

## SAFETY ALERT

Contact: [safety@britishcanoeing.org.uk](mailto:safety@britishcanoeing.org.uk)

SUBJECT	<b>Sea Canoeing – Near Miss CASE STUDY</b>
Date Issued	May 2018

The following case study illustrates both poor and best practise on coastal water. By submitting incident reports to British Canoeing you can help us to identify and address issues within the sport.

### The Incident

- Two open canoes were paddling at the mouth of an estuary on the west coast of Scotland. Conditions were: wind Force 2-3 and swell <0.5 meters.
- One of the open canoes capsized. The two occupants, were wearing buoyancy aids and light summer clothing only.
- The other open canoe was unable to empty the first and decided to try and tow the swamped boat with the two casualties, some 200 meters to shore.
- They had no means of calling for help, the casualties were becoming hypothermic, they were on an isolated section of coast and there was a slow tidal flow outside the estuary.

### The Rescue

By complete coincidence a group of 9 well equipped sea kayakers passed by shortly after the capsized. The casualties in the water “screamed” for help and the sea kayakers took control of the situation:

- ✓ The Open Canoe was emptied and the casualties put back in.
- ✓ At sea the casualties were given waterproof clothing and a snack to eat.
- ✓ The Open Canoe was towed to the nearest beach where further clothing was given to the two casualties to prevent hypothermia.
- ✓ The beach landing was now one mile away from the open canoes starting point and vehicle. As there was no coastal path and no way back by land, they were towed, by sea kayak, the one mile back to their vehicle.
- ✓ Shortly afterwards they were deemed able to drive and headed for home to warm up.

### What can be learnt?

#### a. By the Casualties

- Always carry a means of summoning help – keep it hand and accessible in an emergency. A guide to communication devices can be found [HERE](#)
- Dress for the conditions and if in doubt dress for immersion in cold water
- Get a weather forecast and understand the effect it will have on you and your trip
- Get some training and make sure you are in a group that can rescue each other.

#### b. By the rescuers

Leaders take overall control of the whole situation:

- Direct the rescue rather than do it yourself
- Make sure the rest of the group is safe and they know what to do
- Check safety and survival kit is in good condition and is easily accessible in an emergency.

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### Outcome

The two casualties were extremely lucky. In water temperatures such as this, the time before you become unconscious can be around 30 minutes.

*We would like to thank those sea kayakers for their actions on the day and for submitting such a comprehensive incident report which has brought to life the need to take basic precautions before you go and enjoy Britain's fantastic coastline.*

Further information and sea canoeing safety guidance from British Canoeing can be found [HERE](#)

*By submitting incident reports to British Canoeing you can help us to identify and address issues within the sport. To report an incident go to <https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/incident-reporting>*