

SCOUTING IRELAND BOATING GUIDELINES

SAFETY



AFLOAT

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** A sense of challenge is part of the essence of adventure. The Scout Method recognises this and seeks to provide an opportunity for children and young people to learn about risks for themselves, to experience a degree of freedom, and to take more responsibility for their own safety and well-being. Scouting activities afloat create amazing opportunities for this, to develop skills and leadership opportunities, and to instill the spirit of adventure. An important part of a Scouter's role is to help SCOUTS with this, to prepare for adult life by allowing them to experience managed risk, provided in a controlled way. For this to happen safely and effectively, water activities must be properly planned, equipped and supervised.
- 1.2** The purpose of this guidance document is to assist members of Scouting Ireland with planning and leading water activities, by explaining what is considered best practice and by highlighting how risks and safety control measures exist for the typical water activities undertaken by SCOUTS. This guidance document has been prepared by Scouting Ireland's Sea Scouting Team with the aim of encouraging members to place a focus on safety in their water activities, so that everyone going afloat can enjoy and get the most benefit from their adventurous experiences.

TERMINOLOGY

- 1.3** The following terminology has been applied throughout this document:
- **SCOUTS:** All youth programme members (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Ventures, Rovers).
 - **Scouter:** An adult leader.
 - **Boating:** Water activity afloat using a boat (sailing, rowing, powerboating) but excluding paddling.
 - **Paddling:** Water activity afloat with the use of a paddle, in a canoe or kayak.
 - **Boat:** All types of craft used for boating (dinghy, keelboat, rowing boat etc) or paddling (kayak, canoe etc).
 - **Sea Scouting Team:** Programme team and water-activity experts within Scouting Ireland for guidance, resources and supports afloat.

PRIMARY SOURCES

- 1.4** Scouting Ireland's **Safety Afloat** Guidelines acknowledge the existence of publications from the following parties. Scouting Ireland has made reference to these publications in the preparation of these Guidelines. Scouting Ireland acknowledges that, if a discrepancy exists or is perceived to exist between these publications and the Guidelines, then the requirements of these publications take supremacy:
- Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS), Chapter V, International Maritime Organisation. [Appendix 1](#)
 - Marine Notice No. 37 of 2022: Important safety advice for those involved in Canoeing and Kayaking, Department of Transport, 2022. [Appendix 2](#)
 - Marine Notice No. 32 of 2022: Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft, Department of Transport, 2022. [Appendix 3](#)
 - Marine Notice No. 40 of 2019: Limitations of Mobile Phone Use for Emergency Communication at Sea, Department of Transport, 2019. [Appendix 4](#)
 - Code of Practice: The Safe Operation of Recreational Craft, Department of Transport, 2017. [Appendix 5](#)
 - Irish Sailing
 - Canoeing Ireland
 - Rowing Ireland

COLD WATER IMMERSION

1.5 As the normal water temperature in Ireland is routinely less than 15°C, Scouting Ireland's boating and paddling activities are routinely undertaken in cold water conditions (defined as water of 15°C or less). The safety measures described throughout this guidance document are in place to take account of the critically important issue of cold water immersion. It is of critical importance to the safety of all those going afloat that Scouters understand and take account of these measures.

1.6 Accidental immersion in cold water can have immediate and profound effects on a person's body, especially if it occurs in the absence of protective clothing. After initial immersion (within 30 seconds, lasting up to 2 – 3 minutes) skin experiences a sudden lowering in temperature, which can cause a rapid rise in heart rate and blood pressure, followed by a gasp reflex and uncontrollable rapid breathing. If a person's head goes underwater during this cold shock stage it can lead to water ingestion and subsequent drowning. Cold incapacitation can set in within 2 – 15 minutes. During this response, the limbs can become incapacitated as the blood flow to extremities is restricted by the body's attempts to preserve heat and protect vital organs. Loss of dexterity can occur within 10 to 15 minutes and exhaustion or unconsciousness can occur within 1 to 2 hours. Without a PFD, cold incapacitation can lead to death by drowning as the individual loses the ability to maintain their airway above the water.

CONTAMINATED WATER

1.7 Exposure to water contaminated by waterborne diseases may pose a serious health hazard to members.

Three main diseases are Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis), blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria), and Hepatitis A.

Scouters should be familiar with these health hazards and the recommended control measures such as:

1. Assess the quality of water. Refer to your local County Council or Water Safety Ireland or the Environmental Protection Agency if you are suspicious.
2. Cover cuts and grazes with a waterproof dressing.
3. Wash hands after all water activities and before eating anything.
4. Rinse all equipment with fresh water after use.
5. If an illness occurs after a water activity, be aware of the importance of notifying the medical professional that this person was recently in the water

1.8 Our activities may inadvertently contaminate bodies of water by introducing invasive species, which can have a serious effect on biodiversity. This can occur by not properly cleaning our boats and equipment. Scouters should be familiar with the recommended control measures such as:

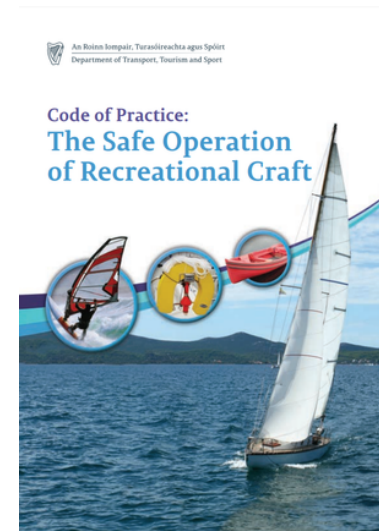
1. Drain all bilge water from boats.
2. Remove all debris, mud and vegetation from boats.
3. Thoroughly rinse all equipment before moving to a different body of water (including trailers).
4. Follow the recommendations stated on signage at the waterbody
5. Do not take anything other than photos, do not leave anything other than footprints.
6. Report sightings of invasive species to invasives@biodiversityireland.ie

1.9 See [Appendix 6](#) for further information on water & air temperature.

See [Appendix 7](#) for further information on invasive species & waterborne diseases.

**PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHOULD BE DRAWN TO THE FOLLOWING CHECKLIST OF BASIC REQUIREMENTS AND ADVICE;
which all owners and users of recreational craft should be aware of before taking to the water:**

- ✓ The legal requirements in relation to the wearing and carrying of Personal Flotation Devices/Lifejackets and the need for the proper care and maintenance of such devices.
- ✓ The need to check current weather forecasts and sea conditions prior to departure and to plan your activity accordingly.
- ✓ Pre-Departure Safety Checks and Briefing – the briefing of all persons on board on emergency procedures and the location and use of safety/emergency equipment on board, e.g. flares, radio equipment, life jackets;
- ✓ The need to ensure that a designated person ashore is aware of your departure and return times, where you are going, and have a procedure in place to raise the alarm if necessary;
- ✓ The importance of having a dependable means of communication. VHF radio equipment is the recommended method of communication and craft users should be familiar with its use. Where mobile phone use is proposed, the phone should at all times be fully charged and the signal strength and charge indicator should be regularly checked while the vessel is underway;
- ✓ In a marine emergency, the alarm can be raised on VHF Channel 16 or call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coast Guard.



SECTION 2 – DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PERSON-IN-CHARGE

2.1 Every activity afloat must be organised by a Person-in-Charge. This person has the overall responsibility for the activity.

This person must either (i) be the holder of a Certificate of Competence ([see 2.8](#)), or (ii) assign responsibility for the on-water part of the activity to a person who is the holder of a Certificate of Competence.

2.2 Where the Person-in-Charge is a qualified youth member, an adult Scouter must be present at all times to support and aid in an emergency.

2.3 The Scouter should always take whatever precautions a prudent parent would take for the safety of their own child.

2.4 Before allowing a SCOUT to take part in any water activity, the Person-in-Charge must consider:

- The age, experience and reliability of the SCOUT; and
- The ability and experience of themselves or any other assigned responsibility for the activity.

If the Person-in-Charge assigns responsibility to a person who is not a member of Scouting Ireland, it is the responsibility of the Scouter to satisfy him/herself that such a person has the necessary skill and qualification before allowing that activity to commence.

2.5 Scouting Ireland recommends that a risk assessment is carried out prior to each activity, prepared by either the Person-in-Charge or the holder of a Certificate of Competence. If the Person-in-Charge or the holder of a Certificate of Competence is a youth member, this Risk Assessment must be approved by an adult Scouter.

FIRST-AID CERTIFICATES

2.6 A Person-in-Charge of an activity afloat must have a valid first-aid certificate. An appropriate first-aid kit should be available at every activity.

2.7 Most workplace first aid courses are based on the concept of an 'urban' environment where it is assumed that the emergency services will have rapid access to a person in need of emergency care.

This is not normally possible when afloat.

The first-aid training appropriate for going afloat should be at least an 8-hour contact time course that deals with the effects of cold water immersion, shock and hypothermia, the use of an AED and how to prepare a casualty for evacuation. There are first-aid courses intended for marine and remote environments such as Rescue Emergency Care, Wilderness First Aid, and the Royal Yacht Association's Marine First Aid.

