



# Journal of Paddlesport Education

A professional forum highlighting Safety Education & Instruction  
for ACA Instructors, Clubs & Affiliates

August 2013

Welcome to the  
**Journal of  
Paddlesport  
Education.**



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## RISK MANAGEMENT IN PADDLESORTS

BY CHARLIE DUFFY

### Introduction

A certain element of risk is involved when teaching paddle sports, leading trips, or providing gear to clients. As ACA Instructors, we take a number of precautions to reduce this risk to acceptable levels. One example is purchasing insurance to protect our livelihood. Risk management isn't unique to paddle sports. It doesn't hurt to look at risk management techniques used in other fields like finance, medicine, information technology, defense, etc. Concepts like insurance, vulnerability analysis (screening participants), cost-benefit analysis (determination of acceptable risk), planning, etc. are well developed in other business disciplines and can easily be applied to paddle sports as well. Most of these concepts apply to paddling in general although some practices like proper paperwork are mostly applicable to formal instruction.

### Basic Concepts

Although risk management concepts have been integral to paddle sports for quite some time, it doesn't hurt to explain some vocabulary. Three important risk management concepts are:

**Vulnerability:** A potential weakness of some sort.

**Threat:** A potential danger that someone or something can discover and use a vulnerability (weakness) to your disadvantage. The someone or something is called a threat agent.

**Risk:** Basic probability. What is the probability of a threat agent taking advantage of a vulnerability and the overall impact?

*Article Continued on page #9...*

## SWR CONFERENCE

Registration has commenced, and less than half of the spots for the Swiftwater Rescue Conference remain! Sign up today on the [ACA website](#)



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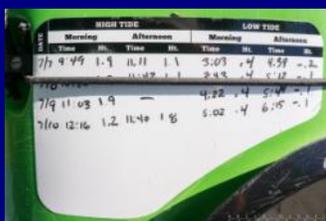
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## SEI RESOURCES

Something new in  
the ACA eStore!  
Kayak Deck Slates



Kayak deck slates are two vinyl stickers that are positioned just ahead of your cockpit which provide a good writing surface for notes using a grease pencil. Paddlers on tidal waters can keep track of daily highs/lows on the left slate while the right one makes a perfect location to track navigation or weather or if you are teaching, student names, notes or a rough lesson plan.

[Get yours today!](#)

## Kokatat Instructor of the Month August—Heather Herbeck

The August Kokatat Instructor of the Month is Heather Herbeck, from White Salmon, Washington. Originally hailing from the Midwest, Heather credits this area with her early interest and development in whitewater paddling. According to Heather, “A lot of people don’t realize how much amazing class III-V whitewater exists along the North and South Shores of Lake Superior. I’ve always been drawn to waterfalls and slides, and this area offers a lot of this. But, one of the main reasons I choose the Midwest as one of my favorite destinations is the people. The Midwest brews some of the most humble, passionate and fun paddlers in their truest form. The people make my paddling experience just as much as the quality of whitewater I’m paddling.” Heather has been paddling for 12 years, and has been an ACA Instructor for 8. As an instructor, Andy Round (owner of Precision Kayak) and J.R. Weir (ACA Instructor Trainer at Sundance Kayak School) have sculpted and helped Heather develop her teaching skills. She is very grateful to have learned from some of the best.

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Heather has been fortunate to have participated in many meaningful paddling programs through her years of teaching, which include women’s clinics and kids week-long camps. Near and dear to her heart is the organization ‘First Descents,’ which provides outdoor experiences to cancer survivors; Heather has been a part of First Descents for over five years. She also proud to be a part of the group ‘Flux;’ Flux is a group of women who participate in various extreme sports, with the goal in mind to empower and inspire women to “push their limits”. Heather started this group along with Mariann Saether in 2011. The Flux group of women come from a variety of backgrounds, but have the common denominator of pushing themselves and showcasing themselves in a positive way to influence women and girls to ‘use the outdoors as their playground.’

