

Canyon Paddlers Association

Volunteer Safety Crew Guidelines and Procedures

(Specific for the Cache la Poudre River, CO.)

Introduction

The Canyon Paddlers Association is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable event for racers, volunteers, and the boating community. Safety is not assumed—it is achieved.

These guidelines establish the expectations, responsibilities, and procedures for all Volunteer Safety Crew members assigned to the event. Throughout this document, the terms *participant* and *racer* may be used interchangeably while *Volunteer Safety Crew* may be shortened to simply *volunteer*, or, *safety*.

Volunteer Qualifications and Responsibilities

Volunteer Safety Crew members are responsible for honestly assessing their own skills, experience, judgment, and physical condition before accepting an assignment or entering the river corridor. Volunteers must understand and accept the inherent risks associated with whitewater boating and rescue activities.

All volunteers are encouraged to notify event personnel of any observed hazards, unsafe conditions, or concerns that may affect participant or volunteer safety.

Volunteer Safety Crew members should:

- Possess a reliable and consistent self-rescue combat roll.
- Be competent Class III paddlers or above.
- Be familiar with the race course, assigned location, and associated hazards.
- Exercise sound judgment throughout the event.
- Operate within the limits of their abilities and experience.
- Provide assistance in emergency situations when it can be done safely and without creating additional risk.

The safety of volunteers is a priority. No volunteer is expected to place themselves in unreasonable danger while performing safety duties.

All Volunteer Safety Crew members are required to read and sign the Volunteer Waiver and Release of Liability before heading to their assigned locations.

Safety Volunteer Locations

Approximately 10 volunteers will be positioned throughout the race course.

Assignments may include a combination of:

- Safety boaters
- Shore-based safety personnel equipped with throw ropes

Planned coverage locations include:

- 3-Way Rapid
- Tunnel Rapid
- Mish Falls
- Cardiac Corner
- Pine View Rapid

Additional coverage may be provided at the following locations depending on river flows and volunteer availability:

- Rocky Falls
- Horseshoe Hole (Goal Posts)
- Bob's Hole

A designated driver may patrol the course area during the event. Volunteers may also request assistance from available motorists if transportation to an emergency call center becomes necessary.

Required Equipment

Each volunteer is responsible for ensuring that all equipment is present, properly fitted, and in safe working condition before reporting to an assignment.

Required equipment includes:

- Cell phone for use at the two emergency call centers (Mishawaka and Poudre Park Fire Department).
- Approved whitewater helmet
- Properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved Class III or Class V Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
- Spray skirt
- Clothing and footwear suitable for land, water and weather conditions
- Whistle

- 63 • Internal flotation or displacement bags
- 64 • Throw bag or tow-line system
- 65 • Paddle and spare
- 66 • Watercraft capable of serving as a rescue vessel

67 Recommended equipment includes:

- 68 • Protective eyewear
- 69 • Nose plugs
- 70 • Ear protection

71

72 **Conduct and Professionalism**

73 All volunteers share responsibility for maintaining a safe environment on the river for racers,
74 spectators, volunteers, and other river users.

75 Volunteers shall:

- 76 • Treat racers, volunteers, spectators, emergency responders, and other river users with
77 courtesy and respect.
- 78 • Follow all safety instructions and directions provided before and during the event.
- 79 • Remain free from alcohol and other impairing substances before and during assigned
80 duties.
- 81 • Conduct yourself in a manner that promotes safety and sportsmanship.

82 Volunteers should recognize that racers may look to them for guidance and reassurance during
83 emergency situations.

84

85 **When the Lower Canyon Search and Rescue Team (LCSRT) is** 86 **alerted via the call box**

87 **Rescue Team Response Procedures**

88 When the rescue team is notified of an incident involving a swimmer, the following
89 procedures shall be followed.

90 **Swimmer Assessment – No Injury**

91 Upon notification of an incident, the on-call ambulance stationed outside the canyon will
92 be placed on standby. Upon arrival at the scene, the Lower Canyon Search and Rescue
93 (LCSR) team will assess the swimmer's condition.

If the swimmer is determined to be uninjured, alert, and capable of making informed decisions, the swimmer may either:

- Withdraw from the race; or
- Continue participation in the race, subject to LCSR approval.

