



Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

Contact us at: info@axevalecc.co.uk

Website: <http://www.axevalecc.co.uk/>

Affiliated to British Canoeing and
Quality Mark accredited



Safety Policy

Author: **Ross Dell, Safety Officer**
rossdell@gmail.com

Reviewed 5/4/25

Safety Introduction

Paddling is a safe sport in the UK with risk of death or serious injury below 1 per 1 million participants.

All club members on and off the water, are responsible for ensuring that our actions do not compromise our own safety or the safety of others. Axe Vale Canoe club is committed to a culture of "safety first".

All AVCC paddlers should ensure they have read and understood this document on safety in paddlesport, to ensure they experience safe, comfortable and enjoyable paddling.

The club Safety Officer works with the AVCC committee to promote safe paddling and takes the lead on assessing risk. Please speak to the Safety Officer if you have any concerns or suggestions about safety or message them at the address above.

BOAT SAFETY

This policy is for club boats and individual member's boats which are used on club activities. Members who have their own boats should check them regularly.

This involves:

- **Buoyancy** - boats must not sink when swamped and Buoyancy must be adequately secured in the case of canoes.
- **Ropes or grab handles** are secure and fit for purpose (should be manufacturer fitted)
- **Easy exit** is possible in event of capsize/ no impedance to exit
- **Footrests** are sound, will not allow foot entrapment, and will not break with impact.
- **Skeg (where fitted)** is in working order
- **Customisation** / modification of boats (particularly kayak cockpit) can lead to impaired exit and must be avoided according to British Canoeing. If in doubt please ask a leader or coach, details of these are on the club noticeboard.
- The use of **kneeling mats** in canoes should be avoided with **novice paddlers**, to reduce the risk of injury associated with slipping or tripping.
- **Labelling**: Club boats are labelled and all members boats should carry their name and emergency contact details, members are responsible for ensuring this is done to their own boat.
- **Annual Check** takes place at the club (normally in February) on our club boats to ensure they are in good condition.

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

Lost Boat

If you are involved in an incident where a boat is lost, please report it ASAP to

- **Coastguard (e.g. Falmouth Coastguard: 01326 317 575)**
- **Police (101)**

This will reassure the emergency services that nobody is at risk and avoid unnecessary searches.

BUOYANCY AID (PFD) SAFETY

When paddling a Buoyancy aid **must be worn at all times including getting on and off the water**. Club and Personal Buoyancy Must be:

- **CE Standard EN393** (international standard IS 12402), Bright **Colour**
- **Adjustable** to fit including a belt or draw cord to stop BA from lifting up in the water.
- Fitted with an attached **Whistle**.
- Has a leg loop if for young children.
- Pockets/ contents **must not impede paddling, exit or rescue**.
- Advanced **WW Buoyancy** should be properly fitted and the wearer must have undertaken training on how to use the integral harness.
- **Stored** correctly (after cleaning, dry on hanger, after drying do not crush)
- **All AVCC paddlers are responsible for checking, each time they paddle, that their BA is in good order and correctly adjusted and comfortable**. In addition, we are all responsible for checking our **fellow paddlers BAs look properly fitted** (it's often easier for someone else to see shoulder straps are loose).
- Annual check takes place to ensure all club Buoyancy aids are in good order. Normal lifespan is up to 5 years.
- AVCC strongly recommends individuals who purchase their own BAs do so from a reputable supplier that includes ensuring the correct fitting, e.g. AS Watersports.

LIFEJACKET SAFETY

Paddle UK (PUK) advise that these are ideal for

- Non swimmers
- Very young children under supervision
- Paddlers with pre-existing medical conditions that could cause unconsciousness or disorientation.

AVCC keeps lifejackets for use in these situations and a **leader or coach must be consulted before using**.

HELMET SAFETY

AVCC Policy is for paddlers to use helmets as follows

- All participants on **Kayak courses** must wear paddlesport helmets when paddling, including getting on and off the water.

