

Australian Dragon Boat Federation Safety Handbook



Edition: 3

Reviewed: January - August 2021

Approved: 21 September 2021

Updated: 15 July 2023

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Document Control

DOCUMENT HISTORY		
ISSUE	DATE	STATUS
Draft	7th January 2013	Draft for comment
Issued	December 2012	
Reviewed	September 2013	
Reviewed	November 2013	
Approved	September 2021	Reviewed by AusDBF Sweep Committee, AusDBF Board, AusDBF Audit & Risk Committee, ERMS Group.
Updated	July 2023	Board
CONTROL STATUS		
<i>All printed document copies are un-controlled</i>		

Introduction

The Board of the Australian Dragon Boat Federation (*AusDBF*) is the national body whose responsibility it is to oversee the sport of dragon boating in Australia. Each State and Territory in Australia has an association (with a Board) that manages dragon boating at the local level.

AusDBF developed the Safety Handbook based on the outcomes of a 2012 qualitative risk assessment on Dragon Boating in Australia. The risk assessment identified all known hazards associated with Dragon Boating and identified the appropriate controls to reduce the risk of harm to:

1. people
2. the environment
3. the reputation of Dragon Boating in Australia

Managing these three (3) risks mentioned above is the responsibility of everyone associated with dragon boating. This includes, but is not limited to, people managing and administering the sport, participants, regatta staff (including volunteers), contractors, service providers and officials. Managing these risks is a collective effort and focuses making dragon boating the safest sport in Australia.

AusDBF recommends each Member State/Territory adopt the National Safety Handbook and include any annexures specific to their environment.

The AusDBF Safety, Health and Environment (*SHE*) statement and this Safety Handbook are key documents associated with a safety management system that governs the safe conduct of dragon boating in Australia. This Handbook encapsulates dragon boat practices/requirements which are common throughout Australia.

Further documents can be found on the AusDBF website - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/>

1. Safety, Health & Environment (SHE)

At AusDBF we are committed to being a leader in Safety, Health and Environmental (SHE) performance for the Australian Dragon Boat sport and achieving a culture which empowers employees (where applicable), volunteers and participants to assume accountability for (SHE) performance.

Volunteers/participants and employees will be appropriately trained and informed of the personal and business benefits of effective SHE management.

We will endeavour to:

- provide, in *so far as is reasonably practicable*, a safe working environment for all volunteers, participants, customers, contractors, suppliers and the community
- comply with applicable safety and operational procedures, regulatory and statutory obligations, and encourage a culture to exceed the level of minimum compliance, where appropriate
- manage identified hazards based on the principles of risk management
- report all incidents and where appropriate conduct thorough investigations, and implement and record corrective actions
- eliminate risk of injuries so far as is reasonably practicable
- protect and conserve assets, including property and the environment in a commercially sustainable manner
- manage safety risks by communicating areas of actual or potential exposure
- ensure that appropriate briefing and/or training is provided to those with a safety responsibility.

2. Legislative Requirements

2.1 Compliance and Due Diligence

There are Work Health and Safety Acts in each State and Territory

AusDBF and its affiliated associations and clubs are classified as 'volunteer associations', which is a group of volunteers working together for one or more community purposes and none of the volunteers, either separately or jointly, or the association itself employ a person to carry out any work for the association. As volunteer associations, with no paid employees the health and safety laws do not apply. It is however, good practice for each state body to comply with the relevant health and safety duties and guidelines within their state.

NOTE: AusDBF is Company Limited under the Commonwealth, this Safety Handbook will be based on the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*

The table below indicates the relevant Acts/links for each State and Territory:

National	Work Health and Safety Act	https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00293
QLD	Work Health and Safety Act	https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/
NSW	Work Health and Safety Act	https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/
ACT	Work Health and Safety Act	https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/about-worksafe-act
VIC	Work Safe Victoria	https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/
TAS	Work Health and Safety Tasmania ACT	https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations
SA	Safework SA Act	https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation
WA	Occupational Safety and Health Act	https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/occupational-safety-and-health-act-and-regulations
NT	Work Health and Safety Act	https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/bulletins/the-legislative-framework

In essence the WHS Acts imposes upon officers or “**persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)**” a proactive duty to exercise due diligence to ensure compliance with the work health and safety legal obligations by that entity. For the purposes of this safety Handbook AusDBF, the State/Territory dragon boat associations and all Dragon Boat Clubs are defined as a business or undertaking.

The definition of an officer is contained within the *Corporations Act 2001, section 9*. With respect to the Australian Dragon Boat Federation (its State and Territory affiliates and their clubs) an officer is a person who makes decisions and administers dragon boating (board members, club officials, coaches, sweeps, regatta staff, etc.).

The WHS Acts also imposes a safety duty upon others involved in dragon boating including participants. In other words, all people involved in dragon boating have a responsibility to ensure that the sport is undertaken safely.

The Reasonable steps you must take to comply with due diligence include:

- maintaining up-to-date knowledge of work health and safety matters
- understand the nature of dragon boating and its hazards and risks
- articulate the resources and processes needed to ensure the sport is safe.
- recording information regarding incidents, hazards, and risks and responding in a timely way to that information
- legal compliance
- recognition of the due diligence framework for dragon boating in Australia

Due diligence is a proactive duty, and it is part and parcel of good leadership. Each State Member is encouraged to refer to their own State Legislation with regards to due diligence.

