

BRITISH DRAGON BOAT RACING ASSOCIATION



Health and Safety Statement

Introduction.

Whilst some forms of "Paddle Sport" have an inherent risk factor, not all paddle sports are a 'risk' activity. Dragon Boat Racing, which normally takes place on placid inland waters has a proven very low risk factor. However, no water based sport can ever be totally safe and when a tragedy does occur, the media tends to react out of all proportion to the actual fact that there is a very low incidence of fatalities within water sports as a whole and paddle sports in particular.

Modern Society is faced with a dilemma. As individuals, we all want and demand 'freedom of expression and action'. In reality, however, the exercise of such freedoms can cause us personal harm and mixed reactions from those around us. Officialdom looks to apportion blame and some people seek recompense against those who permitted or set up the activity. The media joins in this process. In consequence, incidents are distorted beyond recognition, and the dividing line between freedom of action, and responsible provision, becomes difficult to define. The BDA Executive Committee, in taking due regard to the realities of water sports' life does not agree with the view that the occasional loss of life that inevitably occurs in any water sport is disastrous for the sport concerned and seeks to maintain responsible **but not restrictive** standards of safety within the sport.

BDA Position.

The difficulty therefore, for the BDA, as the National Governing Body (NGB) for the sport, is to walk the tightrope of laying down reasonable safety procedures for racing, yet retaining the excitement and competitiveness of the sport, which by the very nature of the element it takes place on – water, will always carry with it an element of danger. In seeking to achieve this balance in matters of Health and Safety, the BDA order of priority in deciding whether action of any kind should be taken, is:

- 1 That no one should lose their life or be seriously injured, if this could have been avoided through the implementation of simple warnings or safeguards.
- 2 That unnecessary adverse publicity should not accrue to the sport. Such publicity may only serve to give credibility to those who may seek to try and apply restrictive legislation to the sport.
- 3 That where reasonably possible, grounds for a claim against the Association's insurance policy be avoided, in order to maintain the continuance of the benefits of this insurance cover, at a reasonable cost to the BDA Members.

Individuals and organizations staging dragon boating events should therefore take such precautions as are reasonably practicable in the light of this Statement and to follow the advice on all aspects of dragon boating given in the BDA Water Safety Policy and Safety on the Water Leaflets , which are published separately.

BDA Events. The BDA recognises the following events and activities:-

1. **British Dragon Boat Racing Association (BDA) events and activities**, are those dragon boat events and activities that are directly organised, administered, or are controlled by the Association. This definition includes all events and activities organised, administered or within the control of the BDA Executive Committee, its Officers or Sub-Committees.
2. **BDA Full Member** (Clubs, Crews or Individuals) organised events and activities. This refers to all dragon boating services organised by BDA Members holding the appropriate insurance cover and using BDA qualified personnel.
3. **BDA Sanctioned Events**, that is those run by non member organisations holding a BDA Race Permit. Such events will be listed on the BDA web site Events Calendar. *The inclusion of events on the BDA Calendar or their notification in BDA Publication does not, in itself, imply BDA recognition or indemnity under the BDA Public Liability Insurance Policy*
4. **Dragon Boat Activities** organised by BDA Registered Centres' or Accredited Organisations, holding the appropriate insurance cover and using BDA qualified staff.
5. **BDA Coaching Awards Courses and Dragon Boat Activities** run by suitably insured and qualified individuals holding the appropriate BDA Licenses.
6. **Unrecognised dragon boating.** Events and Activities organised by non BDA Member organisations without a Race Permit or Activity License or individuals without the appropriate BDA qualification, are NOT recognised by the BDA or covered by the BDA Public Liability Insurance Policy.

Insurance Benefits and Procedures Public Liability (Perkins Slade)

Third party insurance cover is a benefit of BDA membership and applies to; individual BDA members, resident in the UK, BDA Registered clubs and crews and associate and affiliate members holding the appropriate BDA Licenses and qualifications. The limit of indemnity any one accident is up to a maximum of £5,000,000 for a claim arising from loss, injury to, the death of or damage to the property of a third party. The insurance is valid for any dragon boating or related activity worldwide.

