

Steel City Dragon-Boat Program & Steel City Dragons Dragon-Boat Racing Team

Revised March 2013

Dragon Boat Operating Safety

Minimum safety protocol for the safe operation of Dragon Boat during all on-water sessions (including on-the-dock, on the water and during away sessions within the Pittsburgh Three-Rivers community including the Allegheny River, Monongahela River, Ohio River and other bodies of water and waterways.

SAFETY PROTOCOL

1. Life Jackets

Life jackets must be worn by all persons while in the Boat, and following entering and exiting the Boat. Lifejackets are Type III, Coast Guard Approved. Lifejackets must be secured. Persons not wearing lifejackets are not permitted to enter the Boat. If a person removes their lifejacket while on the water other than to make an immediate adjustment, or fails to follow direction to put it back on upon completion of the adjustment, the Boat will be returned to the dock and the person will be instructed to exit the Boat.

Note: SCD trains on the Allegheny River in what is known as the Oakmont Pool. The Oakmont Pool has the highest concentration of power watercraft in the northeastern U.S. It is also part of the inland waterway used for commercial shipping. Any one of the recreational or commercial craft is capable of producing a wake that could swamp or capsize the Boat. In addition, collisions among motorized craft are common. While a person may believe themselves to be a strong swimmer, the many variables in an accidental collision, swamping, or upset preclude reliance on that ability. A correctly fitted and secured lifejacket is the only assurance against accidental drowning.

2. Dock Safety

Most dock locations where SCD may embark and disembark have specific rules for the location. SCD crewmembers are expected to become familiar with these rules and follow them. Running, horse-play, and other similar actions on the dock are not permitted by SCD crew during training sessions and during races.

3. Boat Command

Two people in the Boat are responsible for the control of the boat and the welfare of the crew. They are the Steersman and the Drummer. SCD sometimes practices without a Drummer. In the SCD Boat, the Drummer is in command of the Boat when it is running. When a Drummer is absent, the Steers-person is in charge. Collectively, as used herein, the Drummer and/or the Steers-person are known as the Cox.

When the Boat is being maneuvered, as in away from the dock or into a starting position, the Steers-person assumes control. When the Boat is running the Drummer has control. No one else gives commands. Crewmembers must follow the maneuvering and running commands made by the Cox.

If a mishap occurs, the Cox remains in charge of the Boat until emergency resources arrive. They will issue commands concerning the actions that must be taken.

The Steers-person may take command of the Boat at any time they feel the Boat or the crew is in jeopardy. The Steers-person is immediately responsible for Boat safety. At that time, the Drummer will second the Steer-persons commands. No one else gives commands.

4. Whistles and other On Board Safety Items

SCD Cox should carry a whistle whenever the Boat is running. During rough water and in cold water conditions, the Boat will be equipped with a floating line throw-bag that is kept by the Drummer and/or the Steersman. Minimal first aid supplies are carried during in-pool training sessions. First aid supplies are carried during away trips and on longer out-of-pool cruises. The Boat must be equipped with lights fore and aft when running before daybreak and after dusk.

5. Capsize or Collision Safety

SCD generally practices on-water without the benefit of a safety boat. If capsize takes place during a practice session a rescue boat may not be nearby. Here are some general procedures for crew to follow during one of these situations.

Stay Calm

Always listen to your Cox for direction. That means always. Even if you hear “hold the boat” when you are in the middle of a race.

Buddy System. The simplest buddy system method is to know the person paddling in the seat beside you. In case of capsize, you are responsible for ensuring that they have surfaced. The first and last seats in the boat must also check for the Drummer and Steers-person.

If the Boat Rolls Over. You cannot stop it once it starts to turn. If you are on the higher side of the boat when it begins to go over try to jump clear of your seat partner to avoid injury. If you come up under the boat there will be an air pocket available for you to catch your breath and get your bearings. Feel your way to the side of the boat and then surface on the outside. Call out to your buddy to let them know where you are. If the boat goes over the Cox will account for everyone by calling for seat numbers.

