

Falcon Buoyancy Aid Policy - kayaking & canoeing

updated 1/5/2016

A well-fitting buoyancy aid (BA) could, in extreme circumstances, save a life. The wearing of buoyancy aids is not a substitute for taking all sensible precautions and assessing risks prior to and during a training session. As a racing club, we are committed to preparing athletes for racing at the top level of our sport (where BAs are not worn) in a safe environment.

The default position is that all paddlers should wear BAs except in certain circumstances, detailed below for juniors and seniors.

In any coached session, the coach has the right to insist that any paddler wears a BA, and that paddler may not take part in the session if they refuse.

BAs must be worn by all paddlers, regardless of age or ability if:

- The Environment Agency (EA) is displaying red boards on the stretch of water that the training session is taking place on. <http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk/>
- The paddler has any history of illness which could reduce their ability to self-rescue/be rescued in the event of a capsize (e.g. epilepsy)

In a coached session, the coach (or experienced responsible paddler leading the session) may allow paddlers to not wear BAs provided they have considered all of the following factors:

- the ability & stability of each paddler in their boat.
- the river conditions (current speed & smoothness, water temperature, ease of exit from waterway in event of capsize)
- the weather conditions (temperature, wind speed & directions, rain/hail/snow)
- the light conditions (i.e. is it currently dark or likely to get dark during the session)
- the type of session planned (distance to be travelled from club, how close coach will be to group)
- the group dynamics (number and ability of paddlers in group, range of ability in group, presence of other coaches within group, how well the coach knows each paddler)

In non-coached sessions, the club recommends that all paddlers wear BAs, especially in these circumstances:

- when paddling alone / in pairs
- when the EA red or yellow boards are showing on the stretch of river on which the session takes place
- when paddling in the dark
- in cold/windy conditions

Additional rules for Juniors (any paddler aged under 18)

- In addition to the considerations and rules applying to all paddlers, for juniors, the coaches may only decide that some or all of the paddlers in their group need not wear BAs if all the following conditions are met:
 - their parent has agreed that they are happy for coaches to make the decision as to whether they should be worn. This must be in writing, be saved in the junior details folder, and circulated to all the coaches involved in coaching that junior. If this has not been done, a BA must be worn in all sessions.
 - the junior is ranked in at marathon division 6 or better.
- All juniors must wear BAs on club timetrials

At races, the rules for BAs for that race must be abided to by all Falcon paddlers. A coach or parent may insist that a junior ranked in division 6 or quicker wears a BA (where this is not mandatory in the race rules), if the junior's experience or the race/weather/river conditions deem this appropriate.