

Dragon Boats NSW Inc.

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DBNSW WATER SAFETY GUIDELINES

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Introduction

Safety is ultimately the concern of everyone involved, but Clubs have a particular responsibility for any activity undertaken in their name, whether it be racing at a regatta, training or a social event.

These Water Safety Guidelines are designed to inform **Clubs** of both the legislative requirements and this governing bodies policy during activity both on and off the water.

Statutory Requirements

Dragon boating activities are affected by a number of Acts, Regulations and other legislation that vary according to the location of the activity and where the club is registered. For example, the maritime law in New South Wales varies from the laws in Victoria. It is the responsibility of the Club to ensure that they are both familiar with and abide by local legislation.

Within New South Wales the maritime legislation that directly affects on-water dragon boating:

- **Marine Safety Act 1998**
[\[https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1998/121\]](https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1998/121)
- **Marine Safety Regulation 2016**
[\[https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2016/308\]](https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2016/308)

Additional Resources

In New South Wales, Roads and Maritime Services have two additional documents that will enhance the marine safety and navigation for dragon boating:

- **Rowing Code of Conduct** (*applicable to Rowing, Dragon Boats, Surf Boats and Outrigger Canoes*)
[\[http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/safety-rules/rules-regulations/codes-of-conduct/rowing.html\]](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/maritime/safety-rules/rules-regulations/codes-of-conduct/rowing.html)
- **Roads & Maritime Boating Handbook**
[\[http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/maritime/licence/boating-handbook.pdf\]](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/maritime/licence/boating-handbook.pdf)

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Safety & Other Equipment

The table below shows the minimum safety equipment relevant to on-water dragon boat activities:

Safety Equipment to be carried during dragon boat activity (source: <i>Marine Safety Regulation 2016</i>)			
	Enclosed waters ⁽¹⁾	Enclosed waters ⁽¹⁾ when more than 400m from shore	Open waters ⁽²⁾
Daytime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one bailer with a lanyard attached At least one spare paddle A rope of at least 25m in length and 12mm in diameter (type known as silver role) securely attached to the dragon boat for towing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anchor with chain/line Lifejackets (one per person on board) Bailer Sound signal (air-horn/whistle/bell) Waterproof torch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anchor with chain/line Lifejackets (one per person on board) Bailer Sound signal (air-horn/whistle/bell) Waterproof torch Appropriate map/chart 2 x orange smoke hand-held distress flare 2 x red hand-held distress flare Fresh drinking water 2 liters per person V-sheet (distress signal) EPIRB (when >2 nautical miles from shore) Marine Radio (when >2 nautical miles from shore)
Sunrise to sunset	Above plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flares or mobile telephone (in watertight container) or 2-way marine radio Appropriate lighting ⁽³⁾ 	Above plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flares or mobile telephone (in watertight container) or 2-way marine radio Appropriate lighting ⁽³⁾ 	Above plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flares or mobile telephone (in watertight container) Appropriate lighting ⁽³⁾
Notes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Enclosed waters mean navigable waters within the land mass of New South Wales such as inland and costal rivers, inland and costal lakes and similar waters, and enclosed coastal bays and harbours and all waters specific in schedule 2 and 3 of the <i>Marine Safety Regulation 2016</i> (2) Open waters means all waters other than enclosed waters (3) An all-round white light (preferably LED) attached to the fore and aft end of the vessel in accordance with the <i>NSW Rowing Code of Conduct</i> 			

Lighting Recommendations

The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions At Sea are incorporated into local NSW marine legislation. Rule 25 of these Regulations outlines the minimum lighting requirements for “vessels under oars” and is included in the above table. Roads and Maritime Services strongly recommend additional lighting on vessels over 4m during restricted visibility and between sunset and sunrise including:

- Two all-round white LED lights, one attached to the vessel at or near the forward end, and one attached to the vessel at or near the aft end. The lights can be either two continuous white lights, 2 flashing white lights or a combination of the two.
- A continuous white LED light is considered acceptable if it is visible in clear conditions from a distance of 1 kilometre.
- A flashing white LED light is considered acceptable if it flashes at least once per second and is visible in clear conditions from a distance of 1 kilometre.
- Notwithstanding 3.1(a), it is considered acceptable for a light to be masked so as not to interfere with the vision of the vessel’s occupants, provided at least one light is visible from any direction.

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Wearing of lifejackets

There are a small number of circumstances and conditions in which a persons on board a dragon boat vessel is required to wear a life jacket.