Rescue Boat Available - stay With the Dragon-Boat. Stay with the boat until the rescue craft arrives. SCD does not normally practice with a rescue boat on the water. Races all have rescue boats on the course. Under no circumstances should you attempt to swim to shore. Spread evenly around both sides of the capsized boat holding onto the top edge - gunwale. Due to lightweight construction and bulkheads filled with air, the Boat has the capacity to support a full crew even when fully submerged. If the Boat is upside down after capsizing spread evenly around the outside and gently roll it over. Remember there may be others trapped underneath. Look for or call out to your buddy and obey the instructions of the Cox. Once the rescue boat has arrived, they are in charge. If other paddlers are injured or having difficulty reaching the boat give them assistance and make the rescue boat aware of the situation. In the absence of rescue, you may be instructed to push the Boat to shore or abandon the Boat if conditions jeopardize your safety.

Rescue Boat Not Available. Pre-practice contingency planning addresses current conditions of flow and temperature. The decision to remain with or abandon the Boat is based on the prevailing conditions. In extreme conditions, the Steersman or Coach will conduct a pre-embarkation safety lecture during which event actions are reviewed. In case of an event, always heed the command of the Cox.

6. Sitting Position and Standing Up in the Boat.

Once crewmembers are seated in the Boat, they must maintain their position with their outside hip placed firmly against the side of the Boat. If seat positions must be changed, the Cox will provide instructions while the rest of the crew braces the Boat. Crew must never stand up in a Boat that is not being secured to the dock, unless they are instructed to do so during a position change. If a Crewmember stands up in the Boat while it is being maneuvered or running, and fails to return to a sitting position upon instruction to do so by the Cox, the Boat will be returned to the dock and the offender will be asked to exit.

7. Qualified Steersman

All Steel City Dragon-Boat Association dragon boats must be steered by a Program qualified steersman who is trained, practiced and tested in the functions of steering a dragon-boat. (See Steersman Qualifications).

All steersmen must meet minimum qualifications and successfully complete the Steersman Qualification Training. Upon completion of Steersman Training, the qualified Steersman is rated according to their on-water experience, steering time, race experience, and demonstrated leadership attributes. Rating must be approved by the Head Coach.

8. Use of Launch

Power launches may only be used by qualified operators except in the case of an emergency.

A launch less than 16 feet long must carry:

- A Coast Guard Approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD) for each person in the launch.
- Lights if before sunrise or after sundown.
- An efficient noise making device (whistle, air-horn)
- An anchor with at least 50' of anchor line attached to launch
- Oars

9. Injury Reporting

All occurrences of personal injury, property or equipment damage, and equipment maintenance required must be reported immediately to the Operating Committee Chairperson.

10. Alcohol & Drugs

Are prohibited unless expressly authorized by the Executive Committee in conjunction with an organized event.

11. Smoking

Is prohibited in the Boathouse, on the Dock, in the Boat.

12. Liability Waivers

Must be signed and recorded for every person that sits the Boat or participates in any land-based training exercise. There are TWO different waivers.

13. Know the steps to take when during practice a paddler is in apparent medical distress.

- Always carry a cell phone on water
- Get the boat to shore
- Call 911
- Assess situation to share information with 911 operator.

14. Personal Responsibility

Each paddler must assume personal responsibility for being:

- Fully aware of the weather conditions and possible safety hazards
- Physically conditioned for the sport of paddling
- Properly dressed for the activity and weather conditions

STEERSMAN QUALIFICATIONS & ADVANCEMENT

The Steersman is responsible for on-water safety and is the person who controls the Boat during all running sessions including racing. Steersmen are volunteer staff who provide their time and talent for the development of Dragon Boat Racing with the Steel City Dragon-Boat Program. SCD Steersmen are trained in basic boat handling, conditions and hazards in the primary training body of water, and general safety. Steersmen are not required to become a SCD coach. All SCD coaches must qualify at a minimum as Level I Steersman.