2.8 Is my first-aid certificate valid?

Every first-aid certificate has an expiry date. If your first-aid certificate has expired so has your ability to lead activity afloat.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE

2.8 A Certificate of Competence demonstrates that the holder is trained and experienced in implementing best practice and prudent risk assessment in that activity.

2.9 Any activity afloat must be overseen by a person who is the holder of a Certificate of Competence in that type of activity.

A Certificate of Competence is either a Charge Certificate (these will no longer be valid after 2025), a **Leadership Afloat** award issued by Scouting Ireland or the relevant instructor/ coach qualification issued by the relevant activity National Governing Body (NGB).

It is the responsibility of the holder of a Certificate of Competence to ensure that the abilities of SCOUTS are matched to the categories and conditions of water.

2.10 Qualifications issued by a National Governing Body (NGB) are available for sailing, powerboating, rowing and all forms of paddling, in different categories of water.

Leadership Afloat awards are available for sailing, powerboating and rowing, in different categories of water.

The table below highlights the relevant Certificates of Competence for each type of activity.

2.11 All Certificates of Competence are only valid when accompanied by an in-date first-aid certificate.

2.12 Water activities not listed on the table below, will require Scouters to hold a level of certificate issued by the sports NGB as a measure of competence.

The Sea Scouting Team may advise further.

2.13 The holder of a Certificate of Competence is responsible in ensuring all best practice, risk assessment and due diligence is taken to facilitate a safe and successful activity on the water.

ACTIVITY	CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE	
	MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE QUALIFICATION	ISSUED BY
Rowing	Basic Leadership Afloat (Oars)	Scouting Ireland
Sailing	Basic Leadership Afloat (Sail)	Scouting Ireland
	Sailing Instructor	Irish Sailing or Royal Yachting Association
Powerboating	Basic Leadership Afloat (Power)	Scouting Ireland
	Powerboat Instructor	Irish Sailing or Royal Yachting Association
Kayaking, including Sit-On-Top Kayaking	Level 1 Kayak Instructor	Canoeing Ireland
	Paddlesport Leader	Canoe Association of N.Ireland
White-Water Kayaking	Level 3 Kayak Instructor	Canoeing Ireland
	White Water Leader	Canoe Association of N.Ireland
Sea Kayaking	Level 3 Sea Kayak Instructor	Canoeing Ireland
	Sea Kayak Leader	Canoe Association of N.Ireland
Surf Kayaking	Level 3 Sea Kayak Instructor	Canoeing Ireland
	Paddlesurf Instructor	Canoeing Ireland
	Sea Kayak Leader	Canoe Association of N.Ireland
	Surf Kayak Leader	Canoe Association of N.Ireland
Open Canoeing	Level 1 Canoe Instructor	Canoeing Ireland
	Canoe Open Water Leader	Canoe Association of N.Ireland
Stand-Up Paddleboarding	Flat Water SUP Instructor	Irish Surfing
	Flat Water Stand-Up Paddle Boarding Instructor	Canoeing Ireland
	Stand Up Paddleboard Leader	Canoe Association of N.Ireland

STAYING SAFE NEAR THE WATER

2.12 Activity along our shoreline such as harbours, beaches and riverbanks where SCOUTS do not plan on getting in the water should also be planned and considered.

An appropriate risk assessment should be undertaken for such an activity. This should assess factors such as:

- How well do you know the area?
- What is the likelihood of a person entering the water?
- What is the age of the group?
- Does anyone in the group have any additional needs?
- What is the weather forecast?
- What are the sea conditions; are there currents or tides in the area?
- What is the correct type of clothing and footwear?
- Where is the nearest help. What about nearby life rings, access ladder, how accessible is first aid?
- Should I wear a PFD if fishing by the shoreline?

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

2.13 All Scouters supporting an activity must be prepared to respond in an emergency.

The following principles should be applied;

- Keep calm & ask for help, if required.
- Deal with the immediate situation.
- Crew first, Craft later.
- Contact the Group Leader, when an opportunity allows.
- Do not speak to any media.
- Keep a record of actions and communications.

See [3.45 Emergency Action Plan](#) for further information.

Being 'Prepared' For An Emergency Scouters should;

1. Be ready to enter the water.
2. Be suitably briefed on the EAP & Safety Plan.
3. Have direct access to a means of communication.
4. Know who to call/ when to call in an emergency.
5. Have access to SCOUTS contact & medical details.
6. Be aware of additional needs SCOUTS may have.

INSURANCE

2.14 Scouting Ireland has public liability cover for craft under 26ft in length and/or a maximum speed of 10-knots.

Craft capable of exceeding these specifications must be covered under a marine policy.

Boats may require additional policy cover if kept on a swinging mooring.

For further advice contact Scouting Ireland Headquarters.

2.15 Cliff Diving, Waterfall Climbing, Diving, Speedboat Racing are not covered under Scouting Ireland's normal-activity insurance policy.

2.16 Refer to 'Scouters Insurance Briefing' for guidance on what activities are covered.

See [Appendix 8](#) Scouters Insurance Briefing.

See [Appendix 9](#) for Leadership Afloat Awards.

SECTION 3 – GOING AFLOAT, BOATING & PADDLING

SAFETY AFLOAT TOOLBOX

3.1 The **Safety Afloat Toolbox** is a collection of resources the Scout Group should implement to ensure safe levels of activity on the water.

3.2 Each Scout Group conducting their own water-activities should examine their Safety Afloat Tools and ensure written, recorded, reviewed and communicated to members.

3.3 The **Safety Afloat Toolbox** is a Scout Group's own working document. It should feature key points including;

- 1. A chart of the Scout Groups Boating Waters;** *boundaries & local hazards.*
- 2. Standard Operating Procedures;** *instructions how tasks should be completed.*
- 3. Risk Assessment;** *identification and control of hazards.*
- 4. Emergency Action Plan;** *what to do when things go wrong.*
- 5. Activity Logbook;** *last line of defence for weather assessment and confirming numbers afloat.*
- 6. Safety Briefing Guide;** *communicating hazards, signals and escape to those afloat.*
- 7. Accident Reports;** *printed and available - sent to Scouting Ireland.*
- 8. Certificates of Competence Records;** *who is certified to lead afloat/ where are skill gaps.*
- 9. Equipment & Maintenance Records;** *boats and gear inspected and in safe working order.*

3.4 Additional guidance;

- Have a plan for recovery in adverse conditions; crew first/ craft later.
- Know when to call for assistance & the location of your closest RNLI/ Coastguard Station.
- Determine alternative recovery locations in the event of an emergency.
- Appoint a safety coordinator to ensure hazards are managed.
- Determine clear lines of communications afloat; whistle signals, hand signals, flags, radio, etc.
- Emergency contact details for SCOUTS should be available in case of emergency.

EXCLUDED WATER-ACTIVITIES

3.5 These activities are not permitted under the Associations policy. Please contact Head Office for advice.

1. Speed Boat Racing
2. Cliff Jumping
3. Diving
4. Jet Skiing
5. Waterfall Climbing

SEASON AFLOAT

- 3.6 From the 1st May through to 30th September:** Regular boating and paddling activity can be undertaken by all SCOUTS, based on normal activity risk assessment. Full-length wetsuits and weatherproof cags are recommended for most boating and paddling activities, subject to assessment by the Person-in-Charge of each particular activity.
- 3.7 From the 1st October through to the 30th April:** additional safety measures are required for activity afloat. The Person-in-Charge of the activity must consider the factors that apply to each particular activity, such as the age of the participants, their experience, the type of activity and the weather conditions. Full-length wetsuits/ weatherproof outer-layers appropriate for the activity are recommended for all activities during this period. Spraydecks must be worn for all outdoor kayaking.
- (i) Senior Sections (**Scouts & Ventures**) may continue normal boating and paddling during this period, if the Person-in-Charge applies additional relevant safety measures to each activity.
 - (ii) Junior Sections (**Cubs & Beavers**) must be carefully considered during this period to reflect the colder water & air temperatures. Activities where there is no increased likelihood of juniors entering the cold water, such as keelboat sailing and powerboating are considered most appropriate during this time. Dinghy sailing and similar boating should only be exercised by Sea Scouting Groups. Juniors should not undertake outdoor paddling during this period. Indoor pool paddling under the normal activity supervision guidelines is appropriate.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- 3.8** Scouting Ireland requires that a written risk assessment is carried out prior to each activity, prepared by either the Person-in-Charge or the holder of a Certificate of Competence. Risk assessments for activities should be compiled to become part of a Scout Group's **Safety Afloat Toolbox**.
- 3.9** In order to complete a risk assessment, the Person-in-Charge of an activity afloat and all Scouters afloat, should know and understand these guidelines, be able to identify hazards, bye-laws or relevant notices issued by local authorities, the relevant NGB or Scouting Ireland relating to the waters concerned.
- 3.10** Key factors to take account of are;
1. the type of activity,
 2. the waters where the activity is to take place,
 3. the weather conditions needed for the activity to be run safely,
 4. the age and experience of the SCOUTS,
 5. the experience and qualifications of the Person-in-Charge and the Scouters afloat.

