

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Paddleboarding on a Small Lake (UK)

1. Purpose

To provide a safe and structured approach for stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) on small lakes, ensuring the safety of participants and minimizing risks.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all individuals and groups participating in paddleboarding activities on small lakes in the UK.

3. Responsibilities

- **Participants:** Follow safety guidelines, wear appropriate gear, and adhere to local regulations.
- **Instructors/Organizers (if applicable):** Ensure safety briefings, monitor weather conditions, and enforce safety measures.
- **Lake Management (if applicable):** Maintain clear access, provide emergency contact details, and display safety signage.

4. Pre-Paddle Preparation

4.1 Weather & Water Conditions

- Check the weather forecast, including wind speed/direction, rainfall, and temperature.
- Do not paddle in high winds (above 12-15mph), thunderstorms, or foggy conditions.
- Assess water conditions for hazards such as submerged objects, strong currents, or algae blooms.

4.2 Personal Safety Equipment

- **Personal Flotation Device (PFD):** Must be worn at all times.
- **Leash:** Use a quick-release waist leash (preferred) or ankle leash depending on conditions.
- **Clothing:** Wear appropriate wetsuits/dry suits in cold conditions, and footwear if required.
- **Whistle:** Recommended for signalling in emergencies.
- **Mobile Phone/VHF Radio (in waterproof case):** For emergency contact.

4.3 Equipment Check

- Inspect the paddleboard for damage (cracks, leaks, fin security).
- Check the paddle for integrity and adjust it to the correct length.
- Ensure all safety gear is in place and functioning.

5. On-Water Procedures

5.1 Launching & Entry

- Launch from a designated or safe entry point.
- Avoid disturbing wildlife and other lake users.
- Enter the water in a controlled manner, ensuring the board is stable before standing.

5.2 Paddling Safety Rules

- Stay within designated paddling zones or areas allowed for SUP.
- Maintain a safe distance from swimmers, boats, and other water users.
- Keep to the shore if inexperienced; only venture further if conditions allow.
- Always paddle in a group or inform someone of your planned route and expected return time.
- Avoid standing in shallow areas to prevent injury from falling.

5.3 Communication & Signalling

- Use clear hand signals for distress if needed.
- If in distress, stay with your board—it provides flotation.
- Know emergency contact numbers for the lake area.

6. Emergency Procedures

6.1 Self-Rescue

- If falling, try to fall away from the board to avoid injury.
- Climb back onto the board using the correct technique (approach from the side, use the paddle for balance).
- If unable to get back on, hold onto the board and signal for help.

6.2 Assisting Others

- Approach calmly and ask if they need help.
- Provide stability by offering your board.
- If unconscious or in distress, call emergency services immediately.

6.3 Emergency Contacts

- Call **999** or **112** and ask for the Coastguard in case of emergencies.
- Local lake authorities/emergency response contacts (check location-specific details).

7. Post-Paddle Procedures

- Clean and inspect the board and equipment.
- Report any damaged equipment or incidents to the appropriate authority.
- Log the trip details if required for safety monitoring.

8. Environmental Considerations

- Follow the **Leave No Trace** principles—take all litter with you.
- Avoid disturbing wildlife and protected areas.
- Rinse equipment after use to prevent the spread of invasive species.

9. Compliance & Review

- This SOP should be reviewed regularly and updated according to changes in regulations or best practices.
- Participants must be briefed before every session to ensure adherence to safety measures.