

LAUNCH SITE CHECKLIST

Use this checklist each time you head out in your kayak, whether going for an afternoon paddle, or setting off on a 10-day expedition with a group. On a multi-day trip, perform these checks each day, because conditions and circumstances change from day to day. Obviously, some points may not apply on a given day or trip.

GROUP READINESS:

- Introduce yourself and have each person introduce themselves to the group
- Confirm/check each person's experience level
- Ensure everyone has the equipment required by Transport Canada: PFD, whistle, spray skirt, paddle, spare paddle, pump/baler, throw line, and lighting if darkness is a concern
- Ensure every boat has sufficient buoyancy in the form of bulkheads (with covers) or bags
- Ensure everyone has appropriate clothing: wet suit or dry suit, extra set of dry clothes
- Ensure everyone has fresh water, food and snacks for the trip

SAFETY EQUIPMENT & PROCEDURES:

- Identify paddlers with First Aid Kit(s), First Aid training and Tool Kit(s)
- Identify paddlers with charts and compass, VHF radios, Sat phones, Spot phones, flares
- Designate radio channels to use for non-emergency communications and agree on a time to broadcast/receive messages
- Identify the Leader and Sweep paddler
- Check everyone is "buddied up" or, for large groups, divided into pods of 4-5 people, each with a pod-leader
- Discuss the maximum distance apart the group will paddle in, and/or agree on "checkpoints" for the group to meet up
- Review whistle and paddle signals for on-water communication

CONDITIONS AND TRIP PLAN:

- Discuss the paddling plan: goals, destinations, breaks, time frames
- Discuss the weather forecast, tides and current and how they apply to the paddling goal
- Review emergency procedures, including capsize, whistle and hand/paddle signals, rescue plan
- Discuss a "Plan B" in the case of an emergency: what to do, where is a safe area, etc.
- Identify hazards in and around the launch area (if any)
- Designate an on-water staging area for people to wait until everyone has launched
- Make Go/No-Go decision
- Confirm that PFDs, spray skirts, hatch covers and equipment on deck are secured & chart is visible

Remind the group:

You are accountable for your own safety and that of the group. If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe with the paddling plan, or at any time during the paddle, let the leader or group know.