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

- All **under 18 paddlers** must wear paddle sport helmets when paddling canoe and kayak, to include getting on and off the water.
- Kayak: all **Moving water (e.g. tidal flow at River Axe entrance)** including getting on and off the water and when doing **rescue practice** including in the **pool**.
- Canoe: **moving water Grade 3** and above including getting on and off the water or when in surf.
- **Sea Paddlers** (canoe & kayak) should all take a helmet with them, easily available to the paddler to put on quickly when at risk of head injury including Surfing, Paddling in caves or paddling close to rocks and cliffs, including getting on and off water close to rocks.
- At all times it is the responsibility of the **individual over 18 paddler** to make the decision on whether to wear a helmet when going paddling, or to put a helmet on during a paddle. Paddlers can discuss with a coach or leader, but if in doubt wear a helmet!
- Annual Check takes place for club equipment and individual paddlers are responsible for checking their helmet is in good order and correctly adjusted.

SPRAY DECK SAFETY

AVCC Policy is as follows:

- Spraydecks must be checked by the **individual paddler**, each time before setting out to ensure the deck is in good order, including pull strap/loop, cockpit elastic and body tube. This applies to both club & personal spraydecks
- All paddlers must know how to **release the spray deck** and exit boat safely, including if the spraydeck handle is not functioning, this is covered in courses.
- **Annual check of condition** of club spraydecks takes place but all paddlers have a duty to check their club spraydeck is in good order.
- Coaches and Leaders must ensure their spraydeck is **solid** enough to be able to perform a rescue without being compromised.

PADDLES SAFETY

PUK advise that choosing the correct paddle is vital to avoid injury or repetitive strain and joint problems. Advice can come from Club coaches, outdoors centres, experienced paddlers or retailers.

AVCC Policy is to ensure individual paddlers check the club paddle they are using or their own paddle, is in good condition before setting out.

Spare Paddles

These are often carried by experienced paddlers. Leaders should ensure a group has sufficient spare paddles for any trip.

REPORTING any BOAT or KIT PROBLEMS

If any paddler finds a club boat or other piece of equipment that has a problem, please ensure you report this to a leader or coach. Please ensure a “do not use” Label is placed on the boat or item so we can ensure it’s out of service until it’s fixed. These labels are available in the clubhouse next to the Blue Board which we can all use as a visible record of problems identified.

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

CLOTHING SAFETY

AVCC Policy

- All paddlers must dress for the water temperature i.e. to **be prepared for immersion with every trip on the water**. Ability to **survive in cold water depends** on how well the paddler has **prepared** in particular with their clothing.
- We need a culture of “expect to get wet” and always carry our own **spare clothing** in a dry bag being essential for **all paddlers**.
- If in doubt about what clothing to wear, check with a club leader or coach **before** coming on a trip.
- If carrying phones or cameras on lanyards these must be stowed away in pockets with no loose lines and secured on BA or boat. It is important to avoid looping any fixed lanyard around a paddlers neck as this could be a serious hazard.

SAFETY TRAINING

AVCC Policy

Training: The club provides **safety training** through:

- Beginners courses
- Welcome/ test out paddlers for new experienced members
- Rescue training sessions provided on an occasional basis including pool sessions and river and sea sessions.
- All members should ensure they have done the relevant training **appropriate to the environment they paddle in**. For example, paddlers wanting to paddle white water are strongly advised to attend a PUK approved “Introduction to White Water Safety” course. In addition, regular moving water paddlers should undertake the **PUK white water safety and rescue course**, provided by local external providers. . If in doubt, seek advice from a club leader or coach.

MANUAL HANDLING AND LIFTING SAFETY

Lifting boats is the main cause of injury for paddlers, frequently to the back. All paddlers are encouraged to ask fellow paddlers to assist them when lifting boats. Normally minimum of 2 to lift and carry a boat (small kayaks can be carried solo after training on safe lifting). The risk of injury is greater the higher the load goes above waist and the more outstretched your arms are held. Aim to ..

- Lift with leg muscles by bending knees and keep back straight and shoulders level.
- Hold the load as close to your body as possible

PUK provide an online course on safe lifting and manual handling for further information on this.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT (e.g. throw lines)

AVCC Policy

- PUK provide **safety courses** from foundation level to advanced level and PUK advises that all paddlers should have coaching on safety equipment relevant to their needs.

