

# Calgary Dragon Boat Society

## Member Handbook & Safety Guidelines

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## 1.0 Preamble

Safety of all participants is the number one priority. This manual is to be used primarily by the Drummers, Steerspersons, Coaches, and Team Captains to educate all participants about the safety rules and regulations.

The Drummer, Steersperson, Coach, and Team Captain:

1. Ensures the safety of a team on the reservoir during practice and the Calgary Dragon Boat Festival by following the established procedures stated in this document.
2. Ensures a team does not jeopardize the safety of other vessels on the water during training and races.
3. Teaches the team to be responsible in meeting the above two (2) goals. Everyone has a responsibility to "SAFETY".
4. The Drummer and Steersperson are in control of the dragon boat and are in the best position to make decisions involving safety (i.e. determining whether the boat and crew remain on the water, or return to dock, or head for calmer water, etc). This responsibility is also shared with the Coach and Team Captains.

## 2.0 Definitions and Terms

Boat Patrol: Rescue and patrol boat on the Glenmore Reservoir operated by the City of Calgary

Bow: Front of the dragon boat

Buoy: Floating marker that is anchored to the bottom of the reservoir; mooring buoys are attached to a boat when it is not being used for a practice or race, or used to mark

lanes/areas

Gunnel: Upper side edge of the dragon boat.

Mooring Rope: Rope that is located at the bow and stern of the boat to tie the boat to the docks, or to a mooring buoy in the Reservoir

PFD: Personal Floatation Device; must be Transport Canada Approved

Reservoir: Glenmore Reservoir

Stern: Back of the dragon boat

## 3.0 Glenmore Park and City of Calgary Bylaws

Specific parts of the Glenmore Park Bylaw 9018 that directly affect dragonboat activities are as follows and reference the original sections in the document referenced above.

13.5: No person shall use a Boat, except for rescue or maintenance purposes on the Glenmore Reservoir before sunrise or after sunset in any day.

16.1: No person shall enter the waters of the Glenmore Reservoir for any purpose whatsoever.

28a: Any person who contravenes any provision of this Bylaw is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than TWO THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$2,500.00) and in default of payment is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six (6) months.

Specific parts of the Water Safety Bylaw 9083 that directly affect dragonboat activities are as follows and reference the original sections in the document referenced above.

3.1: Unless he is wearing and continues while he is on or in the water an approved Personal Floatation Device or Life Jacket no person shall:

- (a) Enter or remain in;
- (b) Get on or remain on;
- (c) Hold on to;



a vessel in or on any portion of the waters of any natural or man-made rivers, streams, brooks, canals, lakes, reservoirs or other waterways or watercourses which are contained within the boundaries of the City.

3.2: The Personal Floatation Device or Life Jacket must be in a condition capable of adequately sustaining the person in the water without effort or motion of any kind of the person wearing it at the time the person is in or on or holding on to a vessel in or on the water described in Section (1).

#### 4.0 Member Personal and Safety Equipment

PFDs are available to all adult participants for use during practice sessions and the race weekend. It is mandatory for PFDs to be worn correctly at all times while aboard the dragon boat and when present on the dock. Participants may opt to use personal PFDs, provided they comply with the 9083 Water Safety Bylaws. For optimal safety, it is imperative to select a PFD that fits your body size and type accurately. Should you require assistance in selecting the appropriate size, please consult with your Team Captain or Coach. To preserve the integrity and buoyancy of the PFDs, avoid sitting on or compressing them as this can significantly reduce their effectiveness and longevity.

Participation in a dragon boat team necessitates the ability to swim and a comfort level with water-based activities. Members who do not possess these skills are obliged to inform their Team Captain and Coach promptly. Responsibility for personal safety during all dragon boat-related activities, including practice and racing, rests with the individual member, except as specified in section 14.0 of the safety guidelines. Furthermore, it is imperative that any injuries sustained during practice sessions or races be reported immediately to the Team Captain or Coach for appropriate action.

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These safety rules and regulations must be observed at all times during practices and where applicable, during races. All members should know the content of this document.

Members participating in on-water activities should wear appropriate clothing and have a change of clothing and/or towels with them.

#### 5.0 Glenmore Reservoir Community Interaction

All dragon boat teams must give right-of-way to ALL vessels on the reservoir.

##### Quiet Vessels

The vessels listed below are naturally powered (i.e. no engine). You may not hear them approaching, so it is important to be aware and understand their characteristics (stability, speed and hazards).

SAILBOATS have decreased visibility around the sail and mast, steering control decreases in high winds, and various “learn-to-sail programs” are conducted throughout the season. Sailboats are not allowed to enter the laned area of the



reservoir. Do not assume sailors are skilled.

