

Revised June 3, 2023

## **WET EXIT AND ASSISTED RESCUE CERTIFICATION**

In 2013 the OOPS Board of Directors instituted a policy requiring members to demonstrate the ability to safely exit and re-enter their boats prior to participating in OOPS trips. This policy was adopted following several incidents in which paddlers had been unable to release their spray skirts, requiring the trip leader to perform a “hand of God” rescue. To minimize the risk of future near-drowning events, the Board adopted the Wet Exit Certification policy, which has since been modified.

In order to participate in OOPS trips each person must demonstrate the ability to perform the following:

1. Two panic-free wet exits, one with and one without the use of the spray skirt grab loop;
2. Demonstrate the ability to participate in their assisted rescue.
3. These skills must be demonstrated to a Wet Exit Certifier approved by the OOPS board.

## **DETAILED WET EXIT CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

1. The Certifier introduces her/himself to the Trainee and verifies that the Trainee’s spray skirt will attach properly to their cockpit coaming.
2. Discuss several ways for the Trainee to detach their spray skirt from the cockpit coaming and have the Trainee demonstrate them while upright to be sure that they can do so effectively. (Using the spray skirt grab loop, punch upward with knee, two hands grabbing at cockpit coaming beside them, etc.)
3. Discuss the Trainee's preferred methods of assisted reentry and offer suggestions, if they are interested in hearing them.
4. Have the Trainee capsize, bang the bottom of their boat 3 times (simulating letting others on the trip know that they capsized), and detach their spray skirt from the cockpit coaming, coming out of their boat holding paddle in one hand and grabbing the cockpit of their boat with the other.

5. The Certifier has the Trainee flip their boat upright and "line-walk" to their bow, maintaining a hold on their deck lines.
6. The Certifier positions for rescue, has the Trainee transfer to the Certifier's deck lines, the Certifier empties the Trainee's boat, repositions it for assisted reentry, and walks the Trainee through assisted self-rescue.
7. Once Trainee is back in their boat with spray skirt attached and paddle in hand, they separate and do the whole process a second time using a *different* technique to detach their spray skirt from the cockpit combing *that does not use the spray skirt grab loop*. Ideally a different method should also be used for assisted reentry.
8. Lastly, the Certifier offers the Trainee an opportunity to rescue the Certifier to get the Trainee comfortable with performing a rescue and build a little confidence.

## **PADDLERS WITH LOOSE FITTING COCKPIT COVERINGS**

Wet Exit Certification will not be conducted using a boat with a loosely-fitting spray skirt or spray deck (any cockpit covering that allows the paddler to fall out of the boat on capsize without any action on the paddler's part due to the nature of its attachment or boat construction).

The purpose of this Certification is to ensure that the paddler can escape a capsized boat when wearing an elastic spray skirt (properly and tightly fitted to the boat and paddler) that prevents them from falling out of the boat (and likewise water from entering the boat) either by design, or due to obstructions on the boat's deck which prevent the release of the cockpit covering.

Paddlers with equipment that does not allow for wearing an elastic spray skirt properly and tightly fitted to the boat and paddler will be asked to certify in a loaner boat with such equipment (like they might use if bringing a rental or a friend's fiberglass boat on an OOPS trip).

## **EXCEPTIONS**

(not resulting in a wet exit certification):

- Paddlers on level 1 trips who either paddle a sit-on-top kayak, or do not wear a spray skirt.

- OOPS members who have been certified by paddle organizations including BC, ACA, Paddle Canada, etc., may waive the OOPS certification by providing the OOPS Safety director of their certification.
- Those members who paddle in canoes should be able to do an assisted re-entry.
- Those members who paddle a Stand-Up Paddle board must demonstrate the ability to re-board if they should suddenly become a swimmer.

For members who would like training in wet exits and assisted self-rescues, OOPS offers classes in local pools. Dates will be posted on the calendar as well as on the listserv. Members who are already comfortable with wet exits and assisted self-rescues may be certified during pool sessions, during scheduled trips led by approved instructors, or by arrangement with individual instructors. For open-water sessions, be prepared for cold-water immersion and obtain prior approval from the instructor.

After performing a successful Wet Exit Certification, the Certifier must contact the Safety Coordinator at [safety@oopskayak.org](mailto:safety@oopskayak.org) **within 2 days of the Certification** to inform him/her of the name(s) of the member(s) who have been certified.

A list of all members who have been certified will be maintained by the Safety Coordinator for the board. To request verification of certification, send an email to: [safety@oopskayak.org](mailto:safety@oopskayak.org)

A list of the instructors who have been approved by the board to teach and/or certify members for wet exits and rescue can be found at <https://oopskayak.org/Safety>

## RETAILER CERTIFICATION FORM:

### Wet Exit and Assisted Rescues

In 2013 the OOPS Board of Directors instituted a policy requiring members to demonstrate the ability to safely exit and re-enter their boats prior to participating in OOPS trips. In order to participate in OOPS trips each person must demonstrate the ability to perform:

1. From a kayak with a secured elastic spray skirt (properly and tightly fitted to the boat and paddler that prevents them from falling out of the boat when capsized), roll over and execute 2 panic-free wet exits, one with and one without the use of the spray skirt grab loop;
2. Demonstrate the ability to participate in their assisted rescue.

