

TRR Pool Protocol

Introduction

TRR is exceptionally fortunate that most chapters have free pool facilities from a wide variety of organizations. Swimming pools ensure year-round access for our participants and family members – a critical success factor. Swimming pools provide one of the safest venues for boating skills practice like rolls, strokes and boat-based rescue techniques. The easy access also is critical for participants with limited mobility. Many pool operators and life guards have never experienced paddling in closed deck craft like whitewater kayaks. They have a sensible fear of unknown risks involved. Decent written policies/procedures along with sensible safety precautions can bridge these concerns and ensure continued pool accessibility.

Training

TRR pool sessions are led by seasoned paddlers. The TRR organization funds ACA (American Canoe Association) certified Instructors. If the pool staff has never met you before (or it's a new pool for TRR), bring your ACA Instructor certification card. As part of the initial pool orientation, determine all the first-time paddlers. They will need assistance with gear selection and need to demonstrate in the shallow end of the pool they can properly execute a wet release. Instructors must be standing in the pool next to the new paddler so they can quickly turn upright if necessary. If anyone is uncomfortable performing a wet release, ensure they are not wearing a spray skirt during the pool session.

Non-Swimmers

Non-swimmers are a well-known risk factor. Although the mandatory PFD provides adequate flotation, their fear of water can be overwhelming. A common reaction to being upside down is sheer panic which causes them to tense their legs which makes them fit tighter in the boat. Someone with Hand of God (HOG) rescue experience should always remain close to these individuals. It is also recommended that all TRR pool leaders practice the HOG rescue technique periodically (like monthly).

Pool Sharing

Larger pools often maintain a portion of the pool for their members to swim laps. The boaters are separated by a simple float line. Persons with special needs may lack coordination and can easily cross over into the swimmer lanes by accident potentially causing accidents. Be aware of this possibility and establish a Pool Bouncer in a kayak to prevent cross overs.

Safety Gear

PFDs are mandatory for everyone in the pool. Although helmets are optional, carefully evaluate the pool perimeter for potential hazards. Bear in mind, many of our participants may have experienced TBI in their past. As a rule, TRR strongly encourages everyone wear helmets even in pool sessions. If participating in activities like Kayak Football – helmets are mandatory.

Kayak Football

TRR often plays pick-up Kayak Football games and organizes tournaments. This sport is a great deal of fun but does have an extra element of physical risk. Pay close attention to the boats in use. Avoid boats with pointy ends as they can cause severe injuries when they meet the torso or even the head. Here is a great video on how this can happen: [Kayak Football Injury](#). Run a brief orientation of the rules and safety precautions. The referees need to monitor the game in progress and be prepared to pull anyone that exhibits over aggressive behavior and provide necessary coaching.

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First Aid

Most (but not all) pool environments are staffed by professional life guards. All Life Guards have First Aid certification and most pools have some form of First Aid Kits. TRR has provided the chapters with First Aid kits as well. Chapter Leads should ensure a First Aid Kit is brought to all events including pool sessions. Note – All ACA Certified Instructors are required to maintain current CPR and First Aid certification. A cell phone must also be quickly available should EMS need to be contacted.

Clean Boats

Kayaks gather a great deal of dirt and debris like leaves. This foreign matter quickly comes off the boat and into the pool which can clog pool filters. Inspect all gear and clean with a hose outside to prevent this embarrassing situation.

Conclusion

Year-round access to protected venues like pool environments is a great TRR asset. Pools provide a relatively safe environment to practice skills and perform many fun activities. We are guests to these facilities. A few simple precautions listed in this article can open up these paddling venues and maintain access to them for years.