Learn more about past winners [here](#).





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## Attention Instructor Trainers and Educators!

Do you want to prepare your Instructor Candidates before their certification course? Would you like to save some time in your own pre-course prep work?

The latest resource from the [ACA eStore](#) – Instructor Candidate Packets

Each Instructor Candidate Packet contains:

- ACA imprinted folder
- ACA National Paddlesports Instruction Program Overview
- Instructor FAQ sheet
- Adult Waiver
- Course Evaluation Form
- Who can Teach What? Document
- Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC)
- Skills Course Registration & Report Forms
- Assessment Course Registration & Report Forms
- Benefits of ACA Membership flyer
- ACA stickers
- Multiple brochures

Get Yours Today!  
[Candidate Packets](#)  
[SUP Candidate Packets](#)



## The Recreational Boating Instructor Network: Your Resource for Boating Safety

Imagine you're planning your next boating safety course and are working to gather resources to share in the course: you go to site A for life jacket information, you go to site B for navigation rules information, and then you go to site C for information regarding boating under the influence. The National Safe Boating Council, an ACA partner, has compiled all of this important boating safety information on just one site – the Recreational Boating Safety Instructor Network [[www.BoatingInstructorNetwork.com](http://www.BoatingInstructorNetwork.com)], or the RBS In-Network. The forum is intended to provide products and resources used in both formal and informal boating safety programs.

“Our goal is to give instructors the tools to become better-informed and effective instructors teaching the full myriad of boating safety topics both in the classroom and on the water,” said Virgil Chambers, executive director of the National Safe Boating Council. “We believe the site and its networking opportunities will provide leadership and guidance to new and novice instructors who wish to grow in the field of boating safety education and training.”

In partnership with Walsh Marine Products, a manufacturer of navigational aids for inland waterways, along with input from boating safety partners, the National Safe Boating Council's RBS In-Network provides a place where agencies, organizations and companies can connect with experts to conduct programs to fulfill training needs. The RBS In-Network connects instructors to course providers and credentialing opportunities in recreational boating safety professional programs.

“Walsh Marine Products is excited to be a part of this new venture with the NSBC through the Boating Instructor Network,” remarked Vice President Ken Ullman at Walsh Marine Products. “When Virgil came to me with the concept, there was no hesitation: we wanted to be a part of this product. We feel this opportunity will open new avenues of exposure for our company in a partnership that will grow and expand with the new website.”

The RBS In-Network allows professionals to use, download and gather information without registering for the forum. If instructors are looking for more feedback and discussion, there is a registered users section that gives instructors the opportunity to post relevant and timely information, helping to create interaction among the boating community. Have suggestions? There's a feature on the site that allows users to post comments and suggestions to help improve the RBS In-Network. To learn more about the RBS In-Network and to begin using this valuable resource, visit [BoatingInstructorNetwork.com](http://BoatingInstructorNetwork.com).



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## PRO SCHOOLS



ACA Pro Schools are some of the best organizations across the country to find top quality ACA certified instruction.

[Cutter Aquatics](#)

[CKAPCO](#)

[CCPRC](#)

[Geneva Kayak Center](#)

[NaturPur](#)

[Osprey Sea Kayak Adventures](#)

[Cascade Canoe & Kayak](#)

[Raff Taff](#)

[REI Outdoor Schools](#)

[The River Connection](#)

[University of Minnesota—  
Duluth](#)

[Wet Planet Whitewater](#)

[www.americancanoe.org/  
proschools](http://www.americancanoe.org/proschools)



## National Paddlesports Conference

Registration opens on Monday, August 12th

For schedule details, special events, transportation,  
lodging details, and more please visit

[www.americancanoe.org/NPC](http://www.americancanoe.org/NPC)

The Whitewater Symposium will take place in Bend, OR as part of the National Paddlesports Conference. Find more information, [here](#).