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

- If you carry any piece of safety equipment you must have been shown how to use it and feel confident to use it. If in doubt ask a coach or go on a safety course.
- All safety and rescue equipment should be carried so it's **easily accessible** and carried "**clean**" to avoid snagging on the bank or in the water.
- **White water safety guidance** including equipment attached to BA is published by PUK. WW leaders should carry a throw line and rescue knife that is easily accessible
- Spare clothing, communication equipment and first aid equipment should be carried in **waterproof containers** as appropriate e.g. waterproof phone case, canoe barrel
- **Repair kit** should be carried by leaders.
- An appropriate **towing system** that is easily accessible for quick deployment and quick release should be carried by the leader on a trip on the sea or river if appropriate. These may be carried and used by other experienced paddlers as instructed by group leaders.

TRAVELLING TO PADDLE and TRANSPORTING OF BOATS by CAR SAFETY

When traveling by car all paddlers should have with them **High Vis clothing** (e.g. jacket or similar) to wear when working close to busy roads/ in poor lighting to reduce risk of injury by vehicle.

AVCC Policy on Roof carriage of boats.

- **Roof Rack** should be from a reputable manufacturer and the maximum load bearing must not be exceeded.
- **Fitting and securing** of the roof rack should be regularly checked and according to manufacturer's instructions.
- **Boat Rear Overhangs** from a vehicle are Recommended to be **clearly marked** up to 1m and mandatory marked over 1m.
- **Drivers** are responsible for ensuring their vehicles are loaded safely and in accordance with UK legislation including the use of trailers (which is covered by detailed DVLA guidance).

SAFEGUARDING

Axe Vale Canoe Club takes its safeguarding responsibilities very seriously with children, young people and with adults. AVCC has a Safeguarding Officer who leads on this matter. The club upholds all PUK Safeguarding policies, procedures, legislation and guidance to ensure all members paddle in a safe environment free from exclusion, abuse, neglect and poor practice.

- The Club notice board is up to date with all relevant safeguarding details and contacts.
- A folder with all relevant safeguarding information, to include British canoeing policies, contacts and reporting procedures are made available to all club members.
- All coaches, leaders and helpers will have completed the relevant training and vetting (DBS) process for their role.
- Coaches, leaders and helpers are encouraged to subscribe to the annually DBS vetting services.

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

- Where safeguarding training is needed, the nominated safeguarding officer will source or signpost coaches, leaders and helpers to the necessary training needed for their role.
- All Safeguarding information is available on the club website.

RECORDING INCIDENTS

The recording of injuries, accidents and near misses can be done by all members in the AVCC accident book kept in the clubhouse.

PUK has an online reporting process for reporting incidents concerning safety and all paddlers can raise concerns by following this link. <https://paddleuk.org.uk/online-incident-reporting/>

LONE PADDLING

AVCC recommends paddlers always paddle with others in groups of a minimum size of three. Lone paddling carries significant risk and should be avoided - as advised by British Canoeing.

WATERBORNE infections including Weil's Disease

Prevention: Stagnant bodies of water especially Canals and reservoirs are the greatest risk where rats may live, but rivers also. When paddling in these environments it is important to thoroughly wash hands especially before eating and drinking and to clean and cover any wound ASAP. Wash yourself and all equipment as soon as possible after paddling. Avoid rescue practice in these environments.

Awareness: Weil's disease symptoms can be non-specific, flu-like symptoms including lethargy. If you experience illness after paddling waters at risk, ensure you speak to a DOCTOR and tell them you do WATERSPORTS as the diagnosis may not be considered and it can be fatal.

Further information at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Leptospirosis/>

Sewage Overflow: Over the last few years water quality has been impacted by heavy rainfall leading to sewerage overflow. Paddlers and leaders can look at resources for example Surfers against Sewage websites and apps, as well as PUK map resource:

<https://paddleuk.org.uk/new-national-sewage-spill-map-released-by-water-uk/>

COLD INJURY (hypothermia)

Exposure to cold, wet and windy conditions can lead to excessive heat loss and then COLD INJURY where the body's core temperature drops. Symptoms may be mild (shivering, clumsy, quiet) at first, but it can become a serious threat to health very quickly.

"Your ability to survive cold water depends on how well you prepare"

HEAT EXHAUSTION (hyperthermia)

In very hot conditions, often combined with dehydration, the symptoms may be mild to begin with, sweating, nausea, thirst. It is really important to recognise Heat Exhaustion early, as if it progresses, it can become very serious with confusion, impaired consciousness or seizure.

Treatment: Seek rest in a cool place and rehydrate, if not improving quickly then call the emergency services without delay.

