HAZARDS

Stay away from strainers!

Low-head dams are tough to see from upstream and very difficult to escape. Both strainers and low-head dams are regarded as “drowning machines.” These hazards are dangerous—avoid them, portage around them, and ALWAYS SCOUT AHEAD!

Keep It Stable!

DANGER

Leaning shoulders outside the edge of the boat can lead to a capsize. Keep your weight low and balanced over the centerline of the boat.

Cold Water

can be a KILLER! Loss of body heat, the possibility of hypothermia, and at the very least, the end of your float trip can be a result of falling into cold water.

The Law and You

Officers can provide regulatory information, valuable reports on current water conditions, and other useful information. It is your responsibility to know the regulations which apply to where you boat.

Remember to...

- Wear your life jacket.
- File a float plan.
- Never go paddling alone.
- Scout ahead for water hazards.

Know and Enjoy More!

www.AmericanCanoe.org

SMARTSTART for Safe Paddling

A

American Canoe Association

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Prepare to Paddle Safely

**PFD TYPES**

**TYPE 1:** Intended for offshore use. Be safe and keep your life jacket snug. Read the life jacket’s label. The right fit provides the right flotation. Remember, it doesn’t work if you don’t wear it!

**TYPE 2:** Near-shore buoyancy vests. They are not recommended for paddlers.

**TYPE 3:** Flotation Aid. They are recommended for paddlers.

**TYPE 4:** Throwable devices. These are not required on canoes or kayaks and are not to be used as substitutes for life jackets.

**TYPE 5:** These are special use life jackets. They may be appropriate and recommended for certain uses by paddlers.

**WEAR IT!**

- Buckle up!
- Zip up!

Best Paddling Practices

**Pay Attention!**

- STAY ALERT and be ready to move out of danger.
- STAY VISIBLE because others may not see you.

**SHARE THE WATER:**

- Give others the room they need to enjoy the waters.

**Be Considerate of Others**

- Keep the scene clean and pick-up litter.

**Never Boat Under the Influence**

- While paddling can be easy, it’s no excuse to paddle under the influence. Paddling a kayak or canoe requires a responsible, safe, and aware operator. Don’t blur that operation with alcohol and drugs.

- A group of paddlers is safer, but this should not become a drinking party!

Know Before You Go!

- Know the waters you plan to float.
- MAPS & GUIDES
- WEATHER REPORT
- What waters do you expect to paddle and are you prepared?

Boarding and Re-entry

**Boarding**

- Keep at least three points of contact and stay low for balance. Be a steadying influence on your partner!

**Practice Re-entry**

- If shore is too far away, your buddies can help you empty and re-enter your boat.

- Although you may intend to be IN your canoe or kayak, expect the unexpected and know what to do if you find yourself IN the water. Stay calm and stay with the boat.

- In most cases, getting wet or swamping your boat is no reason to end your trip. If you fall out in current, keep your feet on the surface and swim to shore.

- Just dump the water out, re-enter and you’re on your way.