trip before setting out. This can be done by phoning the National Maritime Operations Centre on 023 9255 2100.
3. Group Leaders are to check the weather predictions and ensure the wearing of appropriate clothing. Conditions out at sea change quickly so having a cag to hand is prudent.
4. Group Leader must ensure paddlers understand that wearing a wetsuit long john or lightweight dry suit in the winter months is advisable.
5. The Group Leader retains the right to exclude a paddler who does not display or provide suitable evidence of competency to the minimum level of ability deemed necessary to take part in the session.
6. Redundancy - the use of a double in the group provides options to change paddlers around during the session if required.
7. If the option is available and the Leader / Coach thinks it is appropriate, look to move paddlers into more stable craft or into doubles, better to suit their ability and the conditions.