



## **Singapore Dragon Boat Association**

### **Dragon Boat Orientation Programme Safety Measures**

#### **1. Context**

- 1.1. The Dragon Boat Orientation Programme (DOP) is designed for participants who are new to Dragon Boating or engaging in it as a one-time or occasional team building or team-bonding activity. This is an excellent platform to expose people to the sport of dragon boating.
- 1.2. To ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for these participants, a set of safety measures must be put in place. Developed by the Singapore Dragon Boat Association (SDBA), these measures aim to support operators, vendors, and organizers by outlining various safety protocols tailored to their events."
- 1.3. The basic measures are mandatory as they address common risks associated with dragon boating. Additional safety measures may be implemented based on participants demographics to mitigate any further risks that may arise.

#### **2. Basic Safety Measures**

##### **2.1. Trainer to Participants Ratio**

- 2.1.1. The ratio for trainer to participant must not exceed 1:10, which means 1 trainer to maximum of 10 participants. For 12crew boats, trainer may double up as steer whereas for 22crew boats, it would be necessary to have a trainer at the bow and steer at the back to fulfil the ratio requirement.

## 2.2. Equipment

2.2.1. It is essential that participants are equipped with approved safety equipment to ensure their well-being during water activities. Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) must be appropriately sized according to each participant's body size and weight. Trainers should conduct visual checks for any damage and ensure that PFDs are worn correctly as designed.

2.2.2. Trainers should inspect paddles for any damage before issuing them to participants, as damaged paddles may cause injuries.

2.2.3. Dragon boats are also considered equipment. Trainers must inspect the boats for any potential hazards that could pose a risk to participants.

## 2.3. Identifying Swimming Ability

2.4. While capsizing is rare in dragon boating, it is crucial to assess participants' swimming abilities. Non-swimmers and weak swimmers must be identified and marked with a prominent indicator to ensure they can be easily spotted in the water. With the indicator, trainers and rescue personnel will be able to identify and provide help to them swiftly.

## 2.5. Boundary

2.5.1. The boundary must be clearly communicated to all trainers and steers, and they must strictly adhere to it. This is to enhance command and control throughout the event and facilitate any evacuation plans.

## 2.6. Environment

2.6.1. It is critical that organizers conduct a site visit to the activity area. This allows them to become familiar with the site and identify potential hazards. For example, areas suitable for briefings and warm-ups are often overlooked. It is important that participants can effectively absorb the information from the briefing and that there is a safe and conducive area for the necessary warm-up.

2.6.2. Understanding water conditions is equally important. While most dragon boat activities take place in closed waters (such as reservoirs), open waters (such as the sea) can also be a viable option and can offer a great learning or fun experience if conducted safely.

2.6.3. All dragon boat trainers and steersmen are required to bring mobile phones to monitor weather conditions. They should also be familiar with the area's lightning warning system. Ensure there is a communication channel between the trainers on the water and the organisers on land, if they are on land.

2.6.4. It is also important to ensure that participants are well-briefed and equipped with proper sun protection.

## 2.7. Emergency Response Plan

2.7.1. Organisers, trainers and steersmen are to be briefed and familiarised with the Emergency Response Plan of the venue. The plan would provide key contact list, evacuation plan, increment weather action plan and capsize drill information.

2.7.2. Clear understanding of this Emergency Response Plan will ensure prompt response when required.

## 2.8. **High-Risk Participant Groups**

2.8.1. Children 12 years old and below

2.8.2. Person with Disabilities

2.8.3. Person with Special Needs

2.8.4. Elderly 65 years old and above

2.8.5. Pregnant women

### **3. Additional Safety Measures**

#### **3.1. Reduced Trainer to Participants Ratio**

3.1.1. Reducing the trainer-to-participant ratio will improve command and control. For example, having 1 trainer for every 5 high-risk participants ensures better supervision.

3.1.2. The number of trainers can be increased and supplemented by teachers or caregivers, depending on who is best suited to provide the necessary care and safety coverage for the participants.

#### **3.2. Equipment**

3.2.1. Certain high-risk groups of participants may require equipment that does not meet standard measurements. Organizers should check with operators to see if their centres have equipment that fits the needs of these participants.

3.2.2. Particularly for Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs), they must be correctly sized for each individual. Oversized or undersized PFDs can pose significant safety hazards.

#### **3.3. Power Boat for Safety Coverage**

3.3.1. The power boat will facilitate the fastest possible evacuation from water to land and can assist in the event of a capsized. There are two options for power boat deployment: on standby (parked) or patrolling alongside the dragon boats.

3.3.2. The Safety boat driver must be familiar with rescue protocols.

3.3.3. An assistant on the safety power boat will further enhance its ability to identify dangers or participants in need of assistance.

#### **3.4. Lifeguard**

3.4.1. Lifeguards are trained to prevent, identify, and respond to emergencies, particularly in drowning cases. While PFDs ensure that participants stay afloat, there is still a slim chance that a participant could slip out of their PFD due to

unforeseen circumstances. In such cases, a lifeguard is the most equipped to rescue the drowning person.

### 3.5. Reduced Boundary

3.5.1. The boundary should be adjusted based on participants' fitness levels. Strong winds and water currents can make paddling more challenging. Limiting the travel area for the boats helps mitigate risks and ensures better command and control over the participants.

### 3.6. Enhanced Communication

3.6.1. If constant communication is required, enhanced communication tools such as walkie-talkies should be deployed.

### 3.7. Extreme Weather Controls

3.7.1. All boats to return to centres where possible or seek immediate shelter at the nearest available safe haven and stay indoors when encountering Lightning Risk.

3.7.2. In extreme hot weather, continuous hydration is a must for all participants. Water refilling stops can be implemented if participants' drinking water are depleting.

## **Annex A – Safety Checklist**

This safety checklist must be duly completed by organiser or event in charge. Do elaborate on any mitigating factors or controls you intend to put in place.

Name of Organiser/Event-in-charge: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of event: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of event: \_\_\_\_\_

Group name/School/company: \_\_\_\_\_

s/n	Measures	Description	Compliance (additional controls)
1	Participant Demographics	Any high risk participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Children 12 years old and below</i></li><li>• <i>Person with disabilities</i></li><li>• <i>Person with special needs</i></li><li>• <i>Elderly 65 years old and above</i></li><li>• <i>Pregnant women</i></li></ul>	
2	Number of Trainer to Participant	Ratio must not exceed 1:10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May reduce the ratio by adding trainers/adults if necessary</li><li>• Check on Trainers' certification (including first aid)</li></ul>	
3	Equipment <i>Boat, Paddles and Personal Flotation Device (PFD)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure equipment is of good working condition.</li><li>• PFD must be fitted correctly as designed (kids PFD required?)</li></ul>	
4	Identifying of any non/weak swimmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify and mark non/weak swimmers so that they can be spotted easily, and help can be rendered fast when needed</li></ul>	
5	Environment <i>Area of play, water condition (open water or reservoir) and sun protection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify and understand the area of play</li><li>• To have proper hydration and sun protection measures</li><li>• Aware of SDBA Emergency Hotline</li><li>• Power Boat on standby or patrol?</li><li>• Would lifeguard be necessary?</li></ul>	
6	Emergency Response Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure proper communication plan is set up</li><li>• Be familiar with Lightning risk alert and follow up actions</li><li>• Be familiar with emergency evacuation plan</li></ul>	