

Safety Procedures
Grand Masters Dragon Boat Club
The Villages, FL

Before you get into the dragon boat and experience the thrill and fun of paddling, safety should be your number one priority. The list below provides some suggestions to help you and your teammates not only to have fun but to be safe.

A. Safety Plan

- Each team member is responsible for his or her own safety at all times while engaging in activities related to practicing and racing in dragon boats
- The steersperson is in charge of and responsible for your boat at all times. His/her commands must be obeyed to insure everyone's safety
- Always listen to your steersperson for directions, even if you hear "hold the boat" and you are in the middle of a race
- A buddy system is used in the event of a medical emergency or capsizing

B. Before Boarding

1. Dress appropriately
2. Take a bottle of water with you
3. Apply proper sun protection, and/or wear a hat
4. Stretching and moderate exercise is advisable before paddling
5. The team should review the paddling commands with the steersperson
6. The steersperson will communicate the safety and emergency procedures with the team before going out
7. There should be an air horn available on board to signal an emergency as well as a cell phone to call 911.

C. Life Jackets

1. All paddlers must wear an approved lifejacket at all times while on the water (PFD – Personal Floatation Device).

D. Swimming Ability

If you are a non-swimmer, you should inform your team captain, and you or your Captain must inform the steersperson, drummer, and your buddy.

E. Loading Procedure

1. Your Captain should know the paddlers' weights and balance the boat accordingly

2. Loading procedure should be done row by row one person at a time. The recommended process is middle rows first. Listen for the steersperson before getting in or out of the boat.
3. Once loaded, the steersperson should remind the paddlers about the buddy system and ask them to identify their buddy
4. For unloading, repeat the loading procedure backwards
5. Before leaving the dock, each person should count off to insure an accurate count.
6. Each person should have an emergency information card attached to their PFD.
7. Do not step on seat or gunwale when entering boat.

F. Boat Commands

1. To be able to control the boat and avoid collisions, all paddlers must know the paddling commands
2. The commands should be reviewed with your steersperson at the dock each time you go out
3. Commands: Hold the boat (paddle in the water to stop the boat), let it run (stop paddling and rest the paddle on your lap), and back paddle
4. Commands from the steersperson need to be followed and take precedence at all times

G. Hydration

Maintain hydration by drinking fluids before getting into the boat and during those times when your boat stops for any reason

H. Exertion Level

Paddling can be exhausting. If you need to rest at any time, do so. Take your paddle out of the water and center it in front of you while you rest

I. Noise Level

1. Paddlers should restrict talking in the boat. They need to pay attention to the directions given by the drummer and steersperson. The noise makes it difficult for other paddlers to hear the directions. In addition, the drummer and steersperson must be able to communicate effectively from the bow to the stern of the boat
2. When on the water, help can be a long way off. If someone should have a heart attack, stroke, or other medical emergency, it is imperative that everyone remains silent as the steersperson gives directions

J. Boat Capsizing

1. Dragon boats can capsize

2. Unless otherwise instructed, paddlers should stay with the boat, hold onto it, do not try to swim to shore, and wait until help comes
3. You must follow the directions of the steersperson and rescue personnel. The steersperson will remain in charge of the team until rescue personnel arrive. Once the rescue boat has arrived, they are in charge
4. Use a buddy system. Your buddy is the person sitting beside you in your row. The paddlers in the first row (row 1) of the boat are also buddies with the drummer, and the paddlers in the last row (row 10) are buddies with the steersperson
5. If you find yourself under the boat, there will be an air pocket available for you to catch your breath and get your bearings. Feel your way to the side of the boat and then surface on the outside
6. Locate or call out for your buddy and be sure he/she is safe
7. If other paddlers are injured or have difficulty reaching the boat, give them assistance and make the rescue boat aware of the situation
8. The Steersperson will take a head count
9. If the boat capsizes, it may not right itself. The Steersperson will determine if anyone is trapped under the dragon boat, and act accordingly
10. If the dragon boat is upside down after capsizing, the Steersperson may ask the team to help roll the boat to its upright position. Before that can be done, all paddlers must be accounted for. A strong swimmer may be asked to swim under the boat from one end to the other looking for paddlers
11. People shouting and making noise will cause confusion. In the event of an emergency, every paddler has to be ready to follow instructions
12. Do not panic, your PFD will keep you afloat.
13. If we are close to shore, the steersperson might have you swim into shore. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUEmG3UMuhl

K. Weather

1. We will cancel practice in advance if the weather conditions are questionable.
2. If the weather adversely changes while we are on the water, we must return to the dock and terminate practice.

L. Boat Stability

To help maintain boat stability, make no sudden moves in the boat. Movement should only be fore and aft, never side to side. Stay seated in the boat at all times. In case of boat wakes or large waves, continue paddling as usual. The boat will wallow less if it is under power. Do not panic and stop paddling. Do not lean into the boat.

M. Swamping

If the boat should swamp (take in water due to waves or wake), it will not sink. Do not abandon the boat, keep paddling, use bailers or your cupped hands to get as much water out as possible.

N. Illness on the Boat

If you feel ill while paddling, stop immediately. Tell your seatmate who will tell the steersperson. If an emergency, call 911 as soon as possible. Return to the dock.

911 Lake Miona – Sumter County Medical Emergency- City of Oxford- 10501
County Road 115 Lake Miona Park Boat Ramp

911 Lake Sumter – Sumter County Medical Emergency – Waterfront Inn (352-753-7535) – 1105 Lakeshore Drive – Lake Sumter Landing Boat Dock

These 911 directions are available in all boats.

Team members not on the boat are asked to keep the boat under observation to be alert for an emergency. Should first responders be required, the members on shore should assist in directing the help to the location of the boat. At Lake Miona, we frequently ask the fishermen on the dock or in other boats to be alert for an audible signal of emergency to help when they are able.

CPR on boat – check for pulse – if none, start compressions 100/minute. Call 911, return to dock.

O. Drills

These procedures must be reviewed with all team members at least twice yearly. A list of those present for this review will be sent to the District Government Administration Office. New members must review these procedures before boarding a boat for the first time.

Adapted from suggestions of The Grand Masters Dragon Boat Club members and the Philadelphia Dragon Boat Festival Safety Plans. JN 4/8/2014

ADDENDUM 3/8/2021

Paddling Safety on ALL Lakes used by GMDBC members Safety for all paddlers is our #1 priority. The Steer Person is the Safety Officer on the boat and their command supersedes any other.

All paddlers must have personal identification with an emergency contact on their person while on the boat. The Steer Person must have a cell phone available while on the boat in the event of a medical emergency.

PFDs – All paddlers must WEAR (not on the floor) an approved PFD at all times while on the boat.

Wind Conditions – Boats are not permitted on the water when there are whitecaps and should end practice if the lake conditions change.

Thunder/Lightening – Boats are not permitted on the water if thunder is heard and teams should not return to the water until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder heard.

Fog—Lake Miona: If the shoreline opposite the loading dock cannot be seen, boats should not be on the water. Lake Sumter: If the lighthouse cannot be seen from the loading dock, boats should not be on the water. Boats are not permitted beyond the lighthouse if the bridge cannot be seen from the loading dock.

If the weather adversely changes while on the water, the team must return to the dock and terminate practice.

Practice should be cancelled in advance if the weather conditions are questionable. Use resources in advance of practice to check for wind and possible storm conditions; weather.com, weather underground app or the weatherbug app for lightening strikes.