**WHITEWATER  
SYMPOSIUM**



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## SEI UPDATE

2013

### Instructor Audit

The annual instructor audit has already begun. If your ACA instructor certification expires this year on 12/31/2013, the SEI Department will be completing an audit of your reported teaching credit, instructor update, and general ACA membership expiration. If you have questions regarding your certification, please contact the SEI Department at [sei@americancanoe.org](mailto:sei@americancanoe.org)



## Upcoming International Events

This section of the Journal of Paddlesport Education will bring to you outreach events that include conferences, festivals, symposiums and more. Check out these great events that may be in your area and consider attending. For more events check out the [ACA Paddlesports Event Calendar!](#)

### European National Paddlesports Conference

- Dates: October 4-6, 2013
- Location: Wädenswil (close to Zurich) Switzerland
- Host: [Patrick Frehner](#) & ACA [Kanuschule Schweiz](#)
- Schedule: Now available at [www.aca-europe.org](http://www.aca-europe.org)
- Pre Conference - [PaddleExpo](#) & [International Whitewater Hall of Fame Ceremony](#)
- Post Conference - Level 3: Whitewater SUP IDW/ICE, Level 4: Whitewater Kayaking IDW/ICE & Update, Level 4: Whitewater Canoe IDW/ICE & Update
- Europe Division [webpage](#)



### South American Paddlesports Conference

- Dates: October 18-20, 2013
- Location: Viña del Mar, Chile
- Hosts: [Rockside Expediciones](#), [Universal Kayak](#) & [Kayak Australis](#)
- Contacts: [Chris Stec](#) & [Sergio Acevedo](#)
- Schedule: TBD
- Post Conference- Level 2: Essentials of SUP IDW/ICE and Level 3: Coastal Kayaking IDW/ICE



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## SOMETHING NEW IN THE ACA eSTORE!

*Looking for a unique paddling gift for a friend or loved one? Check out our 'Custom Artwork' section of the eStore to find the perfect addition to a paddler's collection!*



*Have specific questions about our merchandise?*

*Please contact our [membership and merchandise department!](#)*



## Sea Kayak Georgia—ACA Paddlesports Week

Please join us for the FIRST annual Sea Kayak Georgia ACA Paddlesport Week, held September 11-15, on Tybee Island, Georgia. We invite you to come enjoy the Atlantic ocean and estuary venue that we treasure. We are pleased to offer American Canoe Association courses and specialized skills training courses. You may choose to follow skills development courses from flatwater to rough water and surf, or you may take instructor development workshops and/or exams. ACA Instructor Update courses will also be offered. Sea Kayak, Surf Kayak, Canoe and SUP disciplines will all be offered. Our focus is to deliver world class training, assessment and paddlesport opportunity for all students attending.

For more information, please visit our [website](#).



## WNC River Rescue Rodeo

September 29, 2013

10 Teams of 5 members with either canoes or decked boats compete in river rescue events for over \$1000 worth of prizes on the Tuckaseegee River in Dillsboro, NC. Teams compete in all events for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place as well as overall prizes. This event is coordinated by [Landmark Learning](#), located in Cullowhee, NC.

Event to be held at Dillsboro River Company at the put-in to the Tuckaseegee Gorge – Dillsboro, NC. For more information, please visit the [ACA Event Calendar](#).



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## SEI RESOURCES

### Attention

### Instructor Trainers and Educators!

The SEI Department would like to announce our revised Certification Workshop Evaluation forms, Instructor Candidate Evaluation forms, and Instructor Candidate Continuation forms. A critical part of your certification course reports, please find these new forms in the Instructor Trainer resources page on our website.



## SEI Department Update Online Waivers now available!

As a service to our members, Paddle America Clubs and event organizers, the ACA now has an online waiver system.

Hard copy waivers are still available to print from the ACA website.

If you would like for your event to use online waivers, please contact the ACA's Insurance Coordinator for details.



