



**British Canoeing**  
**02 Safety Alert June 2018**

**CUSTOMISATION OF BOATS**

Paddlers routinely customise their boats to give greater connectivity to improve performance or for comfort. Boat design has evolved over the years to have safety manufactured into the design. Any significant modification may increase the risks including the risk of entrapment.

Common ways to customise a boat are by fitting:

- Padding to the sides of a kayak seat to reduce the width for a snugger fit
- Thigh braces, some may reduce the size of the cockpit

For more extreme performance environments:

- Central foam blocks
- Straps or additional straps to secure you in the boat

British Canoeing does not support the customisation of boats where a modification can lead to difficulty in exiting the boat or entrapment on the failure to roll. In high level performance environments the marginal gains that such modifications produce do not justify the personal safety risks involved.

An incident in 2018 at a surfing competition, involving a customised boat resulted in a near drowning. As a result the British Canoeing Surf Technical Committee issued guidance which is relevant to all those considering customisation and paddling in high performance environments. A copy of that guidance can be found [here](#).