AusDBF encourages each State/Territory Member to include Safety and Review of Incidents as a standard agenda item at Board meetings.

This Handbook focuses mainly on the six aspects of due diligence. But it also contains specific safety information as it pertains to Dragon Boating.

2.2 Risk Knowledge

AusDBF and the State/Territory Boards are working towards implementing a recording process which will allow the States/Territories to capture data to provide a valuable reporting tool. Incidents and Hazards are to be reviewed regularly and any consistencies for trends identified to be raised/addressed at each organisation level.

The reporting process includes:

- A shared reporting template for incidents and injuries which can be submitted via Safe365 at club level and viewed at State/Territory and National level.
- All incident/hazard reports must be dealt with properly and in a timely manner.
- Reporting of incident/hazards received should be a regular agenda item at meetings with actions and outcomes clearly identified.
- Where a State or Territory Board identifies a hazard and implements a control, they should report the course of action to the AusDBF Board for consideration at the national level.
- When an emerging risk is identified, the AusDBF Board in consultation with their State/Territory Member will develop an appropriate control which is implemented via the State/Territory Members.

Training also plays a large part in allowing coaches, and participants to understand the risks arising from dragon boating. AusDBF runs national coaching courses which are accredited through ANCAS. (*AusDBF National Coach Accreditation Scheme*). Likewise, State/Territory Members organise sweep accreditation courses and race officials, the content of which is approved by the AusDBF. Importantly all coaches and sweeps are required to maintain a valid first aid certificate. Also all Coaches, Race Officials and Sweeps must be re-accredited on a regular basis.

Finally, all participants are provided a safety brief before proceeding onto the water by the appointed sweeps for each training session (*for example - corporate training, team building activities, club training, State squad training, Australia Squad training*). The content of these safety briefs is determined by the respective State and Territory Members but contains some core messages required by AusDBF. These core messages are listed under (*Before getting on the Water- section 5*). **Refer to AusDBF Sweep Guidelines and Safety Procedures** - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/ausdbf-courses/sweep-information/>

Example of Core Safety Brief should include:

- All crew members understand the chain of command.
- All crew members know the command calls and the expected response.
- Ask if any participant has any special conditions the sweep should be aware of
- Ask if any participant needs to wear a PFD (Personal Floatation Devices) and they are fitted correctly
- Explain the numbering off or buddy system and when it is used
- Explain to all crew members what the safety procedures are and what they need to do in the event of capsize or emergency.

2.3 Understanding the Nature of Dragon Boating

All AusDBF State and Territory Board members and Club officials are, in the main, experienced dragon boaters. As such they have a sound understanding of the hazards and risk associated with Dragon Boating. A formal risk assessment of the sport has been undertaken and all known hazards (and their controls) associated with dragon boating in Australia were identified. All State and Territory Boards were represented during the risk assessment workshop. This risk assessment has resulted in this Safety Handbook (**reviewed in 2021**).

New participants to dragon boating would not be aware of dragon boat safety requirements. Every dragon boat club in Australia has an induction process in place to explain technique and the safety aspects of Dragon Boating.

Volunteers at regattas are provided with a briefing at the start of each regatta, which would include any safety measures for the day, location of first aid, procedures for an emergency who the nominated Safety Officer is for the day.

Due to the differing paddling conditions around Australia, the State and Territory Members are responsible for communicating the safety messages and requirements associated with their local environment ensuring they are consistent across all clubs in their jurisdictions.

2.4 Resources and Processes

Each State and Territory Member manages their budgets and operational plans to address safety matters highlighted via their Club members. Boards assess the safety impact of their resource decisions and record them in the Board minutes.

Member States/Territories and Clubs independently determine an annual budgeted figure to be spent on maintaining dragon boat equipment in a safe state such that the boat will be “sea” worthy for participants and any other relevant resources.

As far as processes are concerned the Australian Dragon Boat community has a set of established safety practices that assure safety on the water. These practices are based on international norms and local waterway rules and procedures. These are generally inexpensive and are more procedural.

A similar but separate set of processes are invoked during dragon boat regattas due mainly to the large concentration of participants in a small area; the risk of harm to people, the environment and the dragon Boat community’s reputation is greater. Therefore, a risk assessment must be undertaken for each regatta venue, or before any new regatta format and resources assigned accordingly. This assessment addresses all risks associated with the vision for dragon boating in Australia.

Above all the Australian Dragon Boat Community confers upon its members the right to question a safety practice or highlight an emerging safety issue on the spot. Indeed, it bestows upon the individual the right to refuse to paddle if he/she believes that it is unsafe to do so. Accordingly, any participant is free to voice a concern if they believe that the coach or sweep is taking an unnecessary risk – without detriment.

2.5 Information Relating to Incident, Hazards and Risks

AusDBF recommends each Member appoint a Safety Officer.

Analysing and learning from an incident is critical to eliminating risks associated with dragon boating. Should an incident require it, an investigation is undertaken by the Club involved and a report submitted via Safe365.