**ROWING BOATS (SHELLS)** are very light and unstable boats. Rowers must constantly adjust their course according to water and wind conditions. Do not assume that shells

always travel in straight lines. Rowers look the opposite way they are traveling. Their backs are facing the direction of travel. Even if there is a Cox (person who steers the shell or calls out rowing rhythm), they are situated very close to the water level so the individual cannot always see clearly. Rowers often do interval training, so expect various speeds. Remember, shells can accelerate to high speeds very quickly. Various “learn-to-row programs” are conducted throughout the season. Do not expect a novice rower to move out of your way.

**RECREATIONAL CANOES** Assume canoe users are novices who are allowed to launch on the reservoir. There are no rules or regulations constraining the direction or use of a canoe.

**RECREATIONAL KAYAKS** can change direction very quickly and for the most part are stable vessels. A large majority of kayak users on the Reservoir are high school or university students and novice kayakers with “learn-to-kayak programs”.

**RACING CANOES AND KAYAKS** are extremely unstable. Paddlers choose their course based on water and wind conditions. Novice to intermediate paddlers can be capsized by a dragon boats’ wash (the surge or eddy of water caused by oars/paddles). Be considerate! Drummers and Steerspersons should check behind the dragon boat to make sure vessels have not been capsized.

**Motorized Vessels (with Engines)**

**COACH BOATS AND BOAT PATROL** may be seen following racing canoes and kayaks, and shells. Boat Patrol is the main safety boat operated by the City of Calgary and will respond to all emergencies on the Reservoir, and is responsible for educating the Glenmore Reservoir rules and regulations.

**SS MOYIE** is a big paddle wheel boat operated by Heritage Park. The captain and co-captain who reside in the captain’s booth navigate the SS Moyie located at the highest point of the vessel. There are two predefined routes that the SS Moyie can follow, but this is up to the discretion of the captain/co-captain. It is not allowed into the laned area of the Reservoir. The SS Moyie is not a responsive boat; therefore it changes speed and direction very slowly. The wake behind the SS Moyie is considerable. Try to avoid getting caught behind the wash. If you do end up in the wash, meet the wash head on, NOT parallel to the side of the dragon boat.

## 6.0 Retrieving and Returning The Dragon Boat

Steers should have an extra carabiner in the event one has gone missing from the dragon boat or canoe.

### Retrieving The Dragon Boat

Individuals designated to retrieve the dragon boat must be at practice 30-45 min. prior to published practice time. Three (3) members are required with a minimum of one (1) member being a certified steer. Absolutely NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule. Carry the canoe to the dock area. Once again, three (3) members are required. Load the canoe from the middle, then rear, and lastly front (most stable procedure). Then launch the canoe from the docks and paddle out to the dragon boat. Load the dragon boat with two (2) persons in either row 2 or 4 (main paddlers) and one person in row 10 or at the very back to steer. Paddle the dragon boat back to dock. USE CAUTION when docking, as the dragon boat will move around a lot, since the boat is not full of paddlers to hold the boat. One paddler will exit to tie off the front of the boat and then the rear. The other two members will hold onto the dock to help stabilize the dragon boat. DO NOT tie the boat tightly to the dock as this makes it unstable to board if the water conditions are choppy.



## Returning The Dragon Boat

Three (3) members are required with a minimum of one (1) member being experienced a certified steers. Absolutely NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule. Load the dragon boat with two (2) persons in either row 2 or 4 (main paddlers) and one person in row 10 or at the very back to steer. Paddle the dragon boat from the dock back to the buoy. Enter the canoe by starting in the middle, then rear, and lastly front. This is the most stable process of loading the canoe. Paddle the canoe back to dock. Paddle the canoe to the side of the dock. Unload the canoe from the front, back and then middle (most stable process). Carry the canoe from the dock to the canoe rack. Place the canoe, upside down, on the canoe rack and lock up the canoe.

## 7.0 Procedure For Loading and Unloading A Dragon Boat

Roster team on shore in the order of rows prior to walking down to the dock. Have team walk down to the dock, maintaining this line up. Prior to loading or unloading, ensure the dragon boat is tied at both the bow and stern. Maintain this line up on the dock next to the boat. Load the boat in the most efficient and safe manner that works for your team. Drummer or steer may assist in calling in rows. Paddlers shall load as follows: The outside paddler should step in the middle of the seat with their hands on the gunnel or seat and their weight low and balanced. They should sit in the middle until their partner is ready to load. The inside paddler gets in using the same technique, or by holding onto their partner's shoulder to help with balance. Once both paddlers are in the boat, they can slide over to their respective gunnel. Paddles should be kept out of the way of other paddlers getting in and out of the boat. If possible, they should be held over the water in order to brace the boat. Unload the boat in the most efficient and safe manner that your team is comfortable with.

