



AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION FLATWATER KAYAK SAFETY AND RESCUE

Course Overview:

This workshop introduces essential flatwater safety practices and rescue techniques that can be performed with a minimum of equipment, in the first few minutes of an emergency.

Course Objectives:

- Understand that prevention is the key to a safe trip.
- Understand how to avoid potential dangers.
- Develop and practice key self-rescue skills.
- Learn to focus on fast, simple, low-risk rescue techniques.
- Develop the skills to manage minor in-water incidents.

Participant Qualifications:

- Course participants should be comfortable paddling in conditions of up to one foot waves, 10 knot winds, and 2 knot current. Students should be in good health and overall fitness, possess solid swimming ability, and be comfortable in the water.
- Participants should dress appropriately for weather and water temperature, and expect to be in the water for extended periods of time.

Minimum Personal Equipment for the Course:

Appropriately fitted PFD designed for paddling, protective clothing suitable for extended swims, appropriate footwear, boat, paddle, and whistle. Recreational, whitewater or coastal kayaks may be used, at the instructor's discretion.

Course Duration: Four + hours

Course Location: Flat water with easy access and sufficient depth for safe wet exits by beginners. Protected space is needed for on-land work, with adequate shelter for inclement weather. This class should be held within ¼ mile of shore.

Course Outline:

Welcome & Introduction:

- Introductions and expectations
- Class overview
- Waivers and medical forms
- Safety plan, “challenge by choice” approach

- Site logistics (bathrooms, food and drink policies, no controlled substances...)
- ACA overview

Introduction to Basic Safety and Rescue

- Avoiding trouble
- Trip planning, competent leader
- Rescue philosophy

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- The big 3 – near drowning, hypothermia and spinal management; need for further training
- RETHROG
- KISS
- Rescue organization
- Reality of injuries and death

Communication and signals

- Hand, paddle and whistle signals
- Cell phone or radio when appropriate

Equipment

- Makes your trip safer and more comfortable
- Clothing
- Kayaks with flotation or bulkheads
- Paddle float and pump
- PFD
- Helmet (when appropriate)
- Knife and whistle
- First aid kit
- VHF radio and/or cell phone

Swimming skills

- Basis for self-rescue; fundamental personal safety skill
- Wet exits on-land practice, then in-water with one-on-one supervision
- Defensive swimming
- Aggressive swimming
- Swimming with kayaks

Assisted Rescues and Tows

- Allows one boater to assist another; fundamental group safety skills
- T rescue with and without sling
- Eskimo bow and paddle rescue
- Contact tow and cowtail use
- Back deck rescues for swimmers

Rope Handling Skills

- Selecting a tow line
- Handling tows in wind and current
- Throw rope use

Rescue of Loose Boats and Gear

- Self rescue, hold onto boat and paddle when appropriate – Group rescue, rescue people over boats, but don't lose the boat in open water when adequate personnel available, split the load; one person rescues the swimmer, one the boat and one the paddle
- Boat bumping / snowplow methods
- Boat over boat rescues
- Towing – short line and short distance

Conclusion & Wrap-up

- Opportunities for additional training
- Continue to practice skills – this is just an introduction!

Resources:

Sea Kayaking Safety and Rescue (J. Lull)
Sea Kayak Rescue (Schumann and Shriner)
Handbook of Safety and Rescue (Pardy and Alderson)