The Member signs the respective hazard & incident report each time it meets and assures itself that the appropriate action is being taken.

The Members are also responsible for developing a program of safety checks and briefings for the dragon boat community in their respective area.

Accidents in Dragon Boats can and do happen. While the likelihood could be minimal, the consequences can be severe, so AusDBF and its Members provide an environment to reduce the risk of harm to people, the environment, and the reputation of Dragon Boating too as low as reasonably practicable (*ALARP*).

Hazard management refers to the overall process of identification, assessment/evaluation and control of potential injury, harm or other adverse and unwanted effects from exposure to hazards. Risk is recognised as precisely what it implies – a possibility.

The risk assessment and evaluation process will incorporate:

- Likelihood of the event happening, combined with exposure criteria
- Consequences if the event should occur
- Risk level (likelihood and consequence combined)

The criteria for determining the acceptability / unacceptability of the risk will be identified or sought in consultation with the responsible individuals.

An identified potential hazard, shall have risk controls identified to control/mitigate those hazards. The recognised hierarchy of control for developing risk management solutions shall be followed. This hierarchy (preferred order) is:

The Hierarchy of Controls is:

↑	Most Effective Controls	Remove	1. Eliminate (remove the hazard, or the need to perform the hazardous activity all-together).
		Substitution	2. Substitute (hazardous substance, process, equipment, work method for safer alternative).
↓	Least Effective Controls	Engineering / Isolation	3. Engineering / Isolation (Redesign, enclose or isolate / separate people from the hazard by use of barriers / distance / time).
		Administration	4. Administration (Training, Rules, Procedures or Safe Systems of Work).
		Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	5. PPE (Includes: eye / face / skin /foot / head /respiratory / hearing / fall protection / and contingencies such as firefighting equipment).

Definitions: -

- **Accident** - an unexpected event which results in serious injury or illness and may also result in property damage
- **Incident** - an instance of something happening, an unexpected event or occurrence that doesn't result in serious injury or illness but may result in property damage
- **Hazard** - A situation or thing that has the potential to harm a person
- **Risk** - The possibility that harm (death, injury, or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard

2.6 Compliance and Auditing

The AusDBF and its Members undertake reasonable steps to ensure that safety compliance audits within the requirements contained in this Handbook are undertaken on a regular basis. These audits occur randomly (randomness / audit principles). The person undertaking the audits is the nominated Safety Officer/Representative of each AusDBF Member.

3. General Safety Requirements

There are several general safety requirements which should be followed for the sport of dragon boating to be safe. These requirements follow.

3.1 Swimming Test (recommended)

Dragon Boating is a water sport. Accidents on the water can lead to people drowning. To mitigate the risk of drowning, it is strongly recommended all people on the water in a dragon boat are able to swim confidently 50m in paddling clothing (shirt, shorts, enclosed shoes as a minimum) and tread water in the same clothes for a minimum of 10 minutes without support.

Any person who cannot satisfy these requirements must wear a lifejacket or a PFD. Clubs are to encourage all participants to undertake a swim test on an annual basis. This test is best undertaken under the supervision of a nominated Club member or members for verification, and safety.

Each Member State/Territory to determine own requirements with regards to swim tests and wearing of PFDs depending upon state maritime requirements.

3.2 Medical

Dragon boating is a physically intense sport which clearly affects the heart etc.

Refer to AusDBF Participants Annual Health Check which can be downloaded from the AusDBF website here - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/>

Participants who have a medical issue should advise the Coach and/or sweep of their problem at the beginning of an activity. If a medical problem is exacerbated while undertaking a dragon boat activity, the participant must notify the coach and/or sweep as soon as possible.

It is the responsibility of Club members with a medical condition to always equip themselves with the appropriate medication while involved in dragon boating.

3.3 First Aid Precautions

Participants are to:

- Take care to avoid infection if they have open wounds or a skin problem
- Disinfect any open wounds that might occur during training, as soon as possible
- Try to avoid getting open wounds wet by either covering them with a waterproof dressing or not training until they have healed
- report any injury (particularly a head injury) to the coach and/or sweep immediately

The Sweep and/or Coach will assess the situation and take immediate action if the problem warrants it.

3.4 Buoyancy Aids

Lifejackets and/or PFDs (*Personal Flotation Device*)/ buoyancy aids) must be Australian Standard compliant and made available for all Junior participants at an Australian Championships or as per State/Territory Maritime regulations. (refer to rule **CR7.10c** in **AusDBF Competition Rules & Regulations**) and for any competitor irrespective of age, who is a non-confident swimmer. (refer to rule **CR7.9** in **AusDBF Competition Rules & Regulations**). Participants are encouraged to bring their own PFD to training and regattas.

From 01 July 2023 it is mandatory for all drummers (or anyone sitting on the front of the boat) and sweeps to wear PFDs at training sessions and regattas.

It is important to note that lifejackets or PFDs can overheat the body on a hot day. Team managers are to ensure that once off the water lifejackets and PFDs are removed to allow the body to cool.

Participants using their own gas operated PFDs must have spare canisters with them in case the PFD is used/activated during training or a race.