Online waivers are only one facet of our insurance program—check out our website for more information, and to see how ACA insurance can benefit your club, program, or individual paddling needs.

## Coming Soon...

## Downloadable ACA Instructor's Manual!

Check the 'Instructor Items' section of the eStore soon to download your copy!



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## SHARE YOUR PHOTOS



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The American Canoe Association is proud to count Subaru of America among its corporate sponsors.

Subaru is the official vehicle of the ACA.

As part of Subaru's support for the association, ACA members are eligible to participate in the Subaru VIP Partners Program. VIP Partners participants can save up to \$3,300\* off the manufacturer's suggested retail price (depending on model and equipment selected) on the purchase or lease of any new Subaru from participating dealers. This discount is available to all eligible ACA members. No haggling is required.

Now that's a member benefit!

In addition to providing discounts to ACA members, Subaru is partnering with *your* ACA to support the ACA's stewardship and conservation programs. When an ACA member purchases a vehicle through the VIP Partners Program, Subaru makes a contribution to support ACA's stewardship work, providing the organization with much-needed resources for protecting our nation's waterways.

To learn more about the VIP Program visit: [www.americancanoe.org/VIP](http://www.americancanoe.org/VIP)



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## RISK MANAGEMENT IN PADDLESPORTS

BY CHARLIE DUFFY

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

It may be beneficial to examine these concepts in terms of potential education/trip scenarios.

ABC Outfitters has been in business for several decades. It has been a tough year for them financially so they decided to pare back on equipment upgrades and maintenance (vulnerability). Recently, some big storms dumped lots of water in feeder tributaries, causing the water levels to rise on their favorite run: Hot Dog Canyon. A group of college students contacted ABC Outfitters to run the canyon this weekend. It's Saturday and Hot Dog Canyon is well above safe boating levels per sources like guide books. ABC Outfitters has never published a formal cut-off level for the canyon, they wing it (vulnerability). Although there is an easier section of the river above, the clients really have their heart set on a canyon run and ABC Outfitters aims to please (threat - improper venue may lead to serious injuries). Unfortunately, several rafts capsized in Psycho Rapid leading to a flush drowning (risk). ABC Outfitters was successfully sued and is no longer in business.

Kidz Are Great Paddling School specializes in training children near a metropolitan area. They normally staff each class with two qualified instructors but Tom called in sick today leaving Sally by herself with 10 children (several vulnerabilities). They have a nice safe venue and the weather is picture perfect. The class was going great until after lunch when Jon developed an upset stomach and asked to leave the class. Sally contacted Jon's parents and instructed Jon to walk down the trail to the parking lot and wait (threat - unattended children may be harmed and you will be held accountable). On the way to the car, Jon was beaten up by a teenager whom also stole his boating gear (risk - the teenager was the threat agent that caused harm to Jon).

### Dealing With Risk

Risk is part of our everyday lives. It is important to understand the potential risks, carefully evaluate them, and reduce overall risk to acceptable levels. A very common pitfall in risk management is ignoring risk. Ignoring risk eventually leads to bad outcomes and potentially either negligence or a gross negligence claim. There are only a limited number of ways to reduce risk to acceptable levels, the list below covers some of these solutions and provides numerous examples relevant to paddle sports.

*Continued on next page...*



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## ***Risk Mitigation/Reduction:***