3.11 The steps that need to be followed when preparing the risk assessment are:

1. What is the hazard?
2. Who might be harmed?
3. If no control measures are applied, what is the risk. Determine this by considering:
 - The severity of this hazard (for example: not severe, such as a minor injury like a scrape; serious, such as an injury like a broken bone; severe, such as a fatality)
 - The likelihood of this hazard occurring (for example: unlikely to occur; likely to occur; inevitable that it will occur)?
4. What control measures will be applied to either eliminate or reduce the severity or the likelihood?
5. If these control measures are applied, what would the risk be then?
Determine this by considering again the severity and the likelihood of this hazard if these control measures are applied.
This should show that the risk has been either eliminated or reduced significantly.

Repeat Steps 1 to 5 for any other hazards you have identified. At the end of this process, review all of the results and make a decision on whether the activity can go ahead safely if all of the control measures you identified are actually applied. You then need to make sure that the control measures are actually applied!

3.12 To be effective, a risk assessment must be:

1. Documented: This means in writing, and filed securely.
2. Reviewed: If any of the conditions change. Even if it seems that no conditions have changed, it should be reviewed once every year.
3. Communicated: To the Scouters and SCOUTS taking part in the activity, especially the control measures that need to be applied.

A risk assessment is only effective if the control measures it identified are actually applied to the activity. This should be communicated to the participants during a Safety Briefing before the activity starts. The Person-in-Charge of the activity should record the fact that this Safety Briefing took place.

3.13 See [Appendix 10](#) for further information.

WEATHER, TIDE AND CURRENTS

3.14 The weather and tidal conditions must be considered for all activity afloat, before going afloat.

Forecasts must be checked and understood for the duration of the activity and plans amended to suit the age, experience and type of activity vs the actual weather conditions.

3.15 Be aware that conditions change and new hazards can occur. Be continually aware of the hazards associated with the environment.

3.16 Being aware of the weather conditions for an activity means: check the weather forecast; consider how the forecasted weather will affect your activity and your SCOUTS; then decide what you can do to ensure the safety of your activity. Sometimes this will mean you deciding to adapt your plans, and other times it will mean you deciding not to go afloat.

There are numerous places where you can get a weather forecast - traditional methods like TV, radio, newspaper or marine VHF radio, or newer methods like online or smartphone apps. The traditional methods typically rely on information provided by Met Éireann. The newer methods can be Met Éireann's website or its weather app, but other websites and apps can get their data from many other sources so it's important that Scouters understand that, not all weather forecasts are the same, and some are likely to be more accurate than others.

Scouters should understand that:

- Met Éireann's forecasts use an 'ensemble' approach, where multiple predictions are created for what the weather might be at any given time, which are then examined by a single forecast.
- Met Éireann's forecasts have a regional focus centred on Ireland and the north Atlantic, whereas other forecasting models like those typically used by commercial apps, have a global focus on large-scale weather patterns.
- Met Éireann's weather forecasts analyse a grid area measuring ~2.5km in width, whereas many commercial apps use a much lower resolution, sometimes ~25km in width. Met Éireann's higher resolution means that they can analyse coastline features in a more accurate and realistic way, and inland features such as river valleys, and the associated weather variations that are important to safety afloat such as wind speed, gusts, rainfall and temperature.

- It's important that any weather-based decision uses an up-to-date forecast. Typically, published weather forecasts are only updated every 6-hours. This means that the forecast you're looking at may not be showing the weather conditions that are most likely to occur in the near future. For example, a weather forecast published on the day or night before an activity could be considerably different to the weather forecast published on the morning of that activity just before it commences.

3.17 No activity afloat should be permitted if Met Éireann has issued a Small Craft Warning for the activity area (defined as a 'sustained wind speed' of Force 6 or more).

3.18 It is recommended that Scout Groups apply Scouting Ireland's Force 5 Small Craft Warning as a prudent safety measure (meaning that the activity does not take place if the 'sustained wind speed' is forecasted to be Force 5 or more).

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

3.19 The local environment may have an impact on the forecasted conditions predicted. Scouters and the Person-in-Charge must take the local geographical features into consideration when planning activity.

Local environments will have nuances that may have a positive or negative impact on the weather such as; a particular sheltered bank during a specific wind direction, unpredictable gusts forming shoreside features, exposed areas.

3.20 The Person-in-Charge must make themselves aware of local hazards, rules, bye-laws or warnings issued by the harbour, navigation or local authority.

This is particularly important if the activity is to be undertaken in waters other than the Group's normal operating base, which is when the Person-in-Charge of that activity should consult local charts or contact either a local Scout Group or the Sea Scouting Team for guidance.

Local information can be invaluable but Scouters should make sure that their informants are knowledgeable about the type of boating that is proposed in their area.

3.21 Hazards may change significantly within the local environment in periods of flood, heavy rainfall or significant tidal ranges.

SWIMMING ABILITY

3.22 All SCOUTS should demonstrate to a suitable person their ability to swim 50 metres in the clothing and equipment appropriate to their activity.

PFDs may be worn during this exercise. This may be conducted in waters where activity will usually be held.

A SCOUT who is not able to complete this exercise is classified as a non-swimmer.

3.23 A non-swimmer may only participate in a water activity at the discretion of the Person-in-Charge of the activity.

The Person-in-Charge must consider the increased risks associated with the presence of a non-swimmer.

3.24 The Person-in-Charge must ensure that all participants wear a PFD appropriate to the requirements of legislation.

Remember that PFDs have limitations and should only be used in the conditions they are designed for.

For example, a 50 Newton Buoyancy Aid is only intended for a user that is:

- A good swimmer.
- Able to provide active participation to help themselves.
- Of a body mass greater than 25 kg (3 stone 13 pounds).
- In sheltered waters, where help and rescue are close at hand.

3.25 Scouters should be aware of the swimming ability of their SCOUTS intending to go afloat.

Scouting Ireland's annual process of gathering an Activity Consent Form from parents/guardians may be used by Scouters to identify basic information on swimming ability.

LOGBOOK

3.26 An activity afloat logbook should be kept as part of a Scout Groups *Safety Afloat Toolbox*.

Information in the activity logbook may include at least:

- Name of the Person-in-Charge
- Name of the Shore Contact who has been briefed on the activity.
- Names of the SCOUTS afloat.
- Intended destination.
- What equipment is being used.
- Departure time and return time.
- Weather conditions.
- Tidal conditions or River conditions.
- How to contact the Person-in-Charge when afloat (VHF channel and/or the number for a phone in a waterproof pouch).

3.27 See *Appendix 11* for further information

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

3.28 All members afloat must be appropriately dressed for the conditions and activity. Appropriate clothing and footwear are a requirement for all participants in a boating or paddling activity.

3.29 In advance of an activity, Scouters should communicate to parents the recommended clothing and footwear for that activity.

3.30 Appropriate clothing is required for the comfort and safety of participants.

Appropriate clothing may include well-fitted wetsuits, cags and waterproofs.

Inappropriate clothing may include poorly fitted wetsuits, cotton layers and jeans.

3.31 Appropriate footwear is required to protect feet on rough surfaces and to provide grip on slippery surfaces.

Appropriate footwear may include wetsuit booties or runners with good soles.

Inappropriate footwear includes loose footwear, crocs, flip-flops, knee-high or thigh-high boots, and heavy footwear like hiking boots.

Inappropriate footwear or barefoot is a hazard that can cause someone to injure themselves or fall overboard. Environments such as a pier, shore, marina, estuary bed or the deck of a boat are all potentially hazardous areas, particularly when wet.

3.32 Long hair and loose clothing must be tied back and secured.

3.33 Before commencing an activity, the Person-in-Charge of an activity is responsible for doing a visual check of all participants to ensure that they are wearing appropriate clothing and footwear.

PFDS

3.34 A Personal Floatation Device (PFD) means all types of buoyancy aids and lifejackets.

Any PFD purchased after 2020 should conform to the relevant part of specification I.S. EN ISO 12402.

3.35 On all SCOUT activities afloat, including regattas and races, the appropriate type of PFD must be worn by all adult and youth members.

3.36 The Person-in-Charge of an activity must determine the appropriate type of PFD to be worn, taking account of participants' age, experience, and swimming ability, the type of activity and the activity waters.

3.37 The intended use, limitations, and appropriate type of boating waters for the different types of PFD are summarised on the following page;

3.38 A PFD can only be effective if it is securely fitted onto a person.

Before an activity commences, the Person-in-Charge must check all that PFDs are fitted securely and that all clips, zips and straps are fastened appropriately. In particular, a leg strap must be worn if a PFD is fitted with it.