OOPS member: (Print) \_\_\_\_\_, has demonstrated competence in Wet exit followed by re-entry according to the guidelines of the Oregon Ocean Paddling Society at:

(Place) \_\_\_\_\_

On this date: \_\_\_\_\_

Certifier: (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Certifier ( Signature ) \_\_\_\_\_

Kayak Retail Business \_\_\_\_\_

*CERTIFIER: A.S.A.P. PLEASE SEND A DIGITAL COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT  
TO: [safety@oopskayak.org](mailto:safety@oopskayak.org)*

## CRITERIA FOR WET EXIT CERTIFIERS

The Criteria for Wet Exit Certifiers, below, have been adopted by the Board of Directors of the Oregon Ocean Paddling Society (OOPS), keeping in mind that Wet Exit Certification isn't a "check box" certification but is, instead, a process for saving lives in the event of a capsize and ensuring that everyone in our club knows how to perform these life-saving actions.

### PROCESS

A member desiring to become a Wet Exit Certifier for OOPS is required to perform one new Certification while under observation from a current, experienced Wet Exit Certifier.

The experienced Wet Exit Certifier will:

- Discuss the Wet Exit Certification process with the Certifier candidate
- Observe the candidate doing a Wet Exit Certification, providing real-time coaching as needed, and verify that she/he understands and implements coaching.
- Use the stated Wet Exit Certification process as a yardstick to measure whether the candidate has successfully satisfied the requirements to be a new Certifier. If the candidate has not successfully satisfied the requirements, provide further feedback and recommend scheduling a later attempt, either with the same Certifier or another, if desired by either party.
- Recommend to the board to accept the candidate as a new Certifier, if the Wet Exit Certifier feels that the candidate has successfully satisfied the requirement to be a Wet Exit Certifier. The board will then vote to approve or deny the candidate as a new Certifier.

### RESCUES SKILLS

To be approved by OOPS as a Wet Exit Certifier, a member:

1. Must be able to clearly express the club's expectations for successful completion of the Wet Exit Certification.
2. Needs to be able to perform self-rescues consistently and successfully. It is important that a Certifier be able to return to his/her own kayak **with**

**confidence** in the event of a capsize.

3. Must know a minimum of two different assisted rescues and know how to confidently coach a potentially panicked kayaker through each of them.
4. If the Wet Exit Certification is being performed in **shallow water** (water in which the Certifier or an assistant can securely stand next to the applicant), the Certifier must be able to perform a Hand of God-style rescue from a standing position. This is the preferred method (except for the “assisting in your own rescue” portion of the Certification) because it allows the Certifier to be able to see more clearly what the applicant is doing and gives the Certifier more control over the situation.
5. If the Wet Exit Certification is being performed in **deep water** (versus water in which the Certifier or an assistant can securely stand next to the applicant), the Certifier must be able to perform a Hand of God or Hand of Pavia rescue in the event an applicant is unable to exit the kayak once capsized. When doing certification in deep water, the Certifier must be accompanied by an assistant (not necessarily another Wet Exit Certifier) who is capable of, and competent in, performing assisted rescues.
6. A Wet Exit Certifier who is competent in rescuing a canoeist and is proficient in his/her own self/assisted entry to a swamped canoe may certify a canoe candidate.

## **TEACHING SKILLS**

A Wet Exit Certifier must also be able to work as an instructor. The Certifier must:

1. Be comfortable with allowing the person being certified to make mistakes and then at some point, either at the time of the Certification or later, be willing and able to help them correct their mistakes.
2. Be comfortable with and willing to fail an applicant if they aren't yet able to meet the Wet Exit standards of the OOPS club. If an applicant doesn't perform to the level of expectation, the Certifier must be able to tell the applicant where she or he needs to see improvement in order to be able to certify them.
3. Be able and willing to coach the applicant if asked, or recommend an instructor who can help to bring them up to the club's standard.

4. Be comfortable, after observing a Wet Exit Certifier candidate perform a Wet Exit Certification in accordance with the “DETAILED WET EXIT CERTIFICATION PROCESS” above, with recommending either approval or denial of Wet Exit Certifier status to the OOPS Board of Directors. If the recommendation is to deny the status, the observing Wet Exit Certifier must state specifically what the problem(s) was (were) that led to the recommendation.
  
5. Be able and willing to coach the Wet Exit Certifier candidate if asked, or recommend another Wet Exit Certifier who can work with them to help bring them up to the club’s standard.