



Great Lakes Sea Kayaking Association

RISK MANAGEMENT

Great Lakes Sea Kayaking Association (GLSKA) is committed to developing, implementing and monitoring an effective Risk Management program. The program involves the identification, assessment and effective control of risks inherent in participating in the sport of sea kayaking. It is the responsibility of each member, volunteer, paid instructor/contractor and participant to practice risk management and safety on a continual basis.

The Risk Management program may undergo periodic changes as new risks are identified and improved risk control techniques are developed. GLSKA will communicate issues and concerns regarding risk management and safety to members on an ongoing basis.

A full commitment by GLSKA, its Board of Directors, and the membership, to the philosophy of the Risk Management program, is necessary to the avoidance and reduction of risks.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Risk Management program are to manage and minimize risks on three levels: (i) the risks faced by individual members participating in the sport; (ii) the risks faced by volunteer organizers of GLSKA trips and events; and (iii) the risks faced by GLSKA itself. The key to all levels of risk management is promoting awareness among GLSKA members of the risks inherent in the sport of sea kayaking, and undertaking efforts to control or minimize those risks, thus creating and maintaining a safer environment to paddle in.

A sound risk management program is essential in order to obtain and maintain insurance coverage for GLSKA activities.

IMPLEMENTATION

GLSKA manages its risk through the following:

Waiver – all members and guests are required to complete and sign a waiver form, acknowledging that they are aware of and accept the risks inherent in the sport of sea kayaking.

Insurance – GLSKA carries appropriate insurance to protect the Association, its members, and its volunteer event organizers from liability arising from kayaking activities.

Policy – use of all personal protective equipment (PPE) required by Canadian Coast Guard is mandatory for all GLSKA paddling events.

Skills Building Activities – GLSKA offers opportunities for skills building and awareness expansion through on-land and on-water workshops and events such as pool sessions.

Skills Building Incentives – GLSKA encourages members, through incentives, to maintain up-to-date first aid training, and to participate in trip leadership training.

Guidance – guidance documents are provided, via the GLSKA website, to assist members and event organizers in safely preparing for and enjoying paddling excursions. Available guidance includes:

- Trip Classifications – describing trip categories so that members can select trips that are compatible with their skills and abilities.
- Trip Rules and Guidelines – describing the principles and rules under which GLSKA trips are operated.
- The Law – itemizing mandatory safety equipment required by all paddlers, and the additional obligations governing guided excursions under Transport Canada’s Small Vessel Regulations
- Trip Organizer Guidelines – providing a checklist of items to assist volunteer trip organizers in covering all the bases to ensure the trip operates in a safe manner.

Standardized Forms – a Float Plan form, approved by GLSKA, is provided for the use of members and volunteer event organizers. A float plan is mandatory under the regulations governing guided excursions and GLSKA Trip Organizers must adhere to those regulations. Members are encouraged to use the float plan, as a matter of routine safety practice, in their own private paddling as well.

Incident Reporting – GLSKA has established a system for reporting and documenting any incidents that may occur during GLSKA paddling events. A standardized incident report form is provided, via the GLSKA website. In the event of a serious incident occurring on a GLSKA trip, the organizer should fill in this report and submit it to the GLSKA President.

The Association President is appointed to be responsible for risk management and safety monitoring within GLSKA.