3.39 It is highly recommended that lifejackets are fitted with a whistle, reflective tape and leg straps.

Lights must be fitted on PFDs used after sunset; harnesses should be fitted on PFDs used on fully decked sailing boats used after sunset.

All PFDs used in Day Cruising Waters should be fitted with auto-activation to deploy.

3.40 Belt-type PFDs are not recommended for any type of Scouting Ireland activity afloat.

3.41 On an open-decked boat, the Person-in-Charge of the boat may allow PFDs to be removed when appropriate, e.g. when below deck or in a protected cockpit in calm weather, or when tied alongside or at anchor.

3.42 PFDs owned by the Scout Group should be inspected and tested annually.

PFDs that are found to be faulty or no longer able to provide its original level of buoyancy, or a lifejacket that is found have been deployed, should be removed immediately from service and clearly marked until they are thoroughly inspected, rearmed or dumped.

PFD testing [Appendix 12](#).

TYPE OF WATER	TYPE OF PFD	PRODUCT STANDARD	PRODUCT'S INTENDED USE AND LIMITATIONS
Safe Enclosed Waters	50 Newton Buoyancy Aid	I.S. EN ISO 12402-5: 2020	For use by adults and children with a body mass greater than 25 kg only, in sheltered waters. Buoyancy aids require active participation by the user where help and rescue are close at hand. Only for good swimmers and for use near to a bank or shore where help is close at hand. Requires active participation of the user. Will not hold the face of an unconscious wearer clear of the water and does not have sufficient buoyancy to protect people who are unable to help themselves. May be suitable in circumstances where more bulky or buoyant devices could impair the user's activity or actually endanger them. They have minimum bulk and cost, but they are of limited use in disturbed water and cannot be expected to keep the user safe for a long period of time. Not a Lifejacket.
Restricted Waters	100 Newton Lifejacket	I.S. EN ISO 12402-4: 2020	For use by adults, children and infants, in sheltered or calm water, or when the users are fully clothed. For swimmers of any age. Intended for those who may have to wait for rescue. Will not turn an unconscious wearer face-up in water (particularly when wearing heavy clothing). May be suitable in instances where the wearer remains capable of helping themselves. Whilst these PFDs may be less bulky than other types of PFDs, they should not be used in rough conditions or when there is wave splash.
Day Cruising Waters and Coastal Waters	150 Newton Lifejacket, plus safety harness / lifeline	I.S. EN ISO 12402-3: 2020	For use by adults, children and infants, for general, offshore or rough water use, or when the users are fully clothed. For swimmers and non-swimmers of any age. For general offshore and rough weather use. Turns most unconscious wearers face-up in water. However, performance may be affected if the user is wearing heavy and/or waterproof clothing. May be suitable for use in tidal waters or when foul weather clothing is being worn and where the wearer may not be capable of helping themselves due to injury or exhaustion.
Offshore Waters	275 Newton Lifejacket, + safety harness / lifeline	I.S. EN ISO 12402-2: 2020	For use by adults, children or infants, for offshore use under severe conditions, or when protective clothing is being used or additional loads are being carried. For offshore use and by people who are using items of significant weight and thus require additional buoyancy. Also of value to those who are using clothing which traps air and which will adversely affect the self-righting capacity of the lifejacket. Designed to ensure that the user is floating with his/her mouth and nose clear of the surface at an angle and with sufficient freeboard to limit mouth immersions in waves.

COMMUNICATIONS AFLOAT

- 3.43** The Person-in-Charge of every activity afloat must carry a Marine VHF radio or a mobile phone in a suitable waterproof cover appropriate to the activity waters.
- In Safe Enclosed Waters - A fully charged mobile phone in a waterproof cover may be used. However, mobile phone coverage at sea is limited and unreliable, and mobile phones are highly susceptible to becoming inoperable if they come into contact with water.
 - In Restricted Waters, Day Cruising Waters, Coastal Waters, or Offshore Waters - A Marine VHF Radio is required as the primary communication tool.
- 3.44** Where practicable, when a Marine VHF radio is taken afloat, a continuous listening watch should be maintained on VHF channel 16.
- 3.45** A registered Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) worn by the Person-in-Charge is recommended for:
- Boating or paddling in Day Cruising Waters, Coastal Waters, or Offshore Waters.
 - Paddling on remote rivers or Grade 3 rivers.
- 3.46** Pre-determined whistle and hand signals are recommended in controlling situations float e.g. 3-whistles means all return to shore, 2-whistles means come to me. Safety signals should form part of the safety briefing delivered by the Person-in-Charge before every activity afloat.
- 3.47** Further information on the means of communication is available in Marine Notice 40 of 2019. [Appendix 4](http://www.gov.ie/en/collection/74782d-marine-notice-40-of-2019) at www.gov.ie/en/collection/74782d-marine-notice-40-of-2019

SAFETY BRIEFINGS

- 3.48** All activities afloat should begin with a session safety briefing to highlight important safety and operational plans.
- 3.49** DICE is a good format for session briefings:
- Define the activity area.
 - Identify hazards.
 - Communications (whistle signals/ VHF comms)
 - Escape/ Emergency (plan for exit)

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

- 3.50** Each Scout Group should develop an Emergency Action Plan. This document provides activity leaders with a response pathway of how to react in an emergency. If an emergency occurs, the emergency services will need to know details like exactly how many people are on the water and the exact description of the boats, and parents will need to be contacted promptly. The EAP should be prepared so that it assists Scouters with this. It is recommended this EAP is practiced and reviewed annually.
- 3.51** See [Appendix 13](#) for further information.

REPORTING OF AN ACCIDENT, INCIDENT OR NEAR-MISS

3.52 If an Accident occurs on an activity, the Person-in-Charge of the activity should;

1. Notify the Group Leader or their designated person.
2. Make a record of the details in the activity logbook.
3. Complete the Scouting Ireland Accident Report Form. [Appendix 14](#).

3.53 If an Incident or a Near-Miss Event occurs on an activity, the Person-in-Charge of the activity should;

1. Notify the Group Leader or their designated person.
2. Make a record of the details in the activity logbook.

3.54 Definitions:

Accident - an unplanned event resulting in personal injury or the loss of life.

Incident - an unplanned event resulting in property damage, a collision between boats, the loss of a boat, or significant damage to the environment.

Near-miss event - an incident in which there was no Incident or Accident but where the potential for serious consequences existed.

3.55 After receiving notification of an Accident, Incident, or Near-Miss Event the Group Leader or their designated person should ensure that a review is completed of the appropriate Risk Assessment(s) and Standard Operating Procedure(s), to identify any changes to either that may be required.

3.56 Before the 1st May each year (the start normal season afloat), the Group Leader or their designated person should ensure that a review is completed of the Risk Assessments and Standard Operating Procedures for all activities, for example, to identify any areas of concern, new procedures or additional training that may be required.

3.57 Marine Casualty: There is a statutory duty on the owner or operator of a vessel to report a Marine Casualty using the quickest feasible means.

This statutory duty is in addition to, and unrelated to, anything that may be stated in any of Scouting Ireland's guidelines. This statutory duty is defined in legislation that includes the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act, 2000 (as amended). Upon receipt of notification of any Accident, Incident or Near-Miss Event, the Group Leader or their designated person must determine if the definition of a Marine Casualty applies to that event, and the Group Leader or their designated person must then act accordingly.

The definition of a Marine Casualty is as stated in legislation. For information, a Marine Casualty means inter alia:

an event or process which causes or poses the threat of—

- (a) death or serious injury to a person;
- (b) the loss of a person overboard;
- (c) significant loss or stranding of, or damage to, or collision with, a vessel or property; or
- (d) significant damage to the environment,

in connection with the operation of—

- (i) a vessel in Irish waters;
- (ii) an Irish registered vessel, in waters anywhere; or
- (iii) a vessel normally located or moored in Irish waters and under the control of a resident of the State, in international waters contiguous to Irish waters.

3.58 See [Appendix 15](#) for further information.

EXPEDITIONS

3.59 Expeditions afloat are an excellent way for SCOUTS to participate in adventure, teamwork and seamanship.

An Expedition is defined as any activity conducted in Day Cruising Waters (and beyond), a day passage in Restricted Waters, an overnight passage in Restricted Waters.

3.60 All Expeditions must be properly planned and organised and unexpected eventualities guarded against. A passage plan should be completed for each day of the expedition and filed with the coastguard before departure. [Appendix 16](#)

3.61 Expedition in Coastal Waters or Offshore Waters must make out a provisional passage plan and submitted to the Sea Scouting Team for a safety check. The Group Leader should be informed and an Activity Consent Form completed by the parents of all SCOUTS on the Expedition.

3.62 The Person-in-Charge should prepare a carefully considered check-list before setting out on an Expedition and ensure that the boat is safe, fit for purpose, correctly equipped along with spares and safety inventory appropriate for the particular boat and duration planned.

3.63 The Person-in-Charge should consider with particular care the age, experience and reliability of the SCOUTS concerned and also the age, ability and experience of any other persons who will be in charge of any part of the proposed activity and the suitability of the vessel.
The Person-in-Charge should make sure that the parents of all SCOUTS taking part are fully briefed on the plan of the Expedition.

