

# Guidelines for Paddleboard Hire Providers

## Introduction

The following guidelines have been drawn up by Paddle UK, Surfing England and the British Stand-Up Paddleboard Association for paddleboard hire providers who offer non-supervised activity.

We define non-supervised activity as:

*Any activity where the participants are not directly supervised by qualified and experienced SUP Instructors, Coaches and/ or Leaders regardless of if the activity is provided free of charge or on a fee-paying basis.*

*Paddleboarding is used as the generic term throughout this document for all paddleboarding activities, standing, kneeling, sitting, prone etc.*

It is essential that Paddleboard Hire Providers engaged in non-supervised activity reflect in their operational practices and safety management systems that paddleboarding is an “assumed risk- water sports activity”. This means there are inherent risks associated with taking part in paddleboarding, including but not exclusively: Physical effort; likelihood of falling off the board; risk of entrapment; cold water shock; risks associated with medical conditions and drowning. Therefore Paddleboard Hire Providers must ensure an appropriate and responsible approach to the safety and welfare of clients.

These guidelines provide a range of principles for the responsible provision of Paddleboarding activities where safety management, quality provision and the safety and welfare of participants is paramount. They provide a framework from which paddleboard hire providers can develop their own operating procedures to ensure that the principles and expectations expressed in the advice provided are fully realised.

## Activity Management and Staffing.

All paddleboard hire providers should fulfil their statutory health and safety obligations and have current Public Liability Insurance and Employers’ Liability as required by law.

Any provider offering paddleboards for hire must possess the appropriate experience and competence to establish and implement robust safety systems including comprehensive and detailed risk assessments. This includes the crucial responsibility of onboarding and thoroughly training all hire staff to ensure they are proficient in safety protocols and customer guidance. Furthermore, the hire provider bears the ultimate responsibility for making informed decisions regarding when the hire of paddleboards can or cannot safely take place, considering all relevant environmental conditions and participant capabilities.



Staff involved in the hiring of paddleboards must receive training and possess the appropriate knowledge and competence to make informed professional judgments and decisions regarding the suitability of hiring to participants, based on the participants' competence and prevailing environmental factors or influences.

All paddleboard hire providers must ensure that their operating procedures and risk management procedures are appropriate to site, activity, participants and the waters used.

This may include:

Defining clearly the chain of responsibility for their management of paddleboarding hire and there is a well understood system of reporting and accountability in place.

Stipulating the level of ability and age of the participants. Note it is recommended that 16 years of age and over is minimum for independent hire and that solo paddleboarding hire is not recommended due to the added risks associated.

Weather forecasts and prevailing conditions, including the effects of changes in wind direction, wind chill, wind speed, with extreme caution of offshore winds.

Tidal information, high and low water, appropriate flows that hire may take place, and the associated risks mitigated.

The effects of different/variations in water levels and flow and in particular high river levels; also, that rivers often change their course, erode banks and can hold debris.

Different user groups, water confidence, swimming ability, length of hire and location.

Equipment and clothing provided including suitable footwear for the environment of which hire is permitted.

Staff have the competencies, training and experience required for the discharge of their responsibilities. Note: A full list of staff with qualifications, training and responsibilities should be available for inspection on request from clients.

Maintain written accident and emergency procedures, to include documentation for contacting next of kin. All hire providers should maintain and review on a regular basis an accident log book and a near miss log book.

Informing groups or individuals, prior to their arrival, of any special rules and of any special clothing that is required to be brought by the participants. Special consideration should be given where paddleboard hire providers offer a 'walk up service' and sufficient special clothing or equipment available.

Following compliance with local laws and access agreements.



## **Paddleboards and associated equipment**

Note: Appendix 1 provides further detail to support Hire Providers of Paddleboards

Paddleboard hire providers should ensure that the paddleboards and equipment used are:

Safe and fit for purpose for the paddleboard activity and environment in which they operate.

Subject to frequent checks by a suitably trained and competent person(s) for condition, safety and that the results are recorded in an equipment log.

Always checked prior to use to ensure that it is safe to use.

Where required, boards should be constructed, maintained and equipped in compliance with any requirements of the navigation, harbour or port authority that hold jurisdiction over the water used.

Ensuring that all buoyancy aids provided meet the recognised CEN/ISO standards, are worn and correctly fitted. Buoyancy Aids should be regularly inspected and have a record of maintenance.

Where appropriate, a leash is provided for each board for the environment it is being used, ensuring all participants can fit and release the leash, and understand the risk of entanglement and areas to avoid.

When providing helmets, providers must ensure that they are correctly adjusted, and that all helmets conform to CE EN 1385 standard.

## **Participant Communications**

Paddleboard hire providers must ensure that participants are made fully aware of the following and offer appropriate advice:

That paddleboarding is an “assumed risk- water sports activity” This means there are inherent risks associated with taking part in paddleboarding, including but not exclusive physical effort, likelihood of falling off the board, risk of entrapment, cold water shock, risks associated with medical conditions and drowning.

Gain signed acknowledgement from the participants that the risks associated with paddleboarding have been clearly explained to them

Clearly state that paddleboards will not be hired to anyone under the influence of drugs and alcohol.



Participants receive information on the environment and location that paddleboarding can take place, defining routes, no go zone areas and hazards as well as consideration and safety for all water users.

Clearly explain the importance of wearing properly fitted buoyancy aids, leash and associated safety equipment at all times while on the water.

State the importance of only securing specific equipment on their boards and **not** securing other passengers or dogs.

