

# Paddle SAFE *You Cannot Make Your Safety, The Burden Of Your Fellow Paddlers. And So It Remains, Each Of Us Is Responsible For Our Own Safety.*

1. **Risk Assessment** – Individually, you make a “GoNoGo Decision” based on the weather, the water, your skills, your training and your experience with the understanding that:
  - a. You are engaging in an activity with inherent dangers,
  - b. You accept & acknowledge you are participating at your own risk, and
  - c. You are responsible for your own safety and to use your own judgment.
2. **Always Wear a Fully Secured Pfd** while on water, for your safety and the safety of the group.  
Per ACA 70% of drownings involving canoes, kayaks or rafts might have been avoided if victim had worn a lifejacket. Per US Coast Guard, over 80% of drowning victims were not wearing life jackets when found.
3. **Avoid Conditions & Situations Beyond Your Abilities**, or your Physical or Emotional Strength
4. **Dress for Water Temp & Immersion** Cold Water - Wear a wet or dry suit  
Carry Change of Clothing in a Waterproof Bag
5. **Paddle with Others** – Each participant is responsible that we **Stay Together** -  
Using either a **Team Paddle** or a **Group Paddle** Format
  - a. **Team – Paddle together in smaller units (3-6+)** – **Being Sure No Paddler Is Left Behind**
  - b. **Group – Paddle together as larger unit w/ Lead & Sweep – All Adjust To Pace Of Group**
6. **To Participate in Lake Michigan Paddles:** acquire a reliable self-rescue,  
learn to paddle in 2-4 ft waves at rate of 3 mph, using a sea worthy kayak 15 ft or longer  
with deck lines & watertight bulkheads and carry appropriate safety equipment.

# Think SAFE *Safety Is Of Primary Concern When You Are Dealing With Water. If Things Go Wrong, Situations Can Become Very Serious, Very Quickly.*

## In the Event of an Incident **Stop Assess Formulate Execute**

- A. Use Deliberate Calm Procedures** - A Rational and Deliberate Thought Process
  1. **Positive Mental Attitude** - Your Best Tool in an Emergency
  2. **Move Slow & Deliberate** - Control Emotions - To panic will not help
  3. **Let Your Mind Think** - Keep Exploring Options - You will find an answer
  4. **Stay Focused** - Ignore Disruptions
- B. Know Your Limits** - We all have Limits - Don't Become Part of the Problem - Consider Outside Help
- C. Priorities in an Assisted Rescue** - Keep the Incident from Growing - **Your Order of Priorities**
  1. **Safety of Self**
  2. **Safety of Other Group Members**
  3. **Safety of Swimmer**
- D. If You Spill ... Stay Calm** - When you surface - **Yell “Swimmer”**
  1. **On Open Water - Prepare to Reenter Boat** - Know & Practice wet exits & self rescues  
**Stay In Front & With the Boat** - It Floats and is More Visible than a Swimmer alone
  2. **On Streams – Work Towards Shore Keep Upstream Of Boat Or Let It go**  
Float On Your Back, Feet up & Pointed Downstream. Approach Obstacles Face First With Your Arms Extended. Go over obstacles, not under. Do not stand in water higher than your knees
- E. If Others Spill** - **A. Yell “Boat Over”** **B. Signal** for Help **C. Yell “Swimmer”** when sighted
  1. **Two Safety Kayakers Come Forward To Assist** - one taking charge as “Lead Safety”
  2. **Ascertain Swimmer Is Not In Panic Mode** - If in Panic Mode, follow appropriate precautions  
i.e. Bridge up to Swimmer's empty kayak, keeping it between the Swimmer & 'Safety Kayak'
  3. **Other Group Members** - **Bridge Up** (on open water) **Hug the Shore** (on streams)  
**Be Attentive & Ready To Assist** upon request of Lead Rescuer
  4. **Upstream (behind) Swimmer** - Two go forward on shore w/ throw rope rescue bags for swimmer.
  5. **Downstream (ahead) Swimmer** - **Standby To Assist** swimmer or safety boat