Before resuming participation, the swimmer must sign the appropriate LCSR release form. Once the assessment is complete and ambulance transport is not required, the ambulance service will be released from standby.

Injury Requiring Medical Evaluation

If the swimmer has sustained an injury, LCSR personnel will provide appropriate field medical care and advise the swimmer of available options, including:

- Withdrawal from the race and transport by ambulance to a local emergency department; or
- Withdrawal from the race and refusal of ambulance transport.

If ambulance transport is declined, the swimmer must sign the appropriate LCSR release form acknowledging the refusal of services. Once patient disposition has been determined, the ambulance service will be released as appropriate.

River Extraction

If a swimmer requires extraction from the river, LCSR will immediately initiate and complete the extraction operation.

Following extraction:

If the swimmer is uninjured, the procedures outlined in ***Swimmer Assessment – No Injury*** will apply.

If the swimmer is injured, the procedures outlined in ***Injury Requiring Medical Evaluation*** will apply.

Volunteer Safety Crew Procedures

Pre-Race Meeting

The Safety Coordinator will conduct a pre-race briefing for all volunteers.

122 During the meeting, the Safety Coordinator will:

- 123 • Review safety procedures.
- 124 • Assign volunteer locations and responsibilities.
- 125 • Discuss river conditions and potential hazards.
- 126 • Confirm communication procedures.
- 127 • and, identify available rescue resources.

128 Volunteers should communicate their preferred assignments, capabilities, and available
129 equipment during the meeting.

130 If a volunteer lacks required equipment, they should notify the Safety Coordinator. Reasonable
131 efforts will be made to locate necessary equipment prior to the start of the event.

132

133 **Response to a Swimmer**

134 If a racer exits their boat, the first priority is the safety and welfare of the swimmer.

135 Volunteers should use sound judgment and avoid rescue actions that would create additional
136 danger to themselves or others.

137 **Primary Actions**

- 138 1. Assist the swimmer to a safe eddy, shoreline, or rescue position.
- 139 2. Establish communication with the swimmer.
- 140 3. Provide clear and calm instructions.
- 141 4. Monitor the swimmer's condition.
- 142 5. Focus on swimmer safety before considering equipment recovery.

143 Volunteers should not pursue boats, paddles, or other equipment until the swimmer is secure and
144 no longer at risk.

145 Personal safety and swimmer safety always take priority over equipment recovery.

146

147 **Uninjured Swimmer Continuing the Race**

148 If a swimmer is uninjured and wishes to continue racing:

- 149 • The racer is responsible for recovering their equipment.
- 150 • Volunteers may provide guidance and supervision when it can be done safely.

- 151 • Volunteers should remain with the racer whenever practical until the racer has either
152 resumed the race or safely exited out of the race.
- 153 If equipment is visible and easily accessible, the racer may retrieve it by walking along the
154 roadway or shoreline where safe and permitted.
- 155 If the racer is located on the opposite side of the river and crossing would create additional risk,
156 volunteers should not ferry the racer across the river solely for equipment recovery.
- 157 In such cases, the racer may wait for sweep boaters or use a safe crossing point such as a bridge.
- 158 Volunteer Safety Crew members are not responsible for:
- 159 • Recovering a racer's equipment.
160 • Emptying a racer's boat.
161 • Assist with re-entering a racer's boat.
162 • Preparing a racer to continue competition.
- 163 Volunteers may provide assistance or instruction at their discretion when it can be done safely.

164

165 **Injured Swimmer**

- 166 If a swimmer appears injured or may require medical attention:
- 167 1. Volunteer with swimmer shall notify a second safety volunteer immediately to contact
168 the nearest emergency responders at the FD designated call center.
- 169 2. The second volunteer will provide accurate information through the emergency call
170 center:
- 171 o Location
172 o Nature of injuries
173 o Number of injured
174 o River access conditions
- 175 3. Only after the second volunteer has successfully alerted dispatch of the emergency will
176 he/she be able to return to the scene in order to provide exact location of the injured
177 swimmer to the emergency responders.
- 178 4. During this time, the first volunteer is to continue monitoring and keeping the swimmer
179 calm and relaxed until relieved by emergency responders.
- 180 5. Never move the swimmer from the location unless it is necessary for safety of swimmer
181 and self.
- 182 Unless it becomes necessary, the volunteer will not leave the scene unless otherwise advised by
183 emergency responders. But be available to explain to emergency responders the nature and
184 details of the incident.