## 8.0 Chain Of Command

Always obey the Chain Of Command. Yes, we mean ALWAYS, even if you hear "Check the Boat" during the middle of a race! The order of command is as follows: Steersperson/Drummer, Drummer/Steersperson, Coach, Team Captain, then Team Co-Captain.

## 9.0 Checking Boat Balance

Drummer and Steersperson will coordinate and execute the following: After members have boarded the boat, the mooring ropes are untied. Request paddlers to push off from dock using their hands. DO NOT use the blade end of the paddle. Let the dragon boat come to rest. Ensure everyone is next to the gunnel and sitting straight up. Check the balance. Have paddlers move positions as required to balance boat. Once the dragon boat is balanced as best as possible, commence with the practice.

## 10.0 Seat Changes Within A Dragon Boat

The Captain and the Coach will try to balance the boat prior to boarding. Drummers and Steer will coordinate and execute the following once the boat has been loaded: If paddlers need to move to another seat, "check" (stop) the dragon boat. All paddlers must "stabilize", "brace", or "hold" the boat while the dragon boat is at a complete stop. This keeps the dragon boat stable from side to side (left to right). Continue to "stabilize", "brace", or "hold" until the Drummer or Steer instructs the paddlers to stop. One paddler at a time, as instructed by the Drummer or Steer, shall be moved within the dragon boat. Once all the seat changes are made, Drummer or Steer instructs the paddlers to release "let it ride" and practice continues.



## 11.0 Dragon Boat Rescue Procedures

### Swamped or Capsized Dragon Boat During a Race or Practice

Once a dragon boat begins to capsize, it is very difficult to stop it. If you are on the higher side of the boat when it begins to go over, try to jump clear of your seat partner to avoid injury to him/her. If you come up under the boat, it will be dark, but 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. All individuals **MUST** stay with the dragon boat. Hold the dragon boat gunnels to help remain with the dragon boat. The “Buddy System” (below) will be utilized – all paddlers must ensure their seat partner is present. The coaching pod will be “buddied” up with each other. The Drummer, Coach, Steersperson or Captain will initiate a head count (i.e. roll call of the paddlers in their seated rows). The total number of paddlers in the capsized dragon boat must equate to the number of paddlers at the start of each practice. Next in Command to determine if any person(s) is injured or requires immediate assistance.

Once all paddlers are accounted for, stay calm and stay with the boat. Next in Command to use whistle to attract attention from individuals on shore or in other vessels. A dragon boat in distress is easily recognizable. A call will be made to the Boat Patrol as soon as possible. Once the Boat Patrol arrives, follow the directions given. Boat Patrol is in control of the situation now and the only contact between the team and the patrol is the Next in Command. Next in Command will notify the Boat Patrol if any person(s) requires immediate assistance. Help those in need to the patrol boat first. Boat Patrol will remove the paddlers from the water as soon as possible. They may shuttle groups to the nearest shore or to the dock depending on the distance. Boat Patrol will tow the dragon boat to the dock. Any able bodies should be available to assist in removing water from the dragon boat.

### The Buddy System

Know the person paddling in the seat next to you. In the event of an incident, you are responsible for ensuring that your partner is present and assess whether they are injured. Each person is also assigned a row number from 1 to X before loading onto the dragon boat. The Next in Command can initiate a roll call to account for everyone in the dragon boat. The coaching pod (drummer, coach, steersperson) will be “buddied” up with each other - responsible for ensuring the pod is accounted for, and assess for injuries.

### Missing Individual / Find and Rescue Procedure

Have paddlers look and feel around for the missing paddler(s) in their immediate vicinity without leaving the dragon boat. Each paddler to feel under the boat, within their immediate proximity, to see if the missing paddler is under the boat. If necessary, one individual **ONLY**, should check under the boat to ensure the missing person is not trapped underneath. This one individual will be assigned by the Next in Command Notify Boat Patrol as soon as they arrive, of missing person(s), if person(s) is/are not found by then. Once Boat Patrol arrives, the Boat Patrol is in control of the situation now and the only contact between the team and the patrol is the Next in Command.

### Swimming to Shore In The Event of a Capsize or Swamped Dragon Boat

This option can **ONLY** be exercised if the dragon boat is located approximately 50 meters away from shore. Once the entire team is accounted for, a **TEAM** decision can be made on whether to stay with the dragon boat and wait for Boat Patrol, or swim to shore. If **ANY** individual on the team is not comfortable swimming to shore, the entire **TEAM** shall remain together with the dragon boat. If the decision is to swim to shore, a head count is required on shore to ensure the entire team is accounted for.



