CLUB OPERATING AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

1 Introduction

All Coaching and paddling activity within the BCU should be based upon professional behaviour – any coach or paddler operating within the BCU scheme, professional or volunteer doing so within the BCU 'Code of Conduct'

With the Adventurous Activities Licensing Regulations the spotlight has been on safety at many of our centres and schools providing canoe activity. Many people operating in the volunteer section particularly with young people have expressed concern with respect to their personal liability in the event of an incident. The following section has been written to help Clubs with formalising their current operating and safety procedures to provide guidelines and a framework of operation for these volunteers to operate within.

There is no legal requirement for a Club to produce a document unless they come under the above act or employ five or more people. However, it is a good practice" to develop your own safety and operating procedures policy — particularly if your Club runs courses for young people. The areas covered include:

Safety Policy
Operating Procedures
Organisation and Responsibilities for Carrying out Safety Policies
Arrangements For Ensuring Safety and Health of Members.

This information is a guide only and we welcome comments and suggestions from Clubs and Centres so we can pass on practical help and advice to all our Clubs. Further advice and guidance notes on :

Risk Assessment
Insurance
Child Protection
Harassement
Injury Prevention... and other issues highlighted within this document are available from the BCU. These are listed in the reference section of this document

SAFETY POLICY FOR CANOE CLUBS

It is a requirement of all BCU recognised centres that they must have a safety policy statement in force as must centres registered under Adventurous Activities Licensing Regulations or any establishment with five or more employees. Whilst this does not usually apply to Canoe Clubs it would be "good practice" to produce a simple document to cover the situation at your Club, particularly if you provide courses or taster sessions to non-members or run youth/junior sections. The majority of clubs operate without incident however, the fact that you have considered the possible risks of the Club and drawn up a safety policy will assist in the reduction of risk and would be in your favour should an incident occur.

If you produce a Safety Policy and Operating Procedures document it sets out a framework for all helping at the Club to ensure your standards and expectations are maintained. This may sound too formal for small clubs who prefer verbal arrangements, but taking the time to write it down often results in including items not previously considered. Recognising that club officials are busy people, the following has been produced as a guide to assist you to produce a Safety Policy for your Club.

The essence of your Policy Statement is that it should be yours, related to how you operate, your location and such like. Whilst for the sake of convenience a list of rules that you can simply copy out and use at your Club would seem to be helpful, they would not be worth the paper they were written on! So the following is a list of headings and notes to guide your preparation. Not all headings will be relevant to your Club and may exclude some areas relevant to your location. It is therefore helpful to undertake a risk assessment first to establish what should be included in your document. For further information on this refer to the Five Steps to Risk Assessment following. Most importantly, your Safety Policy Statement will have to be understood and applied by helpers and members. You should therefore aim to keep it as short as possible or nobody will read it!!

Additional References:

- **BCU Duty of Care Policy**
- **BCU Coaches Code of Conduct**
- **BCU Participation Statement**
- **BCU Club Operating and Safety Procedures**
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- **BCU Risk Assessment Guidelines**
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2

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YOUR SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT

There are three main headings recommended for a policy statement — (this is for a work place situation but is a useful starting point):

- General statement of policy
- Organisation and responsibilities for carrying out the policy
- Arrangements for ensuring safety and health of members

1.GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

This could be a statement of policy in respect *of:*

- Provision and maintenance of sate and healthy environment for all users of the Club
- Equipment and safe systems of operation for all involved with the club
- Provision of health and safety information, training and supervision as necessary

Within this section it is good practice to outline the allocation of duties for all safety matters and arrangements for the implementation of your health and safety policy.

Responsibilities

When you list those responsible for safety you may nominate different people for certain areas within the Club but you should have one person to whom they all report, for example:

- The Commodore — is in charge of safety overall at the Club and to whom all others report
- Head Coach — is in charge of the club coaching activities.
- Maintenance - of building and surrounding, equipment and if applicable vehicle.
- If you have a kitchen, who checks the appliances, procedures etc. (This may already by covered by the HSE if you provide food regularly).

You should stress that all club members have a responsibility to co-operate with the above and develop a general safety awareness within the Club.

2.ORGANISATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CARRYING OUT THE POLICY

This section should cover general arrangements for carrying out health and safety policy such as:

- Procedures for reporting and recording accidents and dangerous incidents/near misses
- Location of first aid boxes
- Details of qualified first-aid personnel
- Details of all fire procedures
- Fire extinguishers location and maintenance details
- Safety training details or specialist training
- Advice for non-members/visitors
- Codes of conduct

Notes:

Accidents

There should be a procedure understood for reporting and recording acciden;s (accident book).

This should include the date, time. name of injured person, nature of the injury, action taken and by whom.

It is also useful to record how the accident occurred, precisely what the injured person was doing, where and what was considered to be the cause of the accident. If a hazard is then. identified steps can be taken to prevent a re-occurrence. Any action taken should then be recorded. This might also apply to an incident where no one was injured but considered a 'near miss", to prevent an accident in the future.

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DRAFT

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2

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ARRANGMENTS FOR ENSURING SAFETY AND HEALTH OF MEMBERS

This last section should list details concerning all hazards so that everyone is aware of them such as:

- In-house rules and regulations eg wearing buoyancy aids, paddling at night
- Details of any areas where care should be taken
- Rules-concerning the use of any machinery, tools dangerous substances
- Routines for checking equipment. reporting faults, routine maintenance
- Details concerning access to restricted areas
- Rules concerning any electrical appliances etc..
- Details concerning safe stacking, lifting and storage of equipment

Notes:

Personal Buoyancy

There should be a policy on wearing of lifejackets/ buoyancy aids. This will depend on the type of canoeing activity and your location. You may refer to BCU recommendations. Generally. outside of a swimming pool everyone on beginner courses should wear buoyancy aids and for white water paddling at all levels. The fitting of which should be checked with instruction on application and use given.