Also, when the emergency response team has been alerted, they, in return, will alert ambulance service situated outside the canyon awaiting alert. Response times may vary for both depending on river conditions and incident location.

Entrapment and Extrication Incidents

If a racer becomes entrapped in a boat, strainer, debris pile, or other hazard:

- Initiate rescue efforts appropriate to the situation and within the limits of available resources.
- Prioritize airway management and life preservation.
- Avoid actions that create additional victims.
- Request additional rescue resources immediately when needed.

If immediate extrication is not possible, volunteers should focus on maintaining the racer's safety, preserving a clear airway, and providing reassurance until additional resources arrive.

Authority to Remove a Racer from Competition

Volunteer Safety Crew members have the authority to recommend that a racer discontinue participation when, in their judgment, continuing would present an unreasonable risk to the racer or others.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Injury or suspected injury.
- Signs of concussion or altered mental status.
- Physical exhaustion or inability to safely navigate the river.
- Hypothermia or other environmental exposure concerns.
- Loss of essential safety equipment.
- Equipment damage that compromises safe operation.
- Any condition that significantly impairs the racer's ability to continue safely.

Whenever practical, the volunteer should communicate their concerns to the Safety Coordinator.

The final authority to remove a racer from official competition rests with the Safety Coordinator. However, when an immediate safety concern exists, volunteers are expected to take reasonable action to prevent a racer from re-entering the course until the situation can be evaluated.

Racers who are injured, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to continue safely shall not be permitted to resume racing.

217 The safety of participants, volunteers, and rescuers shall take precedence over race results.

218 **Equipment Recovery**

219 Equipment recovery is secondary to participant safety.

220 Volunteers shall not pursue equipment when doing so would create unnecessary risk.

221 If recovery attempts are unsafe or unsuccessful, equipment may be allowed to continue
222 downstream.

223 No volunteer is expected to place themselves in danger for the purpose of recovering gear.

224

225 **Shore-Based Safety Volunteers**

226 Shore-based volunteers provide additional rescue support and emergency assistance from
227 designated locations along the river corridor.

228 Shore-based volunteers should:

- 229 • Position themselves where they can safely observe and respond to incidents.
- 230 • Maintain access to throw ropes and communication devices.
- 231 • Select locations that provide both effective coverage and personal safety.
- 232 • Remain alert to developing situations.

233 Volunteers shall not stand in moving current while performing shore-based duties.

234 Brief entry into shallow water may be appropriate when necessary to assist a swimmer, provided
235 it can be done safely.

236

237 **Sweep Boaters**

238 Sweep boaters serve as the final layer of on-water safety coverage and are the last designated
239 safety personnel to leave the river.

240 The passage of the sweep boaters indicates that the race has concluded.

241 Sweep boaters shall:

- 242 • Monitor the course for remaining racers and incidents.

- Provide assistance when needed.
- Coordinate emergency response if no other safety personnel are present.

All policies and procedures outlined in this document apply equally to sweep boaters.

Emergency Medical Services

When local emergency responders are activated, they assume responsibility for patient assessment and medical decision-making.

Emergency responders will determine the appropriate level of care and transportation requirements.

If ambulance transport is recommended, the patient may accept or decline transport when legally able to make that decision.

If the patient is unconscious or otherwise incapable of making medical decisions, emergency responders will act in accordance with applicable medical protocols.

Volunteer Safety Crew members should remain at the scene until relieved by emergency personnel or until the incident has concluded.

Volunteers should provide emergency responders with accurate information regarding:

- The nature of the incident.
- Actions taken.
- Patient observations.
- Relevant safety concerns.

Accurate communication helps responders provide effective care and ensures a coordinated emergency response.

Guiding Principle

The primary responsibility of every Volunteer Safety Crew member is to protect life and promote safety while operating within the limits of their abilities and available resources.

No piece of equipment, race result, or property is more important than the safety of a participant, volunteer, or rescuer.

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