## F. Flip, Float, Follow - Rip Current Survival Strategy - by Michigan Sea Grant

**1. Flip: Flip over onto your back and float.** (Ears in Water. Chin Up, Chest Up, Hips Up, Kick Gently)

**2. Float: a. Float to conserve your energy and to keep your head above water**

**b. Float to calm yourself down from the panic and fear of drowning**

**3. Follow: While floating, follow the current till it weakens.** Then swim perpendicular to the flow.

When out of current, swim to shore at an angle away from current or continue floating to conserve energy & signal for help on shore if available. (Wave action may bring you back to shore if the current is circulating.)

**Remember: -- As long as you are floating, you are alive**

**-- As long as you are struggling or fighting the current, you are drowning**

## Journey SAFE

*Safety Is Important On Every Trip, Whether Big Or Small*

*Better To Learn & Practice Skills Before Needed In An Emergency*

**To Journey SAFE** - Requires a dedication to bringing more than a boat, a paddle and a Pfd.

**1. Participate In Safety Training Sessions**

**2. Learn To Use Safety Equipment**

**3. Routinely Practice Safety Skills.**

Gain the knowledge & ability & maintain the skills necessary to be able to do wet exits & kayak reentries in case of an incident. Carry & be able to use safety equipment i.e. paddle floats, skirts, tow ropes, rescue throw ropes, bilge pumps, first aid kits, emergency repair kits, navigation aids (compass, maps, GPS), strobe lights & flashlights, & other aids in emergency situations. Some safety equipment can be shared, but must be available when needed.

**To Journey Safe – Stay Together** – using either a **Team Paddle** or a **Group Paddle** Format

**1. The Team Paddle format is used** to safely paddle together as a smaller unit in teams (of 3 to 6+) on paddles where getting separated from the group is possible because of the distance & differences in individual endurance & paddle skills. Individuals **Stay Together** as a team.

**“Being Sure No Paddler Is Left Behind”.**

**2. The Group Paddle format is used** to safely paddle together as a larger unit.

**a. Stay Together** i. **Lead & Sweep Kayaks Set the Pace** to the speed of slower paddlers

ii. **All Adjust to the Pace of the Group** to make the trip safe & enjoyable

**Stay Behind** the Lead Kayak & **Keep Ahead** of the Sweep Kayak

iii. **Keep in Sight of Each Other** Till All Are Back On Land

**b. On Streams** i. **Allow the Boat in Front of You to Clear** obstacles before approaching

ii. **Wait for Boats Behind You to Clear** obstacles before moving on

**c. Let Lead or Sweep Kayaks Know**, if you find it necessary to leave the group

This affects everyone since it is a **‘Divide the Group’** or **‘Abort the Paddle’** Decision

**To Journey Safe - Be Prepared To Communicate**

**1. VHF Marine Radios** A handheld submersible & floating marine radio is an important Safety Tool. It enables access to NOAA weather, communication between the paddlers i.e. Channel 68 or 69, and access to emergency services i.e. US Coast Guard Channel 16.

**2. Cell Phone Carried in Dry Bag** may be an alternative communications Safety Tool in non-wet circumstances.

**3. Audio & Visual Signals**

**Whistle or Horn**

a. Where are you / I’m Here

b. Pay Attention - Come Here

c. Emergency - I Need Help

d. Danger Signal

**Other Signals**

e. Stop

f. Go this way, this side of obstacle

**Int’l Signal**

a. 1 blast

b. 2 blasts

c. 3 blasts

d. 5 blasts

**Visual**

b. Hold paddle vertically

c. Hold paddle vertically - wave top side to side

e. Hold paddle overhead parallel to the water

f. Point arm or paddle towards path to follow

***We Are All Guests In A Watery World That Is Home To Many Creatures. “Treat Our Home With Respect”***

**Help Care For Our Watershed** - Minimize your impact and **Dispose Of All Waste Properly** .

"Pack it in, pack it out," following the general rules of Leave No Trace.