3.5 Emergency Communication

A list of vital telephone numbers should be displayed in every boatshed and inside every safety boat to include:

- Ambulance / Police / Fire = **000**
- Local hospital casualty department
- The emergency service that can provide the quickest on-water response.
- The possible need for emergency communication from the water should be considered whether by two-way radio or by mobile phone.

4. The Participant (*paddler/drummer/sweep*)

The following are useful tips participants must be aware of:

- minimum of 10 years old as of 31st December of that year (refer to rule **CR2.2.2** of **AusDBF Competition Rules & Regulations**) - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/>
- be able to confidently swim 50m in paddle clothing (shirt, shorts and enclosed shoes as a minimum); or wear they must wear a PFD. (refer to rule **2.18 – AusDBF Sweep Guidelines and Safety Procedures**) - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/ausdbf-courses/sweep-information/>
- be honest about their ability.
- be aware of hypothermia, hyperthermia, and any other dangers, and take appropriate precautions.
- apply first aid if required.
- avoid paddling with a 'nagging' or reoccurring injury.
- be responsible for own safety.
- report any safety concerns to the appropriate authority.
- respect the privacy and well-being of other participants.
- 'Fit to Race' both medically and physically at all times during competitions (refer to rule **CR8.4.1** and **R3.11** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**)

4.1 Fitness

Participant's fitness is primarily the individual's responsibility. It is important that Club Coaches assume that not all participants are ready for competition at the beginning of the season; they should cater for participants of differing fitness levels, particularly at the beginning of the season. The intensity of training will increase over the season.

4.2 Pregnancies

Refer to Sports Medicine Australia Guidelines for 'Active Women in Sport' – Pregnancy and Exercise
SMA Pregnancy Statement

<https://sma.org.au/resources-advice/policies-and-guidelines/active-women-in-sport/> and on -
<https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/activewomeninspot/>

4.3 Clothing / Equipment

As a rule, participants should not wear heavy and absorbent clothing or footwear as these have the potential to cause a person to drown.

All participants should dress suitably for the weather, water, and regatta conditions and are not wearing anything (such as personal accessories or jewellery) which may impede ability to escape from a capsized boat or swim unaided once in the water (e.g., wrist weights).

In the summer months, – this should include:

- race shirt, singlet top or sun shirt
- shorts or paddling shorts
- boat shoes or the like (but not bare feet)
- hat, sun glasses, sunscreen
- water bottle (hydrating at every opportunity); and
- Sun Screen / Block out (SPF 50+). <https://www.sunsmart.com.au/protect-your-skin/slop-on-sunscreen>

Winter training requires warm clothing which is usually heavier than normal. The focus should be on thermal garments (for warmth) and wet weather gear (for protection). In the winter months, participants should dress for the conditions remembering that hypothermia can kill. As such a participant's wardrobe might include:

- a wetsuit (without sleeves), spring suit
- woollen or thermals leggings and top
- waterproof jacket
- water appropriate footwear
- wetsuit gloves
- a beanie or a ball cap
- warm clothes to change into after training.

NOTE: Refer to AusDBF Adverse Weather Conditions Policy (PN-0021)

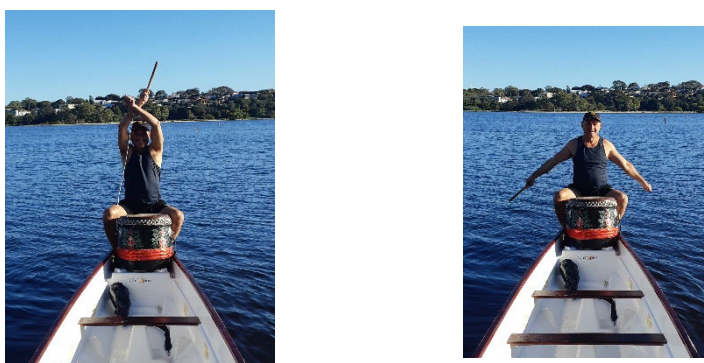
4.4 Injury or Exhaustion

If a participant is injured or exhausted during a training session the boat is to be stopped and the injury or exhaustion assessed. Depending upon extent of the injury an agreement between the Sweep and injured participant will determine whether to continue with the training session or head straight back to shore.

If the sweep is injured, and there is another sweep in the boat they should assume responsibility, if there is no other sweep, the boat can be manoeuvred back to shore by paddle power.

If an injury occurs during a regatta the participant will alert the sweep if deemed necessary, the boat to be brought to a stop and the drummer to use the '**International Distress Signal**' – (refer **rule R7.8 of AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**) to alert the rescue boat they require assistance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QvPS4yf3bl>



5. Sweep Responsibilities

The sweep is the person in command of the boat, and they have responsibility for the safety of the crew. The sweep is the only person that can issue paddling commands to control the boat. All commands must be obeyed immediately. During a training session the Coach can give commands to the participants providing that they have made suitable arrangements with the Sweep beforehand.

Sweep Duties – refer to **AusDBF Sweep Guidelines and Safety Procedures** - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/ausdbf-courses/sweep-information/>

5.1 Before Getting on the Water

Sweeps are responsible for determining whether weather conditions are suitable for any on water activity. Refer to **AusDBF Sweep Guidelines and Safety Procedures** - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/ausdbf-courses/sweep-information/>

As with any water sport, and because of the environment itself, there is always an element of danger. Because of the size and design of the dragon boat and the water conditions in which training, and racing takes place, dragon boating is generally safe and a capsize, especially in such conditions and unless the crew is at fault, is a rarity.