AFTER-SUNSET AFLOAT

3.64 After-Sunset activity is not day-to-day activity for boating or paddling.

Special considerations and assessment are required before considering any activity afloat after sunset.

3.65 After-Sunset activity is not recommended for junior sections to be afloat after-sunset.

3.66 Scouts and Ventures may be permitted afloat after dark to achieve a specific training goal; such as navigation training or seamanship skills.

3.67 Advanced [Leadership Afloat](#) award is required for after-sunset activity afloat.

3.68 All PFDs must be fitted with a light and all boats must display the correct IRPCS lighting. It is prohibited for any boat to be afloat without the correct lighting.

3.69 Kayaks should be appropriately lit and supported by a suitable support boat.

3.70 Note: Sunset is a specific and changing time each day.

It is recommended that, for all normal activity afloat, Scout Groups employ a measure to ensure the activity is not caught afloat unexpected after sunset e.g. all crew & boats should ensure that they arrive back ashore 30-minutes before that day's sunset time.

EXTERNAL ACTIVITY PROVIDERS

3.71 Some Scout Groups may have the equipment, training and qualifications required to safely carry out their own water activities.

Other groups will need to use the services of a third-party provider.

3.72 Scout Groups should not participate in water-activities in a casual way, eg. facilitating Scouting activity because you just may have access to a boat.

Scouting activities must be well-planned and the Person-in-Charge must ensure that they are comfortable with all aspects of the services to be provided.

3.73 If a Scout Group intends to make use of a third-party provider for an activity, the Scout Group should determine in advance if this provider operates in accordance with the requirements of the activity's National Governing Body.

If a Scout Group has doubts about the ability of a provider to comply with Scouting Ireland rules and guidelines they should take the most prudent approach, which may mean not participating in the activity at that time.

3.74 If a Scout Group intends to use the services of a third-party provider, the provider's service should be assessed against the following:

1. Does the provider's service comply with aspects of the Scouting Ireland [Safety Afloat](#) guidelines?
2. Does the activity comply with all of Scouting Ireland's rules and guidelines?
3. Is the activity covered by adequate insurance? If in doubt, Scouting Ireland National Office should be consulted.
4. Is the provider's equipment well-maintained and fit for purpose?
5. Are the provider's staff members assigned to your activity appropriately qualified to the requisite level required by the activity's National Governing Body?
6. Are the provider's staff members Garda vetted?
7. Does the provider have a Safeguarding Statement?
8. Is the provider affiliated with the National Governing Body for this activity?
9. Can the provider present testimonials from other Scout Groups?
10. Persons in charge or other Scouters must never sign waivers when asked by external activity providers.

3.75 Insurance arrangements from an external activity provider should be vetted by Scouting Ireland's insurance provider (Marsh Insurance).

TRAILER TOWING

3.76 The driver of a vehicle that is towing a trailer is solely responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle and the trailer.

Towing a trailer will fall under the driver's personal insurance policy.

Before you arrange to undertake any towing:

- Make sure that the driver is capable of towing and is insured to tow.
- Check with the Road Safety Authority for the licensing and vehicle requirements for towing.

3.77 The following guidelines should be observed:

- A weather condition assessment should be undertaken prior to the start of and at regular intervals during the journey.
- Speed limits must be observed. Remember the speed limit when towing in Ireland is 80km/hr.
- Towing journeys greater than 3 hours should be carried out by two persons.
- Breaks should be taken at intervals not exceeding 3 hours.
- Both the vehicle and the trailer must be visually inspected before departure and at each break to ensure roadworthiness.

This inspection should include, but not necessarily limited to the following:

- vehicle fluid levels
- tyre wear
- tyre pressure
- balanced loading
- hitch and lights working
- Towing should not be undertaken if the driver(s) are under the influence of alcohol, or illegal drugs, or suffering from lack of sleep. If under doctor prescribed medications, consultation with doctor and/or pharmacist should be taken prior to undertaking the journey.

3.78 See [Appendix 17](#) for further information.

SECTION 4 – BOATING GUIDELINES



CLASSIFICATIONS OF BOATING WATERS

4.1 Scouting Ireland's Boating Waters are divided into the following five categories.

Each classification presents different characteristics, hazards, difficulty and opportunity for activity, which is reflected in the different levels of Certificate of Competence that are required to supervise Scouting activities on the water.

TYPE OF WATERS	INTENDED USE	DESCRIPTION	GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITS	MINIMUM REQUIRED CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE
Safe Enclosed Waters	Basic instruction and practice. Normal Scout Activity.	Sheltered inland where there are no or minimal currents or tide, such as protected harbours, estuaries, rivers, canals and small lakes.	Limits are proposed by each Scout Group and submitted to the Sea Scouting Team for consideration and approval. Sheltered, shallow and immediate access to the shore.	Basic Leadership Afloat Level 1 Kayak Instructor
Restricted Waters	More-advanced instruction, practice and activity.	Water often affected by tide or current but excluding dangerous inshore waters eg. tidal race or overfalls. Most inland lakes and waterways fall into this category.	Limits are proposed by each Scout Group in consultation with the local experts and submitted to the Sea Scouting Team for approval. Generally, exposed waters within 3nm offshore.	Intermediate Leadership Afloat Level 2 Kayak Instructor
Day Cruising Waters	Day passage & Expedition.	The sea.	The sea, within 5nm from shore, and up to 15nm along the coast from the Scout Group's normal operating base.	Advanced Leadership Afloat
Coastal Waters	Expedition.	The sea.	The sea, up to 10nm offshore.	Coastal Leadership Afloat
Offshore Waters	Expedition.	The sea, on passage out of sight of land.	None.	Yachtmaster Offshore Certificate, by Irish Sailing or Royal Yachting Association, plus Scouting Ireland must be notified in advance.

4.2 The definitions of Boating Waters given are intended as a guide to the type of waters to be expected in each category.

They assume good weather conditions and daylight. It is obvious that conditions in certain waters may vary considerably in different weather patterns and tidal conditions, and therefore suitability for boating may change. All **Leadership Afloat** holders must appreciate the dangers which may appear with such changes and have the competence to assess when general weather patterns make an area unsuitable for boating. Whilst the classification of a stretch of water is a guide to its potential difficulty or danger, it remains the responsibility of the Person-in-Charge of the activity to make careful enquiries about the specific hazards which may exist. This directory does not list specific hazards.

4.3 Each Scout Group may propose its Safe Enclosed Waters and Restricted Waters in consultation with local experts. These limits must not exceed 3nm from the launch site and should reflect the characteristics of waters listed above. The proposed waters must be submitted to team@seascouts.ie for consideration. Final classifications of approved activity waters will be published on the Boating Waters live map.

4.4 See **Appendix 18** for Live map.

UNFAMILIAR/ UNCLASSIFIED WATERS

4.5 All activity afloat must be conducted in classified waters. This is the measure that these waters have been assessed, reviewed and a level of difficulty determined. Unclassified waters can be reported to the Sea Scouting Team for assessment. Any Scout Group may propose a classification for a body of water.

4.6 Scouters should take prudent care operating in unfamiliar waters/ not their Home Waters. An appropriate risk assessment & identification of hazards should be completed in partnership with the local experts.

INLAND WATERWAYS

4.7 Inland Waterways comprise the navigable sections of the larger rivers, canal network and lakes. Conditions on inland waterways are generally not as severe as those experienced in coastal regions. However, they present their own unique set of hazards.

Difficulties such as locks, open weirs, strong flows in confined spaces, narrow bridges, relatively shallow water and, in the case of the larger lakes, significant wave and wind forces, may present a danger to small boat. For the purposes of this document, inland waterways refer to non-tidal and/or fresh water.

4.8 Heavy rainfall, particularly in Winter months will have an impact to the conditions and difficulties of inland waterways.

4.9 Certain passages and lakes will have restrictions on boat size and operating speeds or licenses required. Scouters must be familiar with these local rules. See www.waterwaysireland.org

4.10 Users of inland lakes and waterways are reminded that Coast Guard VHF and mobile phone network coverage is not guaranteed on inland lakes and waterways, particularly in remote locations. Regular testing of communications equipment should be carried out to confirm correct operation.

BOAT-CERT

4.11 Scouters must always satisfy themselves that the equipment used for activity is in sound and safe working condition.

4.12 Scout Groups should develop a maintenance programme and records to ensure boats are inspected regularly and remain safe for use.

4.13 It is recommended Scout Groups also employ a system to identify and lock-out damaged equipment to prevent damaged items being used and causing harm before they are put in working order again.

4.14 A Boat-Cert is recommended for any boat owned by, or on long term loan to a Scout Group. This is an annual boat inspection identifying that the boat has been examined, is seaworthy and ready to use for activity.

This inspection should be recorded, dated and signed by the competent person who has conducted the inspection.