In New South Wales the *Marine Safety Regulation 2016* state a life jacket must be worn:

1. Where the vessel is < 4.8m, and;
 - a. Operating between sunset and sunrise, or
 - b. Operating in alpine waters ⁽¹⁾, or
 - c. Operating on open waters ⁽²⁾, or
 - d. The person is no accompanied on the vessel by another person 12 years of age or more
2. Where the vessel is crossing a coastal bar (regardless of length)
3. A child who is less than 12 years of age* is required to wear a lifejacket when:
 - a. On board a vessel < 4.8m at all times
 - b. On board a vessel < 8 metres in length that is underway
4. When directed by master ⁽³⁾ of a vessel

The minimum lifejacket standard required to be carried/worn is:

1. Where the vessel is on enclosed waters – Level 50S+
2. Where the vessel is on open waters – Level 100+

Notes:

(1) Alpine waters are defined as Lake Burrinjuck, Lake Eucumbene, Lake Jindabyne, Khancoban Pondage, Swampy Plains River, Mannus Lake, Googong Reservoir, Blowering Dam, and all navigable waters contained within the boundaries of the Kosciusko National Park as reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 – NSW

(2) Open waters means all waters other than enclosed waters

(3) Commonly known as the sweep of the dragon boat or the qualified sweep accompanying a trainee sweep

* DBNSW policy states that there are to be NO children under the age of 12 years in a dragon boat regardless of whether they are wearing a life jacket or not and regardless of whether they are paddling, drumming, steering or sitting.

Despite the rare circumstances in which a life jacket must be worn while dragon boating as required by New South Wales law there are additional stipulations in which the requirement is in effect.

The **Australian Dragon Boat Federation Safety Manual** requires that any individual that is unable to swim 50m or tread water unassisted for 10-15 minutes while fully clothed must wear a life jacket when on board a vessel. AusDBF encourages Clubs to undertake swim tests to determine a persons swimming ability.

Additionally, Dragon Boat NSW policy requires that all persons on board a vessel while being towed must wear a life jacket.

Finally, Dragon Boats NSW highly recommends that all sweeps wear a life jacket/pfd whilst sweeping a dragon boat.

The checklist below can be used to determine whether a person is required to wear a life jacket while on board a dragon boat in New South Wales. Note that the multiple conditions may apply.

Life Jacket in Dragon Boat Checklist	
Condition	Life Jacket Required?
In a vessel longer than 4.8 m	NO
In a vessel shorter than 4.8 m	YES IF <i>between sunset & sunrise, in alpine/open waters and/or unaccompanied by person over 12</i>
Crossing a coastal bar	YES
Less than 12 years of age	YES IF <i>vessel < 4.8m or vessel is < 8m and underway</i>
When directed by master (sweep) of vessel	YES
NOT capable of swimming 50m fully clothed	YES
Vessel being towed	YES
Is the sweep of the dragon boat	YES (recommended)

Additional Safety Considerations

- The national governing body for dragon boating in Australia, AusDBF, has a number of safety requirements, procedures and recommendations in its [Safety Manual](#) while undertaking dragon boating. As a member of AusDBF, Dragon Boats NSW endorses this document to its affiliated clubs and paddlers.
- Dragon Boats NSW has a number of additional safety related policies that must be complied with by Clubs and members of the organisation. These include, but are not limited to, Heat Management, Lightning Management, Dragon Boat Towing, Coaching and Sweeping Guidelines. All documents are available on the DBNSW website.
- Clubs should ensure that all of their members are aware of the AusDBF approved capsize procedures, preferably by having practiced via the capsize drill. Procedures can be found in the *AusDBF Safety Manual* and [video of the drill online](#).
- Sweeps of dragon boat vessels must wear a high-visibility vest in twilight, low light and night conditions.
- Clubs should ensure that a sufficient number of able bodied persons are available to lift, move and store dragon boats in and out of the water. A minimum of 12 is strongly recommended.
- Clubs should ensure that a sufficient number of able bodied persons are able to paddle a dragon boat with the environmental conditions factored in.
- Clubs must ensure their members wear enclosed footwear while on site (both training and regatta venue) and while embarking and disembarking from the dragon boat vessel.
- Clubs, coaches and sweeps should be wary of the current weather and environmental conditions (heavy rain, strong winds, reduced visibility) when conducting dragon boating activity and take reasonable steps to reduce harm to those involved.

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