However, the possibility an accident may occur remains. Dragon Boat Racing is no exception to the rule, and it is the duty of all who participate in the sport – competitors, race organisers, coaches, and officials alike – to be aware of the potential dangers inherent in the sport. Be safety conscious – not safety extreme – and ensure that dragon boat racing is conducted in a responsible manner.

Each site has its own unique conditions that need to be assessed for risk to participants before they get into the boat. Many sites are far from clean and the entry into the water may have dangers (e.g., broken glass and sometimes syringes).

At night, the dragon boat storage area and launch area should be well lit by torches or in-built lighting before participants move in or around it.

All participants should stretch and warm up and warm down before and after training and racing.
All participants should ensure that they are dressed appropriately for the conditions.

The Bureau of Meteorology <http://www.bom.gov.au> or other relevant weather apps should be checked prior to each training session.

If a thunderstorm is likely dragon boats are not to proceed onto the water due to the likelihood of lightening. If a thunderstorm develops while boat/boats are on the water training is to be curtailed and boats proceed back to base unless lightening is close. If that is the case boats are to proceed to the nearest shelter and wait until the threat of lightening has passed.

Prior to proceeding on the water for a training session and at the beginning of a dragon boat event (regatta) a safety briefing must be undertaken, which includes:

- Prevailing and anticipated weather conditions
- If lifejackets/PFDs are to be worn
- Expected time off water.
- The paddling plan (not during regattas)
- The need for hydration and proper protective clothing
- Reminding people requiring medication to take it with them. (e.g., puffer etc)

Other issues which a sweep/coach may wish to include in their safety briefing are:

- Reminding people that they are also responsible for safety and should speak up if they become concerned while on the water.
- What to do in the event of sinking/capsizing (best done on water after boat balance undertaken and before paddling)
- What to do in the event of an injury or exhaustion

5.2 Launching the Boat In/Out of the Water

- Safe lifting technique (bend at the knees, not at the back) when lifting and carrying the boats.
- Boats are not to be lifted above the hip of a person without the proper instruction and guidance.
- Refer to State and Club policies for minimum numbers required for moving and launching boats.
- When lowering a dragon boat ensure it is put down slowly with participants bending at the knees
- People with an existing injury are not to lift the boat if their injury is likely to be affected.
- Decide the seating positions of participants before entering the dragon boat. Have participants of similar weight seated with one another.
- A dragon boat must not be pushed into the water whilst participants are standing. If a dragon boat is to be moved advise those standing to be seated and only then move the dragon boat
- Refer to State/Territory requirements for participants who have been unable to complete the swim test with regards to the wearing a life jacket or PFD
- The boat should be held steady whilst participants are loading/unloading.
- Participants are to take extreme care to not be crushed between boats or between the boat and storage cradles. This can be done by looking out for each other as well as being vigilant.

5.3 Stepping In/Out of the Boat

A capsize may occur when participants are loading into or getting out of a dragon boat and the following guidelines should be observed:

- Participants must avoid stepping onto the buoyancy chamber at the front and back of the Boat. (These are safety devices and are not designed to take weight).
- If loading nose on from a beach or ramp, make sure participants load from the front of the boat first (i.e., participants should walk down the boat with seat ten (10) loading first, then seat nine (9) and so on. Participants on the water side should be helping to stabilise the boat by sitting in the centre of the seat until their buddy boards.

- If loading side on from a pontoon / jetty, participants should load in the middle of the boat first, then move to rows one (1) and ten (10) alternatively back to the middle of the boat. Participants on the water side should be helping to stabilise the boat by sitting in the centre of the seat until their buddy boards.
- When loading or unloading from a pontoon, the dragon boat must be held securely, with the side of the dragon boat butted against the side of the pontoon.
- Two participants as a minimum hold the dragon boat steady.
- When loading and unloading, the participants should avoid erratic movements.
- Participants should keep their weight low when moving through the dragon boat.
- At night, the paddler's pathway is to be illuminated by torches.
- Regardless of front loading or side loading the **sweep** is always **first on and last off** on board the boat.
- Regardless of front or side loading the **drummer** is always **last on and first off** on board the boat (opposite to sweep)
- All participants should know their buddy seated next to them. The drummer is looked after by first two paddlers and the sweep by the back two paddlers.
- When participants are seated, they should have their paddles in the "Paddles Flat Position" (or brace position).