A competent person to complete a Boat Cert Inspection will be a Leadership Afloat Mentor or someone holding their Intermediate Award.

It is best practice that someone from outside the Scout Group completes the Boat Cert Inspection.

4.15 An Intermediate **Leadership Afloat** holder in their relevant activity discipline is a competent person to issue a Boat-Cert after surveying;

- Boat hull is sound, in good condition with suitable buoyancy (if applicable).
- No loose fittings or fixtures that could cause harm.
- Bungs secured in place.
- All boats have a bailer.
- Ancillary equipment - bow line, stern line, anchor
- For sail boats - rudder, standing rigging and running rigging are in good condition.
- For powered boats - engine is secured and properly working; the kill-cord is correctly working; the fuel tank is secured.
- For rowing boats - oarlocks are tethered or spares available.

4.16 In all cases, each boat should carry the necessary equipment that it is adequate for the activity, that it is not overloaded and that it is stowed so as not to hinder its free working. Scout Groups are encouraged to engage with their local RNLI to have their boat examined by the RNLI Sea Check Scheme.

4.17 See **Appendix 19** for Boat Cert template.

SOLAS, CHAPTER V

4.18 The Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) Regulations initially came into effect in 1913 after the loss of RMS Titanic. Certain parts of the current Regulations apply to leisure vessels, including vessels that SCOUTS may take afloat on coastal expeditions or on sail training cruises. Depending on the boat, the type of the boating activity, and the area in which the activity is undertaken, the Person-in-Charge must consider which, if any, of the following regulations may apply:

- **Radar Reflector** (Regulation 19.2.1.7): *“All ships irrespective of size shall have: if less than 150 gross tonnage and if practicable, a radar reflector, or other means, to enable detection by ships navigating by radar...”*. Scouting Ireland recommends that larger keelboats and powerboats should be provided with a radar reflector.
- **Life-Saving Signals** (Regulation 29): *“An illustrated table describing the life-saving signals shall be readily available...”*. Scouting Ireland recommends that a laminated copy of such an illustration is kept in the waterproof container for the emergency flares.
- **Reporting of Dangers** (Regulations 31 and 32): The person in charge of a vessel must communicate information on any danger to navigation they have encountered when afloat, such as for example, a floating container or tree trunk. This encounter should be reported to the Coast Guard or the nearest Harbour Authority.
- **Distress Messages** (Regulation 33): You are obliged to respond to any distress signal that you may receive, and to help anyone in distress if it is possible for you to do so.
- **Passage Plan** (Regulation 34): Prior to proceeding afloat, the Person-in-Charge shall ensure that the intended voyage has been planned using the appropriate available information sources. A passage plan is required of all vessels that put to sea. The degree of planning will vary with the size of vessel, crew, and length of voyage. It must take into account factors such as: the type and condition of the vessel and its equipment (standard and emergency); the experience and competence of the person in charge and the crew; dangers to navigation; weather (actual and forecast); tidal predictions; safe harbours or anchorages on the way, etc.
- **Misuse of Distress Signals** (Regulation 35): *“The use of an international distress signal, except for the purpose of indicating that a person or persons are in distress, and the use of any signal which may be confused with an international distress signal, are prohibited”*. Distress signals must be used only for their correct purpose. They are not recreational fireworks.

Source: <https://assets.gov.ie/22268/0bfbfa2a436342ae815dd2a3cd1e5190.pdf>

SAILING ACTIVITY

4.19 Sailing in these guidelines may refer to all forms of sailing afloat including, dinghy, keelboat, yacht, single-handed, double-handed and multi-handed.

4.20 Sailing activity must be supervised by an appropriate **Leadership Afloat (Sail)** in waters they are certified to operate in.

4.21 Before going afloat, all parts of this document's Sections 1- 4 should be adhered to. In particular, there must be a passage plan and risk assessment for the activity. The degree of planning in the passage plan will vary but it must take into account factors such as: the type of boats, equipment, experiences and competences, dangers, weather (actual and forecast), tides, and options for safe landing.

4.22 All sailing boats must carry an alternative means of propulsion. In larger boats this may be a set of oars or an auxiliary engine. For a dinghy fleet this should be suitably a manned safety boat.

4.23 A safety boat acting as support for sailing boats should be fit for purpose, appropriately equipped and have the capacity to safely come-alongside or tow boats. Support boats with additional passengers aboard can be less effective as a suitably designated rescue boat.

4.24 Safety boats acting as sailing support should be manned by at least two persons. The helm must have a National Powerboat Certificate. If the helm or safety boat is regularly engaged in providing support to sailing boats, it is recommended that the helm of this safety boat attains the Safety Boat Certificate from Irish Sailing or RYA.

4.25 It is recommended one safety boat supports a maximum of up to four dinghies afloat.

4.26 All sailing boats must be inspected by the Person-In-Charge before launch.

4.27 SCOUTS should participate in a capsize drill and a boat familiarisation session if they regularly engage in sailing activity.

4.28 Helmets are at the discretion of the Scouter. SCOUTS should always be appropriately briefed and made aware of activity/ boat specific hazards.

4.29 Long hair & loose clothing should be tied back and secure to avoid catching in rigging.

4.30 Best Practice Top Tips;

- Read the weather - for now and for later (Reconsider the activity if the winds are forecasted to be Force 5 or greater).
- Know your waters - local features and hazards.
- Check your equipment - bungs fitted, masts and rudders secure, painters fitted.
- Ability of sailors - fit and able for the conditions? Capsize drill completed?
- Risk Assessment - updated & control measures communicated to the participants?
- DICE briefing - does everybody know what is happening and what the signals afloat will be?
- If in doubt, don't go out. The activity is only worth doing if it can be a safe activity for everyone.
- Launching & recovery - make a considered plan on how this will happen.
- Remember to assign Sheep, Sheep-Dogs & Shepherds - it's an effective way for the Person-in-Charge to utilise rescue boats to contain and control those afloat.

POWERBOAT ACTIVITY

- 4.31** Powerboating is the use of an engine-propelled craft. It is a great way for SCOUTS to get on the water and explore their environment, and for older members to take responsibility operating and navigating a craft safely as well as supporting others providing safety cover for activity.
- 4.32** All powerboats used in scouting must be manned by a responsible operator holding at least their National Powerboat Certificate issued by Irish Sailing or RYA. A **Leadership Afloat (Power)** award is required to supervise powerboating activity.
- 4.33** For the purposes of training, SCOUTS without their National Powerboat Certificate may take control of a powerboat on condition that there is a Scouter with the National Powerboat Certificate onboard that boat all times acting as a mentor and able to take control immediately.
- 4.34** Killcords must be worn by the powerboat driver at all times, always. It is not acceptable to join two-killcords together to create a killcord 'extension'.
- 4.35** All persons should be in a seated, secure position and holding on to part of the boat when it is underway. There should be enough hand-holds for all crew onboard.
- 4.36** Boat equipment should be appropriately secured to prevent it posing a hazard when underway.
- 4.37** Refuelling should be supported by the Scouting Group's Standard Operating Procedure, and not conducted onboard the boat, where practical.
- 4.38** Powerboats capable of achieving speeds in excess of 17-knots are regarded as fast-boat and must be highlighted to the insurers.
- 4.39** Powerboat crews acting as safety support should be dressed to enter the water in an emergency and should be equipped with a whistle and knife.
- 4.40** Engine maintenance should be carried out regularly and suitable records maintained.
- 4.41** Powerboat racing of any kind is an excluded activity.
- 4.42** Age restrictions:
- SCOUTS under 16 are not allowed be in command of a powerboat capable of achieving speeds in excess of 17-knots.
 - SCOUTS under 12 are not allowed be in command of a powerboat with an engine over 5hp.
 - Cubs & Beavers should not be permitted to operate any size engine while on a scouting activity.

See **Appendix 20** for powerboat kit list.



Aspire For More

There are a number of Scouting Groups that have pursued enhanced levels of standard to become an accredited Irish Sailing Training Centre.

This has allowed those Groups to become leaders of water safety and skill training with the ability to offer the national powerboat syllabus and instructor pathways.

ROWING ACTIVITY

4.43 Rowing is the use of oars to propel your craft through the water. It is a great way to stay physically active and work as a team.

Rowing in this document may include sculling, Olympic, coastal or traditional rowing styles.

4.44 A **Leadership Afloat (Oars)** award is required for all rowing activity in Scouting.

4.45 Rowing boats must be inspected before use, fitted with appropriate buoyancy, and fitted the necessary ancillary equipment and lines. Each rowing boat should be fitted with an anchor, unless during regatta races.

4.46 In Restricted Waters, it is recommended that rowing boats be accompanied by an alternative means of propulsion (auxiliary outboard or support boat).

4.47 The use of single-handed rowing boats by SCOUTS should only occur after the Person-in-Charge has carefully considered prevailing wind direction and currents.

4.48 All rowing boats must comply with the IRPCS (COLREGs) with regards to navigation lights; as per power-driven boat.

4.49 All SCOUTS onboard must wear a suitable PFD, including at regattas, races & events. Belt type PFDs are not acceptable for Scouting activity.