## 12.0 Weather, Wave and Wind Patterns

If the coaching/steering pod does not have the experience/skill necessary to ensure a safe practice, the team does not go out onto the reservoir. The Coach, Captain, Drummer and Steer can decide not to proceed with practice based on weather and the following considerations:

### Wave and Wind Patterns

Direct side waves are most dangerous for swamping/sinking the boat. As water goes over the side/gunnel, the respective side of the boat begins to sink, letting in even more water. Be aware of heavy crews in waves, as they are already sitting low in the water. Head winds are less likely to sink the boat but will make it difficult getting back to the dock. If you are paddling with a novice crew, it may take a long time. Do not panic and force the crew to get back to dock faster. Remain calm and encourage the crew with a steady paddle. When the boat becomes unstable, some paddlers will panic and stop paddling. This will cause even more instability to the boat. Encourage paddlers to continue paddling to minimize the chance of swamping/capsizing. Steer should be familiar with how to compensate for the wind/waves. It is best to orientate the dragon boat with or against the direction of the wave to avoid the waves hitting the dragon boat on the sides.

The wind generally blows across from Glenmore Landing in a SE → NW direction. The roughest section of the reservoir is the last 250m of the laned section and the sailing boat section.

### Weather on the Reservoir

High winds or storms often come up around 3:30 or 4:00 pm and calm down around 6:00 pm. The first practice on weeknights begins at 5:45 pm, so practices will only be cancelled on-site and not beforehand. During the weekends, added caution is required. Historically, mornings and early afternoon are calm and worry free. Late afternoon and early evening are when the weather pattern usually changes quickly. Check with Boat Patrol for guidance. If a storm is approaching with high winds, it is recommended that you follow the shoreline back to dock. The hills surrounding the reservoir will lessen the effects of the wind and in case of an incident; the shoreline can be more easily reached. CDBS reserves the right to cancel practices due to extreme weather conditions such as storms, high winds, or air quality (AQI) of 7+ due to smoke.

It is advisable to consult with the Boat Patrol should any questions arise, 403-371-8674. In the event of lightning, the Boat Patrol reserves the right to prohibit all watercraft from entering the water for safety reasons. Please be aware that the Boat Patrol holds the authority to make the final decision on matters pertaining to water safety.

## 13.0 Mandatory Dragon Boat Equipment

The Dragon Boat MUST contain the following equipment at all times while on the reservoir: One (1) bailer in boat and two (2) whistles, one with the Drummer and one with the Steer. The whistles will be attached to the lifejackets.

## 14.0 Age and Youth Safety Requirements

For Festivals and other on-water competitive events: The minimum age of paddlers is 10 years of age. The applicable age must be reached by the date of the event. In boats consisting of multiple youth participants, at minimum the Drummer and Steersperson must be 18 years of age as of the date of the event. Under-age participants will be required to fill in a waiver by hand with their parent or guardian



present and co-signing with an appointed member of the board of directors. Electronic waivers will not be accepted for under-age participants at Festivals or other on-water competitive events.

For practice and other non-competitive event like Try it Days and Camps: Youth paddlers under the age of 18 must be accompanied in the boat by a responsible adult that is 18 years of age or higher.

For any on-water activity, the parent or guardian is responsible for assuring that the under-age participant has a certified and properly fitted personal floatation device (PFD). CDBS has a limited supply of adult small PFDs, however these are not guaranteed to properly fit every young person.

It is the responsibility of the adults on the boat to assess the hazards on the reservoir including weather and water conditions. They are responsible for the health and safety of any under-age paddlers on the boat.

Per the City of Calgary website in relation to water safety: “Get the correct size. Lifejackets and personal floatation devices have manufacturer size recommendations to help you find the right size. For adults, chest size—not weight—determines the correct size. For children, weight determines the size. Test the lifejacket or personal floatation device by holding your arms over your head and asking someone nearby to grab the tops of the arm openings and gently pull. Make sure there is no extra room above the arm openings and that the jacket does not ride up over your face or chin. Remember, there is a mandatory court appearance and up to \$500 fine for not wearing a life jacket or PFD on Calgary’s waterways.”

#### 15.0 Reference

Parks & Pathways Bylaw 20M2003 - <https://www.calgary.ca/bylaws/parks-pathways.html>

Glenmore Park Bylaw 9018 - <https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/ca/city-clerks/documents/legislative-services/bylaws/9018-glenmorepark.pdf>.

Water Safety Bylaw 9083 - <https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/ca/city-clerks/documents/legislative-services/bylaws/9084-watersafety.pdf>