5.4 Pre-Training Safety Requirements

- Once all participants are seated, the sweep must complete a head count. - **Number 1** is the **drummer** or **front left** following left to right down the boat.
- Participants to be reminded they are responsible for the person they are paired with (seated next to in the dragon boat) and that, in the event of capsizing; their first responsibility is to ensure that their partner (buddy) is accounted for and safe. This is called the "**buddy system**" and it gives each person in the dragon boat a specific responsibility for another. The row one (1) paddlers are responsible for the drummer and the last row paddlers are responsible for the sweep. Refer to **AusDBF Sweep Guidelines and Safety Procedures** - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/ausdbf-courses/sweep-information/>
- Finally, the Sweep must ensure the dragon boat is balanced before leaving the shore. If after leaving the shore the dragon boat is still unbalanced, stop the dragon boat, and adjust i.e., swap the participants from left to right and vice versa. The boat should always be balanced left and right and trimmed front and back within 10 metres of the shore and before heading out for training or a race.
- Participants are not to lock or tie themselves (or others) into their seats.
- Participants must be seated unless asked to change seats by the Coach or Sweep.
- The sweep is to remember how many people are in the boat and ensure the same number of people is present after a capsize – **NOTE:** members do not need to remember their exact number, just the total amount and who their buddy is.

5.5 On the Water

- Participants are expected to listen and obey the sweep's commands. The sweep is always in command regardless of who is taking the training session.
- Teams must not train during lightning storms or severe weather events.
- A Safety Bag should always be carried in the boat and could include such items as (torch, whistle, working mobile phone, laminated map of waterway, tow rope) which are relevant to State Maritime requirements
- At least two bailing tools with ropes if needed are to be carried in the boat.
- First Aid Kit should be easily accessible during training.
- Alcohol and/or illicit drugs are not permitted on boats unless prescribed by a medical practitioner.
- Participants under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs are not to participate in an on-water activity.
- Capsizing requirements to be reiterated at least annually per season. The AusDBF approved capsizing drill can be viewed on the AusDBF website here – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go4w1Q8q3FU&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=AusDBF

5.6 Winter or Night Training

In addition to the other safety precautions mentioned in **point 5.5 'on the water'**, training during the winter should be undertaken as close to the shoreline as possible.

Sweeps are to ensure that their dragon boat crews are appropriately dressed for both winter and night training.

Sweeps must be particularly vigilant at night. In addition, sweeps are to ensure that:

- Boat lights are fitted on the dragon boat between sunset and sun rise and in periods of reduced visibility (if possible) - refer to State Maritime regulations for light requirements.
- The lights are to be waterproof and brightly visible throughout the session (check batteries are working before leaving shore)
- At least one high powered torch is carried between sunset and sunrise (check batteries are working before leaving shore)
- They have an excellent working knowledge of the local Maritime Regulations.
- Lifejackets/PFDs are recommended to be worn from sunset to sunrise particularly in Alpine/cooler climate conditions during winter paddling when the water temperature is below 18 degrees. (it is mandatory for drummers and sweep to wear PFDs regardless).
- They know their local area so that if an ambulance is called, they know the street address for directions.

5.7 Sweeping at regatta's

Before sweeping at a regatta, it is the responsibility of the sweep to check the race rules that apply for that event and ask question(s) at the briefing for Sweeps.

- Sweeps are to follow the instructions from the race officials when loading and unloading the boats and moving to the start line.
- When lining up at the start line, Sweeps must communicate with each other to confirm what racing lines they are aiming (if not on a buoyed course)
- If at the start line a Sweep is not ready or experiences a problem, when the starter calls '**Are you ready**' the drummer must hold a hand straight up in the air and keep it up until the Starter has acknowledged the drummer. (refer to rule **R6.6-6.8** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**)
- If during a race, a collision is about to occur, the Sweep is to instruct the crew to stop the dragon boat immediately. (refer to rule **R7.7** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**)
- Sweeps are to keep their crews calm and balanced once the race has finished. This is when capsizes can and often do occur.
- In the instance of a crew member is lost overboard, the Distress Signal should be enacted (refer to rule **CR7.11** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**)
- In the case of a capsize, the Sweep is to follow capsize procedures (AusDBF Sweep Guidelines and **Safety Procedures**) - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/ausdbf-courses/sweep-information/> and follow direction from the Water Umpire (**AusDBF Regatta Operational Guidelines including RO Roles and Responsibilities**) - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/>

5.8 Capsize Procedure

If a dragon boat sinks or capsizes the following must be followed to ensure minimal harm to participants. AusDBF capsize drill can be viewed here -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go4w1Q8q3FU&feature=youtu.be>

- a) In all situations the Sweep is to remain in control of the boat and, in a race situation, await the arrival of the rescue boats.

- The main concern should be participants' welfare.
- Participants to remain calm.
- Each paddler should immediately account for their buddy
- The sweep should immediately ensure that all the crew are accounted for by requesting a head count – starting with the person on their left and going around the boat – people do not remember their original number but the sweep will know the total number on board. (number off from the rear bench, clockwise around the boat in case the sweep is injured)
- If someone is missing check under the boat – there is air always trapped in an upturned boat
- If anyone is missing immediately contact emergency services
- The crew must initially stay with the dragon boat and leave it in the capsized position or if water logged, in the upturned position
- When a dragon boat has over-turned no one should swim underneath it, but in such circumstances, it can be used as a floating platform, provided the crew space themselves evenly around the dragon boat and hold onto it.
- Alternatively, under the instructions of the sweep the dragon boat may be rolled back to the upturned position and used to support the paddlers by individuals holding onto the gunwales.
- In all situations the sweep should remain in control of the crew and, in a race situation, await the arrival of the rescue boats
- On the arrival of the rescue boats, any injured participants should be loaded onto the rescue boat and given first aid. The crew should move as directed by the sweep and paddle the boat to shore if practical. If not practical the rescue boats should load the crew (in shifts if necessary) and take them to shore.
- Swimming the boat to shore should only be done under the control of the sweep and when the swimmers are capable and not at risk.
- Participants may recover their paddles if they are within easy reach and safe to do so.
- Once the crew is safe, a rescue boat may be used to recover the dragon boat and equipment
- The Sweep remains with the boat until all the participants from the crew have been rescued.

b) On the arrival of the rescue boats, participants should move as directed by the operators of the rescue boats.