Member to member' liability is included as are individual members when officiating or acting in an instructional capacity. This cover includes all crew members when training for, traveling to or from or when participating in a BDA Recognised Competitive Event. *Group insurance policies may not include cover directly between members. It is an advantage of the cover available to BCU members that such member to member cover has been negotiated.*

The law requires us all to take reasonable care for the safety of others. The moral code clearly also implies this duty. In practical terms, if a large claim occurred, the renewal premium could be prohibitive. There is therefore a duty on all of us to ensure that it remains at modest cost to the BDA for the benefit of the member who may become the genuine victim of circumstance. It is important that the policy is not invoked through irresponsibility.

BDA Liability Insurance Professional Indemnity (Perkins Slade)

The BDA Civil Liability policy wording has been amended to automatically include all registered coaches when providing tuition, whether for a fee or not, as an individual. Where any such coach is operating as a business by using a business or company name, separate insurance arrangements must be made

Safety Principles

There is a responsibility in law for organisers of activities to see that reasonable precautions are undertaken to ensure the safety of participants. This Statement covers some basic principles and gives advice on general safety and water safety issues.

These issues are covered in detail in the BDA Water Safety Policy, which should be read in conjunction with this Statement.

Where obvious hazards exist, it is expected that organisers will undertake to identify and take such precautions as seem appropriate and reasonable in the circumstances to provide for the safety of event organizers, volunteers and participants.

These could include:

1. Ensuring that a risk assessment of the event or activity has taken place to establish that any planned activity or event is indeed safe and reasonable, that any identified hazard can be controlled, that monitoring activities for the event or activity are in place and that established cut off procedures are in place.
2. Giving factual information to participants concerning the particular nature of any hazards which may exist. This could be by way of ensuring access to and knowledge of the BDA Water Safety Policy and this Statement.
3. Ensuring that each participant has signed a disclaimer as shown in the BDA Water Safety Policy. This does not absolve the organiser from his or her responsibility to undertake reasonable precautions, nor does it remove the participant's right in law to sue for damages should negligence be involved. It does, however, affirm that the attention of the person has been drawn to the potential risks associated with the activity, if such is involved.
4. Where 'open water' is involved in a competitive event or training the provision of sufficient safety craft for any situation which could develop in the conditions in which the event, held in part or in whole on open water, is to be run. (Dragon Boat activities - by groups of paddlers equipped for an open water trip under the leadership of a BDA Coaching Scheme Member, is covered in detail in the Water Safety Policy)
5. Where training in winter and racing in adverse conditions is involved, the BDA Water Safety Policy gives recommendations on the wearing of buoyancy aids. Advice on personal floatation for other events where a risk may be present is, shown in the BDA Safety on Water Information Leaflet published in all BDA Race Programmes.
6. Participation in competitive events should be limited to those who declare themselves to be water confident and able to handle the physical demands of the sport, taking into account the amount of safety and medical cover available.

Other Areas:

Where electrical or mechanical apparatus is used in the running of an event, care should be taken to ensure that it is operated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and instructions

PARTICIPATION NOTICE

The BDA will be issuing the following Participation Notice to all Dragon Boat participants to draw their attention to the fact that dragon boating is a risk water sport even though **statistically** the risk is very slight.

The Participation Notice will read as follows.

"Dragon Boating is an 'Assumed Risk Water Contact Sport' that may carry attendant risks. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks; be responsible for their own actions and involvement; and fully understand that they have a duty of care towards other participants in the sport".

It is proposed to use this statement in all appropriate BDA literature (for example entry forms) in 2003.

An abbreviated form which can also be used where appropriate, as follows:-

"Dragon Boating is an "Assumed Risk - Water Contact Sport."

The BDA also recommends that BDA Members include in their own literature one or the other of the above notices where appropriate for example, on the inside cover of club news letters or in the preamble or introduction to longer documents.

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Copies of the BDA Water Safety Policy and the BDA Safety on the Water Leaflet, can be obtained from the BDA Chairman:-

Email: Mike.Haslam@ntlworld.com

Fax: 01 633 666796

Tel: 01 633 256796

or write to: 44 Bassaleg Road, Newport, South Wales, NP20 3EA



The BDA acknowledges the British Canoe Union (BCU) Health & Safety Statement in the preparation of this leaflet