

STRAIGHT TALK ON SAFETY

by Larry Kline

What is better -- to paddle alone and BE unsafe or paddle with a group and FEEL safe but really not be? If you think safety is a bunch of hoey, then why not paddle alone instead of thinking the unpracticed group will somehow save you??

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Some may think I know all about safety, but I don't. That is why I practice in both calm and adverse conditions. I'm learning all the time and adjusting my techniques and equipment list as I go. Some may have heard of my episode being "rescued" at Aurora Reservoir this spring in 30 mph winds. Many laughed when they heard my boat was blown almost across the lake. But I wonder how many times those persons had tried a self-reentry in similar conditions-- when a capsize is really apt to happen. I was not really at too much risk (used my PFD and dry suit), and learned a lot in the process--like Murphy's law can happen to you no matter how much you READ about safety, (putting your leg inside the boat to keep it from drifting away, instead of holding the paddle even if it is on a leash, etc.)

WHAT I'VE SEEN and HEARD

I've seen a lot of crazy things in my paddling days... just this year there was a guy with a 2x6 foot piece of 1 inch foam belted around his waist as a PFD, and the macho canoeist on Gross Reservoir with no PFD but his wife up front with hers on (now that is testosterone at its best!!). One of our club members almost drowned a few years ago helping an irrational adult Scout Leader on the Colorado River and survived only by cutting the "rescue" line that held him underwater.

How many times have you heard your paddling friends, both in and out of the club, say they don't need to practice wet exits or reentry every year because they have done it once 3 years ago PLUS they never go out in threatening weather? Problem is, bad weather waits for no man (or woman!). To my mind paddling without practicing good safety techniques is looking for trouble... and I've seen both myself and my best friends do so at times.

WHAT YOU and I SHOULD DO

So, I ask myself what is my responsibility to someone who gets in a predicament whether having done all the right things or by not doing some of them such as no life jacket, no flotation in boat, no life lines on deck, inadequate clothing for the water temperature, etc. Do I put my life in danger for that person???

An ACA certified sea kayak instructor in Maine recently gave the following advice: Your safety comes first regardless of the situation. Therefore, use your judgment to evaluate your abilities and the actions of the "victim".

1- EVALUATE VICTIM. She suggested you paddle up to the victim, but not so close as to let them touch your boat. They may capsize you. Then talk to them and determine if they are acting rational (not yelling "I'm dying, or I'll never get out of here", etc), injured, can understand your instructions, and if you feel they will follow your instructions.

2- DETERMINE A SOLUTION. Then determine how to get them out of the situation and whether you have the skills to do so.

3- EVALUATE YOUR CAPABILITIES. Can you paddle to shore with them hanging on to your bow or stern, can you tow them to shore, can you do an assisted reentry, a scoop reentry, a contact paddle, a tow using a quick release line? Have you ever practiced the needed rescue skills?

4 - TAKE ACTION. If one of these rescue skills or some other action is called for and you have the skills to proceed, then, by all means do so... If you have not practiced the required skills yourself with a willing partner, best not to try a rescue especially with a victim you judge to be unhelpful ----- Instead, go for help no matter the distance. Your life is the most important at this time.

Then think long and hard whether you want to get yourself in such a position/situation to begin with. Maybe practicing rescue skills with someone in the club before you go on your next paddle would be a smart move.

In summary, its better to practice safety techniques before a trip than to have an incident/accident create mass confusion/disaster on the water. At the least is could ruin a very good friendship and at worst it could lead to YOUR death.

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PADDLING SKILLS FOR VARIOUS PADDLING VENUES

An ACA certified instructor recently gave me the following ideas with respect to the safety skills one needs in different flat water paddling situations. They all assume you are wearing a life jacket and have appropriate clothing for the water temperature. As you read them think about how safe you might be if you were not wearing a life jacket or were not dressed in appropriate clothing ... you may just be giving yourself a false sense of security in those cases.

To paddle around a small pond perimeter in calm conditions

- You Only need wet exit skills to get out of a capsized boat and swim to shore

To paddle alone across small pond in calm conditions

- You Need paddle float reentry skills in case you capsize in the middle of the pond

To paddle across a big lake with another paddler in calm or windy conditions

- You need Assisted reentry skills in case either of you capsize

To paddle alone in windy conditions across a pond or big lake

- You need Roll skills in case you capsize in the middle of the crossing

Another Option to the Boom Box

By Lara Usinowicz (Marketing Manager for Restop)

The **Restop 2 Disposable Travel Toilet** from American Innotek is a new and innovative method of dealing with solid human waste in the wilderness and river areas that require users to "pack it in - pack it out". The concept here is that you pack-out individual bags of waste rather than buckets of waste! The benefits to the outfitter are significant.



First, using traditional "grouvers", the outfitter's guest visits a commode that has already been used (once, twice or many times) and the experience is less than pleasant. With the **Restop 2** system, every user finds a clean, sanitary commode! Second, after the trip is completed, the outfitter himself has the potentially hazardous, unpleasant and costly job of flushing out the "grouvers". With the **Restop 2** system, all waste is approved for disposal in any trash container. American Innotek can provide approval letters from each State EPA Department

Every **Restop 2 Disposable Travel Toilet** is packed with toilet tissue and an antiseptic wipe for clean-up and each of the bags contain a blend of polymers and enzymes that convert the waste into a harmless gel for disposal in any trash container. The bag itself is constructed using a gas impervious plastic so that the odor is contained along with the waste. This feature is of particular importance since you don't want to trade the unpleasant "grouver" for a pile of smelly bags! Other bag systems exist, but the **Restop 2** is the only gas impervious bag!

Change always involves a trade-off. With the **Restop 2**, the outfitter will spend a bit more but will get a more pleasant restroom experience for his guests and a safer clean-up job for his staff in return. It might be worth a try!