- If there are insufficient rescue boats to rescue all participants in one go and the water conditions are calm, or it is shallow, participants to remain with the dragon boat until further instructions are given by the relevant authorities
- Once all participants are safe and back on land, dragon boat can then be recovered.
- When on shore do another head count.

c) If a rescue boat is not immediately available the Sweep, after accounting for all participants, must take action to ensure that all participants do not remain in the water longer than is necessary. This is particularly the case in winter training where immersion in the water will result in hypothermia.

The Sweep will issue instructions for the participants to swim together (as a group) to the nearest point of land.

- It is important that all participants swim together; stronger swimmers helping the weaker ones.
- If there are other water craft present participants should attempt to 'flag' them down for assistance.
- If the environmental conditions allow it the sweep may instruct a couple of participants to remain with the boat to assist in its rescue.
- When on shore do another head count.

d) If a capsize occurs in the warmer months and hypothermia is unlikely, the Sweep may assess that it would be better for the participants to remain with the boat instead of swimming to shore. If this occurs participants should carefully turn the boat right side up and swim it to the nearest accessible bank.

- The whole team should move with the boat.
- Participants should not swim on ahead or be left behind.
- The Sweep (or nominated person in charge) is to do several head counts as the boat is taken to safety.
- When on shore do another head count.

NOTE: If participants are missing or require additional aid. Phone **“000”** for the emergency services.

4. Motorised Support Boats

There are different types of motorised craft which may be used in any dragon boat activity to provide support and safety for the dragon boat participants.



- All motorised boats supporting a dragon boat activity must be driven by an appropriately licenced person. Each State and Territory has differing requirements for obtaining a boat licence. It is incumbent upon power boat drivers to ensure that their licences are fit for purpose in accordance with local regulations.
- All motorised boats in support of a dragon boating activity must carry, as a minimum, the State/Territory safety equipment requirements.
- All personnel in a motorised boat, supporting a dragon boat activity, must comply with local regulations regarding the wearing of lifejackets/PFDs.
- Where motors are equipped with a kill switch, the kill switch must be attached to the operator.
- All motorised boats and their engines should be properly maintained since failure, particularly at a critical time, could have serious consequences.
- Refer to State/Territory regulations for requirements when towing boats.

6.1 Coach Boats used in training sessions

- In practice, during training the coach boat is also frequently the safety boat. Any coach boat on the water can provide a measure of safety.
- Coach boats should provide for easy entry from the water (e.g., step, ladder, or handhold).
- When using a coach boat for coaching purposes the driver is to ensure that the boat does not approach a dragon boat at high speed when within 20 metres of it. Coach boats are to proceed in a safe manner when within 20 metres of a dragon boat.
- Coaches should not use a power boat to generate waves unless the boat is full of experienced participants.

6.2 Safety/Rescue Boats used at Regattas

Competitions should not take place unless at least one (1) safety boat is provided to act as a rescue vessel in the event of a boat capsize or the loss of a competitor overboard during a race or crew training.

- Refer to Rule **CR7.8** and **CR7.8.2** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**
- Refer to section **10.11** in **AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Championships Operational Handbook**



Safety boats must have propeller guards. Driver or crew must have first aid qualification. (refer to rule **CR7.8.2** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**)

The safety boat must not be used as the Starters Boat.

The function of the Safety boat is to be able to tow boats back to shore in case of capsize, ability to lift participants out of the water (example a rubber duckie with soft low sides)

Note: "Image supplied and owned by Surf Life Saving Australia. © 2021 SLSA. All rights otherwise reserved."

6.3 Umpire Boats used at Regattas

Purpose of Umpire boat is to follow crews from behind per race. Ideally Umpire boats should be fitted with a roof or some sort of shade protection against the weather.

- Refer to Rule **CR7.8.1** and **CR7.8.2** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**
- Refer to section **10.11** in **AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Championships Operational Handbook**

Minimum of one (1) umpire boat fitted with Propeller guards.

Ideally Umpire boats are NOT to double as safety boats.

All motor boats in support of a dragon boating should be fitted with propeller guards.

Prop Guards



All personnel in a motor boat, supporting a dragon boat activity, must comply with local regulations regarding the wearing of lifejackets/PFDs.