- Inspect equipment periodically for signs of wear and needed maintenance.
- Replace outdated gear like that old Mirage kayak with the small cockpit. The boating industry has made huge strides in safety in the past decade or two.
- Do a mental "Lessons Learned" for trips and classes. Ask your co-instructors for feedback. Use this feedback to improve procedures going forward.
- Learn from others mistakes or near misses. American Whitewater publishes an annual report of whitewater boating accidents with some analysis. This report is a great way to learn from others.
- Always have a Plan B venue and let your class know what that is. I also recommend pre-setting river gauge levels. This is very similar to going to an auction and jotting down a price you will not exceed when bidding.
- Look for useful redundancies. We often teach our students to check other's drain plugs and spray skirts after each break. Recruiting a competent assistant is another example of a useful redundancy.
- Plan, Plan, Plan. The more effort you spend up front, the easier it is to deal with unexpected complications. We often check weather, look at upstream gauges, identify exit routes and hospitals. It isn't a bad practice completing your paper course report before the class. The course report provides a great contact list should the need arise like the Park Service closing down the parkway to my class location with no prior notification - grrr!
- Get and maintain training. The ACA ensures this via Instructor Updates. They also require CPR and First Aid certification to request that great ACA insurance.
- Follow accepted standards. American Whitewater's River Database is a good guide for commonly accepted class ratings. The ACA is the nation's leading paddle sports standards body. Our discipline committees publish and maintain some great suggested class curriculums.
- Make checklists - They work wonders in the space and medical industries.
- Ensure you have the right gear - Do you carry a cell phone in a water-tight enclosure? Do you have a spare breakdown paddle? Do you have a suitable First Aid Kit?
- Verify whether your clients have suitable gear BEFORE beginning the shuttle - Pay extra attention to proper helmet and PFD fit. I also check to see if they have adequate thermal protection. I pack an extra skull cap (and full hood) - both have been used many times. I also bring extra gear like helmets on my novice trips since many novices have exceptionally poor fitting helmets. If mine offers far better protection, I offer to loan it to them but that is their decision. Check to see if they have suitable footwear - bare feet is a non-starter for me.
- Medical Disclosure - Let's face it, we are not medical doctors and need some clues on probable causes of medical issues and preferred remedies. I have experienced diabetics, persons with previous heart disease, previous broken backs, severe allergies, bi-polar issues, etc. I was still able to handle trips/classes with all of the above issues due to prior knowledge and guidance from the afflicted. Treat this information with great care - it is very sensitive. Ask where they keep their medications and how best to potentially assist (or not) if called upon.



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- **Proper Paperwork** - When completing your course report form, ask yourself if the class venue could be misconstrued. Some runs drop a river class (or more) at lower levels. It doesn't hurt to document the river level as an extra precaution or the specific stretch. We already discussed completing your course report ahead of time so you have that all important contact list. Do you carry ACA accident report forms and SOAP notes (two copies) in your First Aid Kit along with a writing implement? Get accident witnesses observations down in writing immediately as they may become difficult to find/remember later on.
- **Qualify Participants** - When running more advanced classes, you will need to qualify participants to help ensure a smooth and safe class. It doesn't make much sense to run a solid class III river with some students that have just begun boating.

**Risk Transfer (AKA: Insurance)** - As ACA certified Instructors, we all have access to great liability insurance at very affordable prices. Your sponsoring organization may also carry insurance - certainly worth checking out.

**Risk Acceptance** - There is almost always some left over risk (AKA: Residual Risk). We do our best to reduce risk to acceptable levels and remind our clients via the ACA Waiver they play a key role in their safety as well. Stress "Challenge By Choice" and fully support individuals that choose to sit out certain exercises.

**Risk Avoidance** - There's a reason few firms run classes on Class V venues, for most firms the potential risks far exceed the benefits.

## Summary

Risk management might not be one of the more exciting topics but it is really essential to safe paddling events/activities. In most serious accidents there often isn't one root cause, it is a collection of numerous small issues that eventually lead to a really bad outcome. Developing a habit of risk management allows you to deal with small issues before the ruin a great event. Litigation in our field is exceptionally rare but not unheard of. Practicing Due Diligence (AKA: Do Detect) is a great first step in protecting yourself and your business. When you see potential unsafe practices, ask why and how can I address? This leads us to Due Care (AKA: Do Correct). Identifying issues like outdated medications in your First Aid Kit is only half the battle, you need to correct this vulnerability by restocking.



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