4.50 Suitable footwear must be worn at all times. The Person-in-Charge must assess the suitability of footwear worn by their crews in advance of an activity, with particular attention required for craft in which the footwear is fixed in place such as Olympic-class rowing boats.

4.51 Long hair & loose clothing should be tied back and secure. The coxswain of every rowing boat must be in possession of a suitable knife when afloat.

4.52 A marine VHF radio, or mobile phone in a waterproof case, should be carried by the coxswain of each boat.

4.53 All coxswains should be familiar and competent with their craft and their crew's abilities. Rowing can be physically demanding so the Person-in-Charge and the coxswains they has assigned to each craft must ensure the activity is appropriate and the crew of the boat is able to get home safely, particularly in tidal waters and currents.

4.54 Each rowing boat must have been assessed at the start of the boating season as being suitable for use and possess a Boat Cert.

4.55 Rowing Ireland is the national governing body for rowing in Ireland. The Irish Coastal Rowing Federation is the governing body for coastal rowing in Ireland.

SECTION 5 – PADDLING GUIDELINES

- 5.1** The term 'Canoeing / Kayaking / Paddling' in these guidelines includes all aspects and disciplines of the sport including Kayaking, Canadian Canoeing, Canoeing, Sea Kayaking, Play Boating, Slalom, Polo, Sit on Tops and other vessel that are propelled in a manner similar to kayaking.
- 5.2** An appropriate Instructor qualification awarded by Canoeing Ireland as described on page 7 of this document is required for all SCOUT paddling activity. Adults may peer-paddle without an instructor only if every member in the party has their Level 2 Kayak Skills Award by Canoeing Ireland. The Person-in-Charge of this activity must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed for this activity. This should consider factors such as:
- Environment: weather conditions, water temperature, currents, depth, water quality, access and egress.
 - Swimming ability: the Person-in-Charge has determined that swimming ability of all participating SCOUTS is adequate for the environment.
 - Rescue: appropriate equipment and plan for assisting SCOUTS in difficulty.
 - Supervision: adequate supervision by Scouters, with ratios afloat based on appropriate risk assessment.
- 5.3** SCOUTS undertaking paddling must be able to swim.
- 5.4** An appropriate PFD must be worn for the full duration of all paddling activities.
- 5.5** Do not paddle alone: 'Less than 3 there never should be'. There must be at least 3 paddlers on the water at any time.
- 5.6** Helmets must be worn for all paddling activity on moving water. It is best practice to wear helmets for all paddling activity, particularly in shallow/ unfamiliar waters.
- 5.7** Spraydecks must be worn on closed-decked kayaks. This rule may be relaxed for beginner paddlers on flat calm water at the discretion of the Instructor. Spraydecks must be worn at all times during the winter months.
- 5.8** Kayaks and canoes must be fitted with:
- Adequate air bag or closed-cell foam buoyancy properly secured in place, capable of supporting the vessel when full of water.
 - Grab loops / bands to both bow and stern.
 - A properly secured, easily adjustable foot rest.
- 5.9** Runners or hard-soled neoprene booties to protect the feet must be worn at all times.
- 5.10** The Instructor must ensure that spare paddles are carried where appropriate and sufficient first-aid/ emergency repair kit is carried.
- 5.11** The Instructor must ensure that their boat is adequately equipped for rescue, as per the requirements of their Canoeing Ireland qualification.
- 5.12** Instructors must ensure that all craft is off the water no less than 30 minutes before sunset.

RIVER GRADING

It is important to note that the following grading system is meant as a general guide with regard to river grades.

The Training, Coaching & Accreditation Scheme is based upon the Training & Development Committee's interpretation of these grading's.

The final decision, however, as to the grading of a river's conditions is ultimately the responsibility of an Instructor who must make decisions based upon experience, knowledge, ability, and level of qualification.

<https://www.canoe.ie/river-grading-and-area-definitions/>

RIVER GRADE	INTENDED USE	DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERISTICS	MINIMUM REQUIRED CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE
GRADE I	Normal Activity	Flat Water	Water is stationary or extremely slow moving and without any obstructions.	Level 1 Kayak Instructor
GRADE II	River trip for moderate scout paddlers	Moderately Difficult	The way down a river is clear but simple obstructions do exist. Small stoppers and small drops can be present. There are places where the flow accelerates. There is a choice of routes.	Level 3 Kayak Instructor
GRADE III	River trip for advanced scout paddlers	Difficult	There is a route that is easily recognisable from the water. Waves can be irregular. Boulders and obstructions can be numerous. Stoppers and small eddies exist. Inspection is advisable.	Level 4 Kayak Instructor
GRADE IV		Very Difficult	The route is not always clear and inspection is advisable. Rapids are continuous and breakouts are few and small. Stoppers are powerful. Continual manoeuvring with precise control and good decision making is required.	
GRADE V		Extremely Difficult	Inspection is essential because serious dangers can exist. Large drops, narrow passages, very complex boulder fields, ever changing water and difficult holes are characteristic of this grade. Difficulties are continuous.	

KAYAKING ACTIVITY

5.13 Kayaking can be defined as a small narrow boat where the paddler sits in an enclosed covered cockpit, also using a double-ended paddle to move through the water.

5.14 The appropriate Kayaking Instructor Grades for Scouting Ireland activities are:

1. Level 1 Kayak Instructor

Qualified to instruct Level 1,2 &3 kayaking skills on water of no higher than Grade I difficulty including Very Sheltered water, Designated Lake Areas, and in Designated Sheltered Tidal Areas. A Level 1 Kayak Instructor is specifically not qualified to lead groups on a journey and is restricted to static instructional sessions only. Instructors with this qualification can assess SCOUTS for the Level 1 Kayak Skills Award from Canoeing Ireland.

2. Level 2 Kayak Instructor

Qualified to instruct introductory, basic, and intermediate skills level kayaking skills on water of no higher than Grade I difficulty including very sheltered waters and/or sheltered tidal areas. Instructors with this qualification can assess SCOUTS for the Level 1 and 2 Kayak Skills Awards from Canoeing Ireland.

Qualified to lead journey on:

- Canals
- Sections of a river that does not include rapids or weirs
- Defined shorelines around a lake. The Instructor is specifically not qualified to journey across a lake.
- Harbours and Very Sheltered Tidal Waters

3. Level 3 Kayak Instructor

Qualified to instruct and lead kayaking groups safely on water of no higher than grade 2 difficulty including Very Sheltered Waters and/or Sheltered Tidal Areas. Instructors with this qualification can assess SCOUTS for the Level 1, 2 and 3 Kayak Skills Awards from Canoeing Ireland.

4. Level 4 Kayak Instructor

Qualified to instruct and lead groups safely on water of Grade 3+ difficulty in a kayak. Instructors with this qualification can assess SCOUTS for the Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 Kayak Skills Awards from Canoeing Ireland.

SIT-ON-TOP KAYAK ACTIVITY

5.15 A sit-on-top kayak is similar to the above however the paddler sits in on open decked, uncovered cockpit. The appropriate Instructor Grades for Scouting Ireland activities are those stated for a Kayaking Instructor (see 5.14 of this document).

SEA KAYAKING ACTIVITY

5.16 Paddling undertaken in all coastal locations is classified as Sea Kayaking and requires the appropriate level of Sea Kayaking Instructor qualification in accordance with the Canoeing Ireland scheme.

5.17 Instructors undertaking paddling in coastal conditions must observe the following particular precautions:

1. Be aware of the weather forecast and sea area forecast.
2. Paddling in a wind of Force 4 or above should only be considered suitable for the very experienced.
3. Be aware of the tidal conditions for the areas that you are operating in.
4. Be aware of the effects of interaction between wind and tide on sea states.
5. Carry the following additional equipment:
 - A chart for the area of operation
 - A hand-held compass
 - Towrope/throw bag
 - Suitable knife
 - Portable waterproof VHF radio
 - Personal Locator Beacon
 - First Aid Kit
 - Spare food/drink
6. Ensure a nominated person ashore is aware of your itinerary, departure and return times.

5.18 The appropriate Instructor grades for Scouting Ireland sea kayaking activities are:

- Level 3 Sea Kayaking Instructor. They are qualified to instruct and lead groups close to accessible coastlines that do not involve tidal races or overfalls.
- Level 4 Sea Kayaking Instructor. They are qualified to instruct and lead groups on open sea crossings and areas where there are tidal races or overfalls.

