



Wellington Dragon Boat Festival

Capsize Procedures

PERSONAL ACTION

1. Boats are fibreglass and won't sink. They float just below the surface of the water and can be used as a life preserver to support panicking or injured paddlers (using bailers can lessen the load and help raise the boats).
2. Let your body go with the boat's roll. If you are on the high side try to throw yourself clear of your partner, and let your paddle go. If you come up under the boat, rise till you can catch a breath in the air pocket. Then duck down and to come back up beside the boat.
3. As soon as you surface, check your buddy is present (ie. the person sitting next to you in the boat. The closest pair to the drummer and sweep forms a trio).
4. Stay with the boat. **DONOT SWIM TO SHORE** unless instructed to by the Rescue Crew. **DONOT SWIM FOR YOUR PADDLES.** The rescue crew will collect these. Keep calm and quiet.
5. Avoid scrambling at the sides of boat as this will keep it spinning. Spread evenly around both sides of the boat and hold onto the gunnel (top edge). Don't swim over the top as this may cause it to roll. If the boat is upside down, gently roll it to an upright position.

CREW ACTION

6. Sweep takes control (if not in a position to do so the Crew captain takes command). Call for silence, and 'number off', starting with drummer (No.1) to sweep (No.22).
7. "Buddes" advise the sweep of injured / distressed / poor swimmer or missing paddler by raising their hand. Place any distressed paddlers in the middle of the boat (with their buddy as support if necessary).
8. If a person is missing the sweep directs a confident swimmer to search while two paddlers watch the searcher.
9. Signal Assistance: 1) Contact land and water safety crew on the Radio let them know whether there are any problems. 2) Place a person in the middle of the boat, with a raised paddle 3) blow three long whistle blasts and repeat if necessary if the marine radio has not worked.
10. Move around the rear to spread along the sides of the boat, staying from the 4-5th seat back. Avoid pressing down on the gunnels as this drives the boat further under the water. Huddle together for warmth.



ARRIVAL OF THE RESCUE CRAFT

11. The Rescue Craft will use the space near the front five seats to manoeuvre in close and tie up to the dragon boat without hitting any paddlers. Keep well clear, as this can be awkward in rough conditions.
12. Crew must keep quiet so that sweep and Rescue Crew can communicate clearly.
13. The Rescue Crew will identify the sweep and ask for a status report: Number in the boat, any missing, distressed, injured people. Paddlers in distress are taken out first.
14. Missing paddler – the Rescue Crew will take over the search, with 2 paddlers keeping watch. The Rescue Craft driver or second vessel will start ferrying the rest of the Crew to shore.
15. Rescue Crew notifies marine rescue services (VHF 16) and WTS (VHF 77), advising if a drill or actual capsize, and any assistance needed. The WTS liaises with other land based emergency services as required.
16. First 1-2 paddlers onto the boat assist with pulling the rest of the Crew on. Allow yourself to be pulled in, rather than trying to climb in yourself. **DO NOT CLIMB IN THE BACK OF THE BOAT.** Leave 2 in the dragon boat to help guide it back to shore.

ONE BOAT ONLY OPERATING: Starting with distressed paddlers, the Crew will be ferried in lots of 10-12 to the nearest land point. Once everyone has been removed from the water the RESCUE BOAT will tow the dragon boat in. The sweep will sit in the dragon boat and help steer with the sweep oar or a paddle.

TWO BOATS OPERATING: Similar to above boat and paddles can be removed from the water faster.

17. After the crew is on land, it is their responsibility to bail out the water from the boat immediately after it is brought into shore.
18. In the event of the boat being towed back with some/all of the Crew holding onto the gunnels, ensure Crew does not push down (creates a huge drag and can prevent the rescue boat from moving the dragon boat). Assist by kicking with the boat. The rescue boat will take the boat into the lagoon, or lagoon entrance.
19. In extreme conditions Crews will be taken to the nearest sheltered land, with dragon boats returned to the lagoon as soon as practicable.

CAPSIZE – BACK ON SHORE:

20. Crew reassembles at our boatshed for a headcount (remember to include the members guiding boat into the lagoon). Sweep advises the WTS that all are present (or of any missing/ injured).
21. Wait at boat ramp to help retrieve your boat and empty it of water. If time and conditions permit the Crew may reload the dragon boat and finish their training session.
22. Team Manager and Sweep to debrief Crew, complete the capsize report and return to the Festival Office.



SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT PADDLES:

23. Let go when capsizing so you don't knock anyone on the head. After surfacing, grab paddles before they float away. DO NOT SWIM FOR YOUR PADDLES. Paddles can be secured by hooking them under the seats of the submerged dragon boat, or by dumping them together in a pile, to slow their drift. The oar should be kept in the rowlock if possible or hooked under a seat.
24. At no time may Crews demand that the Rescue Crew take their paddles, or throw paddles into the Rescue Craft when it arrives. The Rescue Crew will attempt to retrieve paddles once your Crew is safe. The Rescue Crew and Festival Management are not responsible for any paddles that go astray.

PROCEDURES TO AVOID CAPSIZE:

If in doubt don't go out.

25. Load your boat with care, carefully considering the right/left and forward/aft balance.
26. The stable command applies to all paddlers in the boat. Paddlers push their body/hip against the wall of the boat, leaning out with paddle blades resting in the water.
27. Keep the swells at 90 degrees to the bow of the boat.
28. If the boat rocks from side to side DO NOT TRY TO ADJUST (your sweep will be doing this and you may make matters worse). KEEP PADDLING with a steady, strong stroke rate, leaning hard out against the side.
29. If you feel the boat start to tip, KEEP PADDLING, paddlers on the high side should lean out further – it is possible to stop a tip out, but if you jump out the whole boat will go with you.
30. In a strong northerly there will be swells and chop at the exit from the lagoon. The Rescue Crew may escort boats across to the container terminal. In rough conditions shift the weight in the boat back by leaving the drummer's and stroke's seats empty. Most foul weather capsizes occur when water is taken over the bow, as the weight of the drummer causes the front of the boat to go into the waves, rather than over them. It may be necessary to take out four paddlers for this session.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ANY OF THESE RULES MAY RESULT IN LOST TRAINING TIMES OR DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE FESTIVAL.