Requirements & Minimum Qualifications of Steersmen

- Sixteen years old or older. Junior Steersman, under the age of 18, must be under in-boat control by Level III Steersman where the Level III is sitting as a paddler or cox, or in attending chase boat.
- Clearly see with both eyes.
- Clearly hear with both ears.
- Unrestricted use of arms and legs.
- Ability to stand for one-hour and be physically capable to steer dragon-boat up to one-hour.
- Speak fluent English.
- Ability to read and write in English.
- Ability to project voice up to 40 feet above moderate external noise.
- General knowledge of paddle sport helpful.
- Previous coaching / teaching experience helpful.
- Demonstrated ability to command and control group of up to 20 paddlers and one drummer including doing so under stressful conditions and in adverse weather.
- General knowledge of moving water, river hydrology.
- Demonstrated understanding of on-water safety protocol and rules of procession.

Steersman Qualification Levels

- **Level I** - New steersman who has completed the SCD Steersman Clinic.

Requirements:

- Complete Steersman Clinic

- **Level II** - Experienced steersman

Requirements:

- Complete Steersman Clinic, and
- Complete Annual Refresher Training, and
- Steer 10 hours on water Intermediate/Advanced level crew training, and
- Steer 1 local / regional race heat without fault, or
- Steer minimum 3 Intermediate/Advanced level crew in-lane practice full-distance race pieces without fault.

- **Level III** - Regional race qualified steersman

Requirements:

- Complete Steersman Clinic, and
- Qualify as Level II Steersman, and
- Steer 2 regional race heats without fault or 40hrs of steering community/competitive crew during practices.

- Level IV – International – Level III steersman who has successfully steered Advanced level crew in International racing event.

Advancement

Advancement is automatic upon attainment of requisite qualifications and experience. See Head Coach for roster placement.

BASIC TRAINING for STEERSMAN QUALIFICATION

Preparation

Read SCD Team Manual and Steering Guidelines. Identify and learn Safety Protocol

Steersman Clinic

Complete one hour on-water steersman training in accordance with Steel City Dragons Dragon-Boat Racing Team Steering Guidelines / Steering Clinic course work.

Know the steps to take when during practice a paddler has is in apparent medical distress.

- Always carry a cell phone on water
- Get the boat to shore
- Call 911
- Assess situation to share information with 911 operator.

OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR STEERSMEN

Steersmen may steer training boats according to the following guidelines.

Steersman Qualification Level	Crew Level	Restrictions Flow Rates are for Allegheny River at Natrona
Level I - Novice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practiced Novice with Coach • Community Intermediate • Community Advanced with Cox or Coach in attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Running Conditions chart • Dockside of River only unless accompanied by Coach • Novice Crew < 10,000 cfs • Intermediate Crew < 15,000 cfs • Advanced Crew < 20,000 cfs
Level II - Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Running Conditions chart • All < 30,000 cfs. • Intermediate > 30,000 cfs • Advanced only > 35,000 - with Coach.
Level III - Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Running Conditions chart • Below 40,000 cfs. • Above 40,000 Competition only - with SCD Coach or Senior Coach

* River stage is Allegheny River at Natrona.

RUNNING CONDITIONS

The Boat runs from late March, early April to late October, early November. Wind, water level, water temperature and air temperature are factors that govern when the Boat runs. The following is a *guideline*. Final decision rests with the Coach and Steersman.

Condition	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Corporate
Stage	< 20,000	< 30,000	< 40,000	< 30,000
Air Temperature	> 50	> 45	> 32	> 50
Water Temp.	> 50	> 45	> 40	> 50
Wind/Rain	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Moderate

Another condition that affects running ability is the number and skill level of Crew. Suggested minimum training Crew is 10 Advanced, 14 Intermediate, 16 Novice. Stronger crews may run with less crew.

Recreational and commercial traffic are always a consideration. SCD training boats should stay to the side of the main channel except when crossing the main channel, and follow USCG standards for procession and local traffic rules at all times.

Steersmen must remain vigilant for floating debris. There are sandbars, hidden pilings, and other submerged obstacles. Do not operate out of channel in unfamiliar water. Operate at low rates near shore or where underwater hazards may exist. ~ **END** ~