



BOAT AND EQUIPMENT PREPAREDNESS



- 1. Test new and different equipment** under familiar conditions before relying on it for difficult runs. This is especially true when adopting a new boat design or outfitting system. Low volume craft may present additional hazards to inexperienced or poorly conditioned paddlers.
- 2. Be sure your boat and gear are in good repair** before starting a trip. The more isolated and difficult the run, the more rigorous this inspection should be.
- 3. Install flotation bags in non-inflatable craft**, securely fixed in each end, designed to displace as much water as possible. Inflatable boats should have multiple air chambers and be test inflated before launching.
- 4. Have strong, properly sized paddles or oars** for controlling your craft. Carry sufficient spares for the length and difficulty of the trip.
- 5. Outfit your boat safely.** The ability to exit your boat quickly is an essential component of safety in rapids. It is your responsibility to see that there is absolutely nothing to cause entrapment when coming free of an upset craft. This includes:
 - A. Spray covers** which won't release reliably or which release prematurely.
 - B. Boat outfitting** too tight to allow a fast exit, especially in low volume kayaks or decked canoes. This includes low hung thwarts in canoes lacking adequate clearance for your feet and kayak footbraces which fail or allow your feet to become wedged under them.
 - C. Inadequately supported decks** which collapse on a paddler's legs when a decked boat is pinned by water pressure. Inadequate clearance with the deck because of your size or build.
 - D. Loose ropes** which cause entanglement. Beware of any length of loose line attached to a whitewater boat. All items must be tied tightly and excess line eliminated; painters, throw lines, and safety rope systems must be completely and effectively stored. Do not knot the end of a rope, as it can get caught in cracks between rocks.
- 6. Provide ropes which permit you to hold on** to your craft so that it may be rescued. The following methods are recommended:
 - A. Kayaks and covered canoes** should have grab loops of 1/4" + rope or equivalent webbing sized to admit a normal sized hand. Stern painters are permissible if properly secured.
 - B. Open canoes** should have securely anchored bow and stern painters consisting of 8 - 10 feet of 1/4" + line. These must be secured in such a way that they are readily accessible, but cannot come loose accidentally. Grab loops are acceptable, but are more difficult to reach after an upset.
 - C. Rafts and dories** may have taut perimeter lines threaded through the loops provided. Footholds should be designed so that a paddler's feet cannot be forced through them, causing entrapment. Flip lines should be carefully and reliably stowed.
- 7. Know your craft's carrying capacity**, and how added loads affect boat handling in whitewater. Most rafts have a minimum crew size which can be added to on day trips or in easy rapids. Carrying more than two paddlers in an open canoe when running rapids is not recommended.
- 8. Car top racks must be strong** and attach positively to the vehicle. Lash your boat to each crossbar, then tie the ends of the boats directly to the bumpers for added security. This arrangement should survive all but the most violent vehicle accident.