Many members on placid water may prefer not to wear a buoyancy aid when training, for U 18's they may be dispensed with only at the discretion of the coach in charge. You may prefer to state guidelines in your safety policy for your younger members in extreme conditions — such as air/water temperature or water state.

Night Paddling

Many canoeists paddle in the dark. If you operate on a section of river that has an official policy with respect to lights then all Club Members should be made aware of this. Young people should not be allowed on the water without the required lights in these situations.

Water Conditions

Where your Club is sited there may be situations where the water conditions are more hazardous — for example in the winter when the flow increases, or at certain states of the tide. You may wish to add guidelines for paddling in those conditions for your members, such as not going out on your own, wearing a buoyancy aid, a check in and out list on the notice board. For example, the Environment Agency issue strong stream warnings which could be used by Thames based Clubs to restrict activity at these times.

Equally, in the summer there may be problems with blue green algae or Weil's disease that requires a code of practice, such as areas to avoid paddling in and always showering and washing as soon as you come off the water.

Launching and Landing

These areas can **be hazardous** — suitable warnings and routine inspections are advised of pontoons. slipways etc. If you have a healthy resident wildfowl population it may require regular cleaning from a basic hygiene point of view as much as slipping safety point! These issues will come Out of your **risk** analysis if applicable.

Equipment

Should be maintained to BCU recommendations, this includes canoe/kayak fixtures and fittings. safety helmets, spraydecks and buoyancy aids. Students and members should be trained in their application and use and care should be taken when lifting any heavy items. The Club may specify where and how equipment should be stacked from a safety point — greater detail on s systems for maintenance/repair could be left to the operational procedure document.

Surf, Whitewater and trips away from the Club

It is recommended that BCU guidelines be followed for trips, journeys and Clubs operating on moving water and that a risk assessment is made for each and all trips run by the club.

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2

CLUB OPERATING PROCEDURES

The basis of this document is that it would be of guidance to instructors, helpers and officials at the Club to ensure the efficient safe operation of the Club. It helps to prevent problems as a result of people "not knowing" the, what, where, when or how! The following are only some suggestions as the operation of any Club is very individual and will require different policies.

KEYS

- Who opens up the Club — only officials, Club members?
- More importantly what are the rules for locking the Club at the end of the day.
- If there are keys to equipment stores where are they kept?
- Who has access to these keys — Captains, Coaches?
- Where are the duplicates kept (which will inevitably be needed!)?

EQUIPMENT

- Who can use what Club equipment and when.
- Can Club equipment be taken off site for use?
- How are problems or repairs to equipment notified and to whom~ Is it recorded anywhere?
- How/where should the equipment be stored What are the requirements for non-members using the equipment eg School groups, Club members
- If you have a rescue boat where is the engine kept and what are the rules for fuel as a hazardous substance

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- What are the fire procedures (may refer to safety policy)
- In the event of a serious incident what instructions are there with respect to dealing with the media eg club coaches should not discuss the incident with the press of admit liability
- For anyone attending a canoe course participants should complete a health declaration and the instructor should ask if they have any medical conditions that they should know about. For young people this could be completed by a parent or guardian.
- For Clubs running courses for young people it is useful to have an emergency contact number for a parent or guardian and school number if applicable.

CLUB COURSES

Procedures for coaches and helpers might simply be a statement that they follow BCU guidelines for coaching or you might want to specify what is expected of them such as:

- They follow BCU guidelines with respect to safety
- What is the policy respect to a student's swimming ability
- What advice they give students eg, what to do with valuables, specs. shoes, sun cream.
- Safety Briefing to students of potential hazards eg slippery banks
- Preparation of equipment
- Personal kit - money for tue phone, personal safety first aid kit to BCU guidelines.
- Ensure they have read and understood the Club Safety Policy and Emergency Procedures
- They check medical conditions of the group and take account of any special needs
- If there are any problems who does the coach report to — is there a contact number for help when courses are running?
- Do you have a system for monitoring courses and receiving feedback
- What awards, logbooks etc. is the Club offering to participants — are these being achieved'?
- Operating areas — do you wish to specify areas dependent on group or to allow for Club members and/or other water users in the vicinity'?
- Clothing must be appropriate to the ability, air/water temperature, wind chill factor and suitable foot protection worn.

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KITCHEN

If your club operates a kitchen you may well be visited by the HSE who will want to ensure that your procedures do not endanger the health of Club members. Most of it will be common sense but you may need to consider:

- Who is allowed to serve food'? What are the regulations they should abide by for hygiene purposes?
- What procedures are there with respect to electrical appliances'?
- Who is responsible for checking sell by dates

(For fii.rther information on this contact the HSE address below)

REFERENCE SECTION

BCU Risk Assessment Guidelines
BCU Codes of Practice
BCU Duty of Care
BCU Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy
BCU Harassment Policy

Most HSE publications are available from HMSO or from HSE direct. The HSE publish free leaflets — mostly geared to the work place — but which you may find useful

Useful publications:
Essentials of Health and Safety at Work: ISBN 0 7176 0716 X £5.95

Our Health and Safety Policy Statement 1990 (rev) £3.00 ISBN 0 7176 0424 1

BCU Centre Approval Scheme — Terms of Reference for the conduct of canoeing

Any of the RoSPA publications on health and safety are good reference — try your local library.

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HMS 0
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Tel 0171 873 9090

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Cannon House
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Birmingham B4 6BS
Tel 01212002461

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