



PADDLE SAFE PADDLE SMART

A guide to help you
paddle and return
safely →



Victoria has experienced an increase in incidents involving canoes, kayaks, row boats, surf skis and stand up paddle boards.

When operating these vessels, it is mandatory to carry the minimum safety equipment as detailed in the table below.



Always wear an approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD).



Display a white light when operating at night so other vessels can see you.

Minimum safety equipment		COASTAL OFFSHORE (>2m from coast)	COASTAL INSHORE (~2m from coast)	ENCLOSED (Bays and estuaries)	INLAND (Rivers, lakes and dams)
	PFD (per person on board/towed)	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3	Type 1, 2 or 3
	Waterproof buoyant torch	1			
	Bailer (if no electric or manual bilge pumping system)	1	1	1	1
	Electric or manual bilge pumping system (if vessel has covered bilge or closed underfloor compartments)	1	1	1	1
	Hand held orange smoke signals	2			
	Hand held red distress flares	2			
	Compass	1			
	Spare oar with rowlock or spare paddle	1			
	Approved EPIRB	1			

You are required to hold a recreational boat operator licence and register your vessel if the vessel is fitted with a means of propulsion (regardless of engine size).

Recommended safety tips

To make your time out on the water safer and more enjoyable, follow these tips:

- Make sure your safety equipment is in good working condition and is easily accessible.
- Check the weather before you go out. Contact the Bureau of Meteorology by telephone on 1196 or visit www.bom.gov.au/marine
- Let someone know where you are going, your point of departure and when you plan to return.
- If you capsize, stay with your vessel. A vessel is much easier to spot in the water than a person.
- Wear suitable clothing for the conditions.
- Make sure you are visible to other boaters. You will not always be seen because your vessel sits low on the water.
- Take a mobile phone and/or Personal Location Beacon (PLB) with you.
- To avoid losing your paddle(s) attach it/them to your vessel with shock cord(s).
- Take a buoyant waterproof torch with you. You might not intend to operate at night but if you run into trouble a torch will help you attract attention.
- A large sponge can absorb any unwanted water that enters your vessel.
- Attach reflective tape to your vessel and paddles to increase visibility.
- Display some identification on your vessel. Your car registration or a telephone number are good examples. This may assist with identifying who you are in the event you become separated from your vessel.
- Where possible, always travel in a group to maximise your safety.

Capsizing

The effects of cold water immersion and hypothermia impact on your ability to think and act clearly. Before you go out on the water you should wear suitable clothing, ensure that your outer layer of clothing is watertight and wear a Personal Flotation Device.

If you capsize, stay with your vessel.

A person with blonde hair tied back, wearing a yellow life vest and a white t-shirt, is seen from behind, paddling a blue kayak on a river. The water is dark blue, and there are trees on the banks in the background. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Safety equipment tips

- Ensure your safety equipment is in good working condition and is easily accessible.
- Take care of your PFD. Ensure you familiarise yourself with the manufacturers instructions on how to wear and operate it.
- In the case of inflatable PFDs, service these on or before the date specified by the manufacturer.

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