

ALWAYS WEAR YOUR USCG APPROVED PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICE – ALWAYS!

Waters ports can be dangerous and result in injury or death. Always follow USCG regulations and safe boating practices. Obtain proper instruction in kayaking. Use proper equipment and be certain you are in good sound health. NEVER kayak alone. Always wear a USCG approved PFD.

Minimum USCG requirements for kayaks (taken from USCG materials):

- 1) A type I, II, III or V Life Jacket for every person aboard. This life jacket must be of appropriate size for the intended wearer and in good condition. **Ideally the life jackets are worn!**
- 2) A sound producing device for signaling, typically a whistle. The best location is attached to the Life Jacket of the operator.
- 3) If operating at night appropriate lights. The navigation rules allow the use of a white lantern or flashlight for vessels under oars or you may have running lights like those used a sailboat under sail. The lantern or flashlight should be readily available and bright is best.
- 4) If operating under the following conditions "All vessels used on coastal waters, the **Great Lakes, territorial seas, and those waters connected directly to them**, up to a point where a body of water is less than two miles wide, must be equipped with U.S.C.G. Approved visual distress signals. Vessels owned in the United States operating on the high seas must be equipped with U.S.C.G. approved visual distress signals." You must carry approved, non-expired night signals. You are not required to carry day signals.

Additional USCG recommendations for kayakers;

Obtain the knowledge, skills and ability necessary for kayaking. Take lessons!

Always carry a bilge-pump or kayak style pump device for removing water.

Always boat with a group. Three boats is a recommended minimum.

Know how to self-rescue. Practice! Practice! Practice!

File a float plan, with friends or family so someone can call for search and rescue if you are overdue.

Bring appropriate safety, rescue, and navigational aids, and more than adequate food, water, and extra protective clothing. **Do not wear cotton!**

Pick an activity level that matches your ability, and progress to more demanding challenges.

Monitor your physical and emotional condition, and watch the other members or your group for fatigue, illness, and changes in behavior.

Know and follow all local, state and federal laws.

Be visible - wear bright colors so others can see you between waves or in the fog. Carry a bright light, flares, and whistle to signal your position.

Take a boating safety class offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Additional equipment – highly advisable to carry;

Communications device (cell phones should always be in a watertight container). A waterproof portable (pocket sized) VHF radio is also recommended.

Two (2) navigation aids (such as compass and GPS) *never* rely on a single navigation aid.

Tow line (at least 50ft of water-use appropriate line).

On-board first aid kit in a waterproof container.

Spare paddle (a break down paddle fits easily in most kayaks).

Small emergency survival kit (such items as matches in an H2O proof container, space blanket, signal mirror and fire starting materials). The kit should include snack type energy bars.

Kayak self rescue device appropriate for your type of kayak (obtain proper instruction in the use of these devices first).

Special considerations for *sit-inside* style kayaks:

If the kayak is a sea kayak, spray skirts are highly advisable. Recreational kayaks (large cockpit type) can be fitted with a spray skirt but it may not be able to keep all the water out (they can implode in larger waves more easily than the smaller tighter designs used on sea kayaks).

NOTE: Any sit-inside style kayak that does not have two or more bulkheads (to separate the cockpit from the fore and aft sections of the boat) should always have bow and stern flotation bags. These inflatable bags are designed to decrease the interior volume of the boat in the event of a capsize or swamping. They also offer increased buoyancy. The average 10 foot recreational kayak can hold over 250 pounds of water making it extremely difficult to right or bail after a capsize or swamping.

Clothing Considerations:

Always “dress for the swim”. As an example, if you are properly dressed for full immersion in 40 degree water, you are already dressed for the cold air temperature. A good rule of thumb to remember; if the air and water temp combined are *120 degrees or below* use **extreme caution. Always wear appropriate kayaking clothing** such as a dry suit or dry top and bottom or a 3mm or thicker neoprene wetsuit with a dry top for colder applications. Like all outdoor sports, clothing should be layered and kayak clothing is sport specific. Kayaking is a water sport – *assume you will get very wet and dress accordingly*. Your winter parka may keep you warm when you are in your boat, but it will not help you when you are in the water.

When in doubt – don’t go out!

If you are questioning the weather or water conditions, your equipment, health or ability or *any* combination of these factors you should not venture onto the water.