Provide instructions on how to contact the hire provider, which may include the limitations of phone coverage. Outline the process of advising of an expected late return, unable to return to the agreed end of hire location etc.

Where the use of a mobile phone is considered part of safety management framework the hire provider must consider keeping the phone dry, charged, appropriate signal as well as credit. Providers should consider providing a phone or other device if the participant doesn't have a suitable device.

Clearly explain to all participants the importance and safety of wearing suitable footwear during the paddleboard hire

Share with all participants of their responsibility to care for the water environment, and respect other users and the local community.

## **Customer Care**

Paddleboard hire providers should:

4.1 Indicate clearly that in the interests of safety it may, on occasion, be unavoidable to cancel or modify advertised Paddleboard hire due to adverse water and weather conditions or unavailability of staff.

4.2 Promote an ethos which is conducive to safety. Staff must display sensitivity to the needs and abilities of all participants.

4.4 Describe fairly and accurately the amenities and facilities available for Paddleboard hire including car parking arrangements, the venue or meeting place, availability of WC's, changing rooms and information on accessibility for disabled customers.

4.6 Make clear to all prospective participants details of charges and any additional costs including VAT. Where there are pre-entry requirements for Paddleboard hire, providers must ensure that these are clearly stated.



## Appendix 1

### Equipment Advice

This part of the document is aimed at supporting and aiding Paddleboard Hire Providers to consider what equipment is suitable for their individual operations and advice on equipment maintenance and requirements.

Equipment falls into two categories:

1. Personal protective equipment (PPE) - Buoyancy aids and helmets
2. General equipment – Paddleboards etc.

### Personal protective equipment standards

**EN standards** - The purpose of European standards (EN) is to harmonise technical rules and laws within the single European market that was jointly established on 01/01/1993. All personal protective equipment must conform to the appropriate EN standard:

Buoyancy aids - en 393

Watersports Helmets - en 1385

### ISO standards

Certification certifies that a management system, manufacturing process, service, or documentation procedure has all the requirements for standardization and quality assurance. ISO ([International Organisation for Standardisation](#)) is an independent, non-governmental, international organization that develops standards to ensure the quality, safety, and efficiency of products, services, and systems.

Buoyancy aids - ISO 12402

There is no ISO standard for watersports helmets

Paddleboard Hire Providers need to check all equipment both pre session and periodically as this will ensure our clients are using safe and usable equipment appropriate for their size and environment. It is also good practice to be checking kit as well as a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requirement for all PPE equipment.

## Safety Checks

These checks must happen at the start of each session and also on a periodic inspection which is also recorded. The reason for the checks is to ensure that the equipment to be used for a session is in a safe condition and fit for purpose. Most checks can be completed visually and below we listed what checks are required per item of equipment

### Buoyancy aids - Daily checks

Check the zip and buckles are functioning  
Check all straps are adjustable  
Check there are no rips or tears in the material  
Check you have appropriate sizes for your group

### Buoyancy aids - periodic checks

Check the integrity of the foam core  
Check the manufacturers date  
Check the general condition of the Buoyancy aid

### Helmets - Daily checks

The shell is in good condition with no dents or cracks  
The cradle or foam inners are in good condition  
The fastex buckle is working  
You have a range of sizes for the group

### Helmets - periodic checks

Check manufacturer dates of helmets  
Check for any discoloration  
Check inside and out for any damage

### Paddles

No sharp broken or chipped paddle blades and no sharp edges  
Blades are securely attached  
"T" Grips are securely attached  
Appropriate for the activity to be undertaken  
Can be adjusted easily to suit the individual and activity



## Paddleboards

The boards are in good condition with no cracks or sharp edges

Where leashes are used, they are appropriate for the environment, attached correctly to the board and participant

Fins are attached to the boards correctly, with no sharp edges or are damaged

If using ISUP the boards are inflated to the recommended pressure

Check for any leaks

Valve caps are shut.

## Leashes

Velcro cuffs free from debris (sand etc.) and operational

Swivels are free moving

The cord is in good condition with no visible signs of wear and tear

Attachment points have no wear and tear

There is no discoloration/UV damage to the cord

## Other Kit – Clothing and footwear

In addition to the above equipment paddleboard hire providers may also have cags, wetsuits and footwear that are supplied to clients. It is important to keep this kit clean and disinfected. It is therefore good practice to disinfect wetsuits and cags after each use and then allow to dry before being re used

## **Maintenance**

If protocols and processes are followed Paddleboard Hire Providers could find that there may be very little equipment maintenance as the pre session checks and periodic checks will identify kit that needs attention before being taken out of service.

Completing daily checks will reduce the need for larger maintenance schedules.

With larger maintenance jobs there may need to be additional training for staff, as well as supplying appropriate tools and clothing

## **Competency of the person completing kit checks**

It is imperative that the person completing equipment checks on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and associated paddleboarding kit and clothing possesses the necessary competence and has received appropriate training. This ensures they can accurately identify wear, damage, or defects that could compromise safety. Such training may need to be specialised, potentially involving external instruction from equipment manufacturers, to guarantee thorough and reliable inspections that uphold participant safety



## Recording

There is a requirement from the Health and Safety Executive that all Personal protective equipment PPE is individually identifiable and is regularly inspected.

Paddleboard hire providers should check the kit on a daily basis and then periodically complete a more thorough check of that piece of kit. The time frames between periodic inspections vary depending on how and how much the kit is used. The recording system should include the date, description of the kit, identification number and if it is in good condition or any issues. This is a requirement for both Buoyancy and Helmets.

All other equipment that is non PPE should also be checked in a similar method and recorded as this shows good practice in equipment management.