PFD level-100 (inflatable)



PFD level-50s (non-inflatable)

Table below indicates links for State/Territory Maritime Departments

Australian Maritime Safety Authority		https://www.amsa.gov.au/
QLD	Transport and motoring	https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/boating
NSW	Transport for NSW	https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/
ACT	Access Canberra	https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/4755/~boating-on-canberras-lakes
VIC	Maritime Safety Victoria	https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety
TAS	Marine & safety Tasmania	https://mast.tas.gov.au/
SA		https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/boating-and-marine
WA	Department of Transport	https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/imagine/boating-rules-in-wa.asp
NT		https://nt.gov.au/marine

6.4 Chemical Cleaning Agents

While cleaning agents are not used widely, they must be treated with respect when used. It is incumbent upon members to ensure that they comply with the product disclosure statement (PDS) and use/wear the proper personnel protective equipment (PPE). Refer to <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/ppe>

Substances should be clearly marked with what is in the container. Safety data sheets (SDS) should be made available where possible.

There must always be two people present when dangerous cleaning agents are being used; the second person is to act as a safety number and not use the cleaning product. Phone the **Poisons Information Centre** hotline on **131 126**

7. Regatta Requirements

The safety of Competitors and Race Officials taking part in any Dragon Boat Competition is a prime concern of the AusDBF Board. (refer to rule **CR1.5** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**)

The safety requirements contained within this Safety Handbook must be followed as closely as possible during regattas although clearly there may be some differences such as the need to carry a safety bag, and first aid kit.

Although it is incumbent on the Organising Committee to provide a rescue service, the Sweep is the captain of the boat and must take responsibility for the safety of their crew whilst on water.

7.1 At regattas, safety comes before results

Regatta organisers must undertake a risk assessment and record the outcomes in a document. The risk assessment must, as a minimum include the risk of:

- Participant, race official, volunteer or member of the public being harmed.
- Equipment being damaged.
- The environment being damaged.
- The reputation that the sport dragon boating will be harmed.

State/Territory Member and Clubs hold regattas at venues throughout Australia. Not all courses have lanes marked down the course such as a designated rowing course. At venues where there are no markings all sweeps should talk to one another and (where possible) let each other know the landmark they are heading for at the other end of the course (i.e., if a reference point is available).

If a sweep loses control of the dragon boat and it looks likely that it will hit another dragon boat the sweep must stop the dragon boat under their control. If the boat is not stopped the crew can be disqualified. (refer to rule **R7.7** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations**)

7.2 Safety Officer

For all AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Racing Championships and sanctioned events it is recommended that a Safety Officer be appointed or contracted. Duties and responsibilities can be found in the below documents:

- rule **R3.13** in **AusDBF Competition Rules and Regulations** and
- **AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Championships Operational Handbook** and
- **AusDBF Regatta Operational Guidelines including Race Official Roles and Responsibilities**

7.3 Medical & Rescue Services

At all AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Racing Championships and sanctioned events, the organisers must provide a medical and rescue service ready to act on and off the water, throughout the event, which includes all official training sessions before the first Race Day. (refer to rule **CR7.7** in **AusDBF Competition Rules & Regulations**)

7.4 First Aid Services

First Aid Cover must be provided by qualified personnel who must be in attendance throughout the competition (First Aid Officer must be a non-participant on regatta day). First Aid Officers should be onsite from arrival time of race officials and volunteer's arrival time to after last race of the day.

7.5 Outdoor Protection

Protection from the elements must be provided for people involved in dragon boat regattas. The shape that this protection takes is up to the event organiser and Club officials. Refer to:

- **AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Championships Operational Handbook** and
- **AusDBF Regatta Operational Guidelines including Race Official Roles and Responsibilities**

7.6 Embarkation and Disembarkation Points - Protection

It is important that the embarkation and disembarkation points for participants are protected from the prevailing seas / water and wind conditions, to provide a stable loading / unloading area. If a protected area cannot be provided, event organisers are to undertake a risk assessment and add additional controls to prevent the landing area or boats from moving too much. Not to do this will result in an increased risk to participants injuring themselves (slip, trips, falls, and crush injuries) as they proceed across the pontoon / terrain and across their boats (if boats are rafted together).

- **AusDBF Australian Dragon Boat Championships Operational Handbook** and
- **AusDBF Regatta Operational Guidelines including Race Official Roles and Responsibilities**

7.7 Extreme Weather Precautions

Event organisers are to consider providing:

- Water sprays to reduce body temperatures during events in hot weather.
- Access to fresh drinking water, or a fresh water truck for participants to draw water from
- Minimising the 'on water' time for participants outside of the race to prevent crews from overheating or getting too cold.

8. Alcohol and Drug Testing

AusDBF reserves the right to undertake random alcohol and drug testing at national and local dragon boat events hosted by AusDBF and the State and Territory Associations, respectively.

Refer to AusDBF Anti-Doping Policy - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/antidoping/>

9. References

- AusDBF Competition Rules & Regulations) - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/>
- AusDBF Sweep Guidelines and Safety Procedures) - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/ausdbf-courses/sweep-information/>
- AusDBF AusChamps Operational Handbook -
- Bureau of meteorology - <http://www.bom.gov.au/>
- Sports Medicine Australia Guidelines for 'Active Women in Sport' - <https://sma.org.au/resources-advice/policies-and-guidelines/active-women-in-sport/> and on - <https://www.ausdbf.com.au/policies/activewomeninspot/>
- SunSmart - <https://www.sunsmart.com.au/protect-your-skin/slop-on-sunscreen>
- Poisons Information Centre - <https://www.health.gov.au/contacts/poisons-information-centre>