WHITE-WATER KAYAKING ACTIVITY

5.19 Kayaking activity undertaken on moving water generally in fast flowing rivers involving drops, weirs and rapids.

5.20 Scouting Ireland requires that activities undertaken on moving water be classified using the international river grading system:

- Grade 1: Flat Water - Small rapids - Route easy to find - Sheltered.
- Grade 2: Medium - Some weirs - Frequent Rapids - Route easy to recognise Exposed sections.
- Grade 3: Difficult - Large weirs - Heavy rapids - Whirlpools - Route difficult.
- Grade 4: Very Difficult - Long stretches of heavy weirs and rapids, large waves -Difficult broken water - Inspection from the bank advisable.
- Grade 5: Exceedingly Difficult - Long unbroken stretches of heavy irregular rapids - Fast eddies - Difficult whirlpools

5.21 Scouting Ireland recommends that SCOUTS undertaking paddling on water of Grade 2 difficulty undertake River Safety & Rescue, level 1 (RSR1) training in safety and rescue techniques. Scouting Ireland recommends that SCOUTS undertaking paddling on Grade 3 and above difficulty water undertake River Safety & Rescue, Level 2 (RSR 2) training in safety and rescue techniques.

5.22 The appropriate Instructor grades for Scouting Ireland white-water kayaking activities are:

- Level 3 Kayaking Instructor. They are qualified to instruct and lead groups on Grade 2 rivers.
- Level 4 Kayaking Instructor. They are qualified to instruct and lead groups on Grade 3 rivers.

PADDLESURF ACTIVITY

5.23 Using a kayak to ride waves headed for the shore.

5.24 The appropriate Instructor grades for Scouting Ireland paddlesurf activities are Level 3 Sea Kayak Instructor or Level 4 Sea Kayaking Instructor.

5.25 Each canoeist in the surfing party must hold at least the Adventure Skills Paddling Stage 6 or CI Skills level 2, or equivalent.

OPEN CANOEING ACTIVITY

5.26 A canoe is a lightweight narrow vessel, typically pointed at both ends and open on top, propelled by one or more seated or kneeling paddlers facing the direction of travel using a single-bladed paddle.

5.27 This activity should take place in calm water, no more than 30 metres from the shore, with suitably qualified instructors present. All other safety precautions still apply for paddling activities, relating to the wearing of PFD's, helmets, and clothing etc.

5.28 The appropriate Instructor grades for Scouting Ireland open canoeing activities are:

- Level 1 Canoeing Instructor. They are qualified to run static site introductory canoeing sessions on flat water.
- Level 2 Canoeing Instructor. They are qualified to instruct and lead open canoeing journeys on flat water.
- Level 3 Canoeing Instructor. They are qualified to instruct and lead open canoeing journeys on flat water and moving water up to Grade 2.
- Level 4 Canoeing Instructor. They are qualified to instruct and lead open canoeing journeys on Grade 3/4 moving water.
- In Safe Enclosed Waters only, subject to an additional risk assessment by the Person-in-Charge: Either Level 3 River Instructor or Level 3 Sea Instructor, with additional training and experience in safety and rescue of open canoes.



Make it Accessible

Lashing two Canadian Canoes together in catamaran style is an excellent way to create a stable platform for all abilities. It is a great teamworking opportunity with a competent person onboard to maintain safe supervision.

SECTION 6 – OTHER WATER-ACTIVITY GUIDANCE

SWIMMING ACTIVITY

6.1 The Person-in-Charge of this activity must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed for all swimming activity including indoor swimming pools.

This should consider factors such as:

- Environment: weather conditions, water temperature, currents, depth, water quality, access and egress.
- Swimming ability: the Person-in-Charge has determined that swimming ability of all participating SCOUTS is adequate for the environment.
- Rescue: appropriate equipment and plan for assisting SCOUTS in difficulty.
- Supervision: adequate supervision by Scouters, with ratios afloat based on an appropriate risk assessment.

6.2 This activity must take place in either an indoor swimming pool or Safe Enclosed Waters. Any Scouter holding a Certificate of Competence (NGB Instructor Grades or Leadership Afloat Award) may supervise this activity.

6.3 See [Appendix 21](#) for water safety and safe swimming advice.

See [Appendix 22](#) for drowning prevention strategy.

See [Appendix 23](#) for swimming pool safety.

RAFTING ACTIVITY

6.4 This activity involves SCOUTS constructing a floating raft platform using ropes, lashings, spars, flotation (barrels or otherwise); to create a raft that SCOUTS will board and paddle.

6.5 This activity must take place in Safe Enclosed Waters. Any Scouter holding a Certificate of Competence (NGB Instructor Grades or Leadership Afloat Award) may supervise this activity. Offshore winds should be avoided. Be aware of the influence of tidal streams, which may carry you offshore or away from your start point.

6.6 Buoyancy-aids, suitable footwear and helmets are required for this activity.

6.7 The Person-in-Charge of this activity must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed for this activity.

This should consider factors such as:

- Environment: weather conditions, water temperature, currents, depth, water quality, access and egress.
- Swimming ability: the Person-in-Charge has determined that swimming ability of all participating SCOUTS is adequate for the environment.
- Rescue: appropriate equipment and plan for assisting SCOUTS in difficulty.
- Supervision: adequate supervision by Scouters, with ratios afloat based on an appropriate risk assessment.

SURFING ACTIVITY

6.8 Surfing uses boards of different shapes and sizes to ride waves heading towards the shore. The Irish Surfing Association is the National Governing Body for surfing activities in Ireland.

6.9 Surfing activities undertaken by SCOUTS should be supervised by a person holding an Instructor qualification awarded by the Irish Surfing Association.

The Person-in-Charge of this activity must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed for this activity.

This should consider factors such as:

- Environment: weather conditions, water temperature, currents, depth, water quality, access and egress.
- Swimming ability: the Person-in-Charge has determined that swimming ability of all participating SCOUTS is adequate for the environment.
- Rescue: appropriate equipment and plan for assisting SCOUTS in difficulty.
- Supervision: adequate supervision by Scouters, with ratios afloat based on an appropriate risk assessment.

6.10 SCOUTS must be able to swim before participating in this activity.

SNORKELING

6.11 Snorkeling is underwater swimming, usually on the water's surface using a mask, snorkel and flippers.

6.12 SCOUTS must be able to swim before participating in this activity.

6.13 This activity must take place in Safe Enclosed Waters. Any Scouter holding a Certificate of Competence (NGB Instructor Grades or Leadership Afloat Award) may supervise this activity.

The Person-in-Charge of this activity must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed for this activity.

This should consider factors such as:

- Environment: weather conditions, water temperature, currents, depth, water quality, access and egress.
- Swimming ability: the Person-in-Charge has determined that swimming ability of all participating SCOUTS is adequate for the environment.
- Rescue: appropriate equipment and plan for assisting SCOUTS in difficulty.
- Supervision: adequate supervision by Scouters, with ratios afloat based on an appropriate risk assessment.

STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDING (SUP)

6.14 SUP-ing involves standing on a large board similar to a surfboard and using a long paddle to move you around the water. It is a great activity to get confident around the water and explore your local shores. This activity must take place in Safe Enclosed Waters.

6.15 The Irish Surfing Association is the national governing body for SUP activities in Ireland. SUP activities undertaken by SCOUTS should be supervised by a person holding the Flat Water SUP Instructor qualification awarded by the Irish Surfing Association; the Flatwater Stand Up Paddle Instructor qualification awarded by Canoeing Ireland; or by any Scouter holding a Certificate of Competence (NGB Instructor Grades or Leadership Afloat Award).

The Person-in-Charge of this activity must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed for this activity.

This should consider factors such as:

- Environment: weather conditions, water temperature, currents, depth, water quality, access and egress.
- Swimming ability: the Person-in-Charge has determined that swimming ability of all participating SCOUTS is adequate for the environment.
- Rescue: appropriate equipment and plan for assisting SCOUTS in difficulty.
- Supervision: adequate supervision by Scouters, with ratios afloat based on an appropriate risk assessment.

6.16 All SCOUTS must be able to swim before participating in this activity.

6.17 PFDs must be worn at all times + a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch should be carried.

6.18 Offshore winds should be avoided. Be aware of the influence of tidal streams, which may carry you offshore or away from your start point.

Can everyone paddle home?

WINDSURFING ACTIVITY

6.19 Irish Sailing is the governing body for windsurfing in Ireland. Windsurfing activities undertaken by SCOUTS must be supervised by a person holding the Instructor qualification awarded by Irish Sailing or a Leadership Afloat (Sail) certificate.

The Person-in-Charge of this activity must ensure that a risk assessment has been completed for this activity.

This should consider factors such as:

- Environment: weather conditions, water temperature, currents, depth, water quality, access and egress.
- Swimming ability: the Person-in-Charge has determined that swimming ability of all participating SCOUTS is adequate for the environment.
- Rescue: appropriate equipment and plan for assisting SCOUTS in difficulty.
- Supervision: adequate supervision by Scouters, with ratios afloat based on an appropriate risk assessment.

6.20 SCOUTS must be able to swim for windsurfing.

6.21 This activity must take place in Safe Enclosed Waters. Offshore winds should be avoided. Be aware of the influence of tidal streams, which may carry you offshore or away from your start point.

6.22 It is recommended a powerboat is available to support in an emergency



Appendix



**SCOUTING
IRELAND**

**ADVENTURES
BEGIN HERE**