

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PADDLERS

WIND: -what is the wind direction and speed? Anything over 10-15mph is probably too windy for a novice. Are the winds onshore or offshore? Onshore winds are safer since you will be blown toward shore if you capsize or have trouble paddling in the winds.
-will you have a head wind, tail wind, or beam wind? Quartering winds are typically the hardest to keep your kayak on course. Head winds will slow you down.
-the greater the fetch (distance that the wind travels over the water) the larger the waves will be.

WATER: -cold water kills. Are you dressed for possible immersion in the water if you capsize? Don't assume that you will not capsize. Dress for the water temperature, not air temps. Do an intentional wet exit near shore before paddling. If you're not ready to get in the water in a controlled situation, you're not ready to go out paddling. Remember, kayaking is a water sport!
-stay well hydrated. If you're dressed for cold water, but the air is warm you can overheat.
-cold water shock, hyperventilation, and hypothermia can all cause problems for a capsized paddler. Get first aid training so you know causes, symptoms, and treatments.

WAVES: -novice paddlers should not be out in waves over about 1 foot in height.
-will you be paddling in chop or swell? Chop will make you feel less stable. Swells are pretty easy to paddle in, but may make you seasick.
-watch out for areas with rebound waves or "clapotis". These are waves that occur when waves hit a wall or cliff and bounce back. You can get waves coming from several directions and waves can be twice as high as other areas. It's like paddling in a popcorn popper.
-stay out of areas of breaking waves. Waves will break when the water depth is approximately 1.5 times the height of the wave. If there are rocks just below the surface, you can have breaking waves right over those rocks.
-wind moving in the same direction as a current flattens out waves. Wind moving in the opposite direction to a water current will cause the waves to steepen and possibly break.

WEATHER: -always get a weather forecast. Have a weather radio or VHF radio with you.
-when you see lightning, get off the water. Wait 30 minutes after the last thunder before returning to the water.
-always keep an eye out for changes in the weather. Weather forecasts have been known to be wrong.
-be especially careful about planning long crossings if the weather is changing.

SHORELINE: -know the characteristics of the shorelines you will paddle along. Is it sandy, gently sloping, steep cliffs, rocky?
-steep sloping shorelines will have larger breaking waves than shallow gently sloping shorelines.
-always carry maps and charts
-know where you have possible take-out locations in case of an emergency or bad weather

Wear your PFD at all times when on the water!

Know what to do in the event of a capsize and PRACTICE!

Know and respect the limits of your skill and the limitations of your equipment!

