

SAFETY ALERT

Contact: safety@britishcanoeing.org.uk

2018SA-07	White Water Safety
Date Issued	10 th December 2018

Background

Over the past 12 months, there have been a number of serious incidents on white water around the UK. As everybody looks forward to getting out and enjoying the 2019 paddling season, it is worth remembering some of the lessons of 2018.

Training

Consider what safety and rescue training might be useful

<https://www.britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/white-water-safety-rescue/>

Don't just rely on past training and experience, take time to practice rescue techniques and keep up to date.

Clean Rope and Clean Principles

Cowtails, tapes/karabiners and other attachments can create a snagging hazard when paddling. This risk is greatly increased if you leave your boat (for whatever reason) and enter the water. Getting a line snagged on a tree or between rocks is a major risk when in moving water, with potentially life threatening consequences.

If using a cowstail a quick release system is essential so you can free yourself quickly and in a way that leaves no trailing attachments once free.

It is **strongly advised** that you paddle with an approach of a "Clean Principle" stow or secure all such equipment in/on your boat or if attached to you, in a way that leaves no loose or trailing attachments that can snag.

Before getting on the water

- Always check river levels.
- Ensure the individuals you paddle with are suitably experienced and equipped for the difficulty of water and environment you are paddling.
- Within your group it is recommended that collectively you carry at least 2 means of communication.
- Know your location and be able to relay that information to others. This can be via map (physical or on phone) or GPS.
- Know the escape/evacuation points and be able to direct the emergency services to the nearest access point.
- If you need a rescue service, ask for the right one. To get the mountain rescue and access to appropriate rescue service ask for the Police, then mountain rescue.

On the Water

- If unsure get out and 'scout' to inspect the river. Look out for strainers and pinning hazards. After storms / high winds be mindful that there may be trees down causing debris and dangers on the river.
- Always consider the potential risk to yourself and others when carrying out a rescue. Entering the river has a higher risk consequence and needs to be considered fully.
- Keeping open communication between those attending to a casualty and others who may need to leave or seek, or guide in emergency services can be vital.

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>