



## **Injury Prevention in Paddlesport (Manual / Safe Handling)**

### **THE AIM**

The Aim of this leaflet is to provide guidelines for Manual Handling training and Risk Assessment in relation to Canoeing.

### **INTRODUCTION**

All Canoeists need to raise their awareness of Manual Handling and that damage can occur to joints and muscles, particularly when they are moving or lifting people or any equipment that is related to the sport of Canoeing. The principles of Manual Handling within Canoeing should be introduced at all levels. In addition, Risk Assessments of how to prevent harm and injury to paddlers should be undertaken. This could, of course, include a body, especially when performing rescues. The BCU has prepared this information leaflet which gives a brief outline of procedures to assess and evaluate Manual Handling operations. In addition, a one-day Manual Handling Course has been developed which should ensure that information in respect of lifting and carrying and all Manual Handling issues are being disseminated throughout the Coaching Service.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places general duties on both employers and their employees to maintain the safety and well being of everyone at work. To reinforce the Health and Safety at Work Act, a set of European based Regulations came into force on 1 January 1993. As part of these Regulations, guidelines for conducting Manual Handling Operations were developed. Whilst it is recognised that the Regulations are intended to apply to employees in the workplace, the term employee need not apply only to those persons actually paid for providing work. There are occasions where individuals acting on a voluntary basis may also be considered to be in employment although no money actually changes hand.

From a Canoeing perspective, Coaches and paddlers need to take reasonable care to avoid injury, harm or damage to either themselves or to others while taking part in any Canoeing related activity. In Civil Law there is a Duty of Care towards your students and others who paddle. This includes loss, harm, damage and injury. Coaches are charged with the care of paddlers, and as such, Coaches need to identify where there is a risk of the 'duty' being neglected or abused.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Risk assessments of how to prevent harm and injury to paddlers must start from the individual - Is the body prepared for the stresses that will be placed on it as they move, lift and carry the equipment? Is the body prepared for the stresses of the activity, the paddling techniques and rescues? Has the environment been considered - is it cold, wet, windy, fast-moving etc? Risk Assessments need not be a laborious, paperwork generating exercise; indeed, they should be undertaken on a regular basis as part of the activity.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT MODULE**

In order to cover effectively the issues raised by Manual Handling, a Risk Assessment module must underpin all aspects of canoeing activity. This Module should include the following:

- \* A basic approach to assessing risk.
- \* Acceptable Risk - Legal Situation.
- \* **SAFE Model** - Stop, Assess, Formulate, Execute.
- \* **LITE Model** - Load, Individual, Task, Environment.

### **SPECIFIC RISKS IN CANOEING**

- \* Lifting and carrying canoes and kayaks.
- \* Trailers, Loading and Securing.
- \* Rescues, Pins and Wraps, use of throwbag.

It is essential that coaches and students on courses have a good working knowledge of the following:

- The Spinal Column and injury due to disc displacement.
- The repetitive and cumulative nature of back injury.
- Safe Lifting, weight relative to posture.
- Use of major muscle groups.
- **Spine in Line.**
- Injury prevention through warm up and warm down.
- Reducing the load and distance of carry.
- The ability to identify risks and formulate plans for lifting and carrying in the following situations:
  - Loading and unloading cars and trailers.
  - Carrying boats and equipment.
  - Dealing with swamped boats.
  - Rescue, use of strops and alternative strategies.

## PRINCIPLES OF SAFE MANUAL HANDLING

### To Protect the Body

- Adopt a **Balanced Stance**, i.e. one foot at a slight angle to the other and just over shoulder width apart. Get close to the load and if possible stand so that your centre of gravity is right over the load.
- Bend your knees so that you can lift with your **Thigh Muscles**.
- Get a **good grip** of the load and, if lifting from ground level, keep your arms straight and between your legs.
- **Orientate** yourself to face the direction you intend to move in as this avoids twisting.
- Before you lift or lower a load, look straight ahead as this will help you develop **good posture**.
- Keep the load **close to the body**.

### To Make the Task Easier

- **Raise the Centre of Gravity** of the Load before lifting.
- **Get under the load**, e.g. like a weight lifter.
- **Use Gravity** when lowering, e.g. allow the load to slide to the floor.
- **Avoid Asymmetric Loads**, carry loads centrally or if they have handles carry one in each hand.
- **Communicate** when working in pairs, plan what you intend to do and get the timing right when lifting.

### Other Points to Remember

- Use body weight and leg muscles when pushing and pulling.
- Lift and lower with smooth actions.
- When lifting heavy weights:
  - Know your limitation
  - If in doubt seek help.