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

LIGHTNING SAFETY

Every year lightning strikes 300,000 times per year in Britain and this risk should be considered by paddlers.

Prevention: If lightning is forecast to be likely then **paddling should not take place** as it puts us in places that make it difficult to seek shelter.

If lightning develops whilst on the water, paddle to the bank and get off the water ASAP as proximity of water increases danger of strike. Protect yourself and leave paddles and boats behind. If you cannot seek shelter then crouch down, hands on knees, head tucked in, to reduce risk of strike. Avoid shelter under trees as these increase likelihood of strike.

FIRST AID & MEDICAL CONDITION SAFETY

AVCC courses and trips are run by coaches and leaders who have up to date First Aid qualifications (these have to be updated every 3 years). First aid trained Coaches and leaders are authorized to carry out first aid during club activities and these people can be identified on the club notice board. The Safety Officer is available for advice on first aid matters, for any queries from coaches and leaders.

First aid equipment is kept in the first aid kit in the clubhouse as well as carried by coaches and leaders. The Safety Officer is responsible for checking the clubhouse first aid kit is up to date.

PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITION SAFETY

Any previous condition need not be a barrier to participation and the club is committed to including all paddlers regardless of disability or condition.

It is important for coaches and leaders to know if any paddlers have a pre-existing condition so they can best adapt the paddling to suit the paddler and ensure they have a safe and healthy experience. It is similarly important that any existing paddler who develops a significant health problem shares this with coaches or leaders who are responsible for their welfare on future paddles. PUK produces guidance for paddlers, coaches and leaders on conditions such as Epilepsy, Diabetes, Anaphylaxis and Asthma.

At AVCC, the Safety Officer is available to give advice to paddlers, coaches and leaders on pre-existing medical conditions and how to best support paddlers to ensure safe paddling.

SEA ENVIRONMENT SAFETY

Calls to the RNLI have been steadily rising from paddlers over the last 5 years; frequently with novice paddlers, offshore winds and currents or paddlers unable to get back on their craft.

AVCC endorses RNLI safety at sea advice and the RNLI “**respect the water**” campaign.

- Always carry a means of calling for help WITHIN REACH when you are paddling.
- Wear a BA
- Check Weather & Tide, understand how they will affect you
- Paddle a seaworthy craft capable of coping with the conditions
- Tell someone WHERE you are going and WHEN you'll be back
- Wear appropriate CLOTHING.
- Get some TRAINING.

RNLI produces Kayaking Safety Packs with a label and reflective tape for boats as well as advice for paddlers. www.RNLI.org/KayakSafe

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

Notifying HM Coastguard

This is recommended if you are undertaking rescue training or paddling in reduced visibility (including night paddling) or on multiple day trips i.e. situations where the coastguard may be notified of your activities on the sea.

Buildings/Premises Safety

FIRE SAFETY

Axe Vale canoe club undertakes annual fire safety assessment to check fire safety systems as well as fire extinguishers at the club. Fire safety is directed by our premises officer who maintains a record of the checks kept in the clubhouse.

LEGIONELLA SAFETY

The premises officer oversees LEGIONELLA safety who organizes an annual check at the club, normally on maintenance day. Hot water cylinders are heated up to 60°C and flushed through on along with a check to ensure no containers holding water outside the building. All water is supplied off mains supply and none is kept in storage. This annual check is recorded in the maintenance record held in the clubhouse.

ELECTRICAL SUPPLY SAFETY

The club undertakes annual PAT safety testing to ensure that the main electricity supply is safe. This is coordinated by the club's premises officer. This check is recorded in the club maintenance record held in the club.

Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

EVENT AND COMPETITION SAFETY

PUK Advice

Open club event e.g. River Axe Race and Open Canoe Weekend

An open event is one to which other clubs / independent paddlers may be openly invited and/or the event is publicly promoted. In such instances the responsibility for the authorisation of the event, as in closed club events, falls to the club committee and as guided by the appointed club Safety Officer.

Agreed Actions

- Committee officer to attend Events Safety Management training.
 - The focus of the workshop is to raise awareness of safety management and duty of care issues as they affect clubs/groups, both in their normal everyday/weekly activities and also when they may engage in running events open/promoted to others.
 - The workshop provides guidance and support to mitigate risk using the concept of an 'event span of control'
- Risk assessments will be informed by 'event span of control' document (see appendix A).

Appendix A

