

Detail information for Waka Safety Equipment

Personal flotation device [PFD]

Most paddlers use some sort of recreational buoyancy vest which will not impede paddling, or climbing back onto their craft. However it is important to understand that a buoyancy vest, unlike a lifejacket, may not support an unconscious person face up in the water. Under the Navigation Safety Rule (part 91) and navigational safety bylaws everyone on a vessel, and that includes Waka, is required to have available an appropriate and correct fitting PFD, and that it should be worn at times of heightened risk such as rough seas, strong ocean currents and open waters. PFDs are essential for novice and junior paddlers.

- A PFD should always:
- Be in excellent condition
- Have the correct buoyancy rating for your weight
- Be the correct size for your body
- Be fitted properly. This usually means correctly fitting shoulder straps (some are adjustable) and firmly adjusted chest and waist fastenings. A common fault is wearing a PFD too loosely which means that when you are in the water the PFD rides up above your shoulders leaving your nose underwater
- Be accessible

Pump/bailer

If a Waka Ama capsizes, usually some water enters the cockpit when it is righted. This can be drained either by a hand operated pump, or by a simple bailer which can be made out of a common plastic container.

Communication equipment

A very brief message to all craft in the area on channel 16, stating that you are on the water, can alert others to your presence.

Mobile phone

Cell phones are restrictive in that they are only heard by the person dialled and have limited 'coverage areas'. If you have a cell phone, of course – take it with you, but always keep it in a waterproof bag.

Flares

Flares suitable to Waka Ama are hand held flares. They need to be kept ready at hand, and also well water proofed. Check their expiry date.

Spare paddle

Paddles can often break or get lost overboard, especially in strong winds. A spare paddle can be a life saver. Spare paddles can be kept behind the steerer but it is recommended to secure a spare paddle/s to the Kiato with rubber lashing.

Spray Skirt

Waka Ama should use good fitting spray skirt if in open water. The spray skirt turns the cockpit into a water proof compartment and prevents excess water entering the hull. Zips and draw strings must be functional and duct tape can be used to keep the spray skirt tightly fitted to the Waka.

Tow rope

A rope of about 40 metres can be used if you need a tow, or if you need to tow someone else. It need not be a great thick rope, about 4mm diameter will do. When using a tow rope it is very important to have a quick release fastening.

Leg leash

Similar to a surfers leg leash, the leash commonly made of flexible cord or webbing goes around you ankle secured by a Velcro strap, the other end connects to the Waka. The purpose is to keep you attached to the Waka should it capsize. This is required for W1 paddlers using surf rigger style canoe (see example photo). These Waka are very light an could easily get blown away from you in windy conditions. However use of a leg leash while departing or landing in surf can have dangers. If you get tipped out and tumbled about in surf you run the risk of being entangled in the leash.

Waka visibility

There are many factors that can prevent boaties from seeing Waka and other craft that sit low in the water. Conditions such as choppy water, fog, glare, sun strike, rain, wind in the eyes, and salt spray on the windshield, poor vision or a combination of any of these can

affect a boatie's ability to spot a small craft in the water. Waka paddlers and others using similar craft can do a lot to dramatically improve their visibility – and therefore their own safety.

Use your head

Your head is your highest point – make it as bright as possible. Day-glow orange or yellow hats are highly visible.

Blazing paddles

Motion is another important visibility tool. Because your hoe (paddle) is in constant motion while paddling, you can increase your visibility by using reflective tape on blades or shafts, in combination with strips of day-glow tape.

Fly the flag

Day-glow orange and yellow chopper flags provide a permanent bright flash at a good height above the water. Chopper flags 'break the horizon' of other vessels and draw attention to the Waka.

Have a colourful craft

Choose a Waka in a bright, contrasting colour. The highest visibility potential is achieved when your boat contrasts with the sea and surrounding backdrops and with your clothing, paddles and flag. Bright, multi-coloured Waka give greater contrast.

Dress to impress and protect

Wearing a day-glow orange or yellow paddle jacket or over shirt offers the highest visibility potential. New Zealand coastal weather can change rapidly so paddlers should have clothing for all anticipated conditions. Paddlers are very exposed to the elements. The aim is to be able to stay warm and dry in all conditions.

Warm, dry clothing

Effective clothing for paddlers in winter is a top made of polypropylene (or similar synthetic fibre), plus a waterproof wind shell as necessary.

Modern synthetic clothing holds very little water and stays 'warm'. Cotton is one clothing fabric to avoid since it dries poorly and creates heat loss in a wind. Woollen clothing can also be a problem since, although it may seem 'warm', it holds an enormous amount of water, and is difficult to dry. Sun hat and glasses are recommended in the summer season.

Stick together and light up

Waka paddlers travelling in a group, particularly at night, are recommended to carry two light sources, such as a head torch and an all-round white light or sector light.

If the rear paddler has their all-round light turned on when paddlers are travelling in a tight pod, the group will be visible from behind and other members will not be blinded. The lead paddler should have their head torch on and shining forward, which won't affect others' night vision.

Re-entry equipment (Rescue stirrup)

If you can't upright the Waka after capsizing you may need some equipment to help you climb back on-board. To assist with self-rescue, or rescuing others, a length of webbing with a foot loop tied at one end can assist paddlers to get themselves back onto their Waka, especially if they do not have good upper body strength.

Miscellaneous Equipment

Securing items

Any equipment kept on the deck or inside of a Waka should always be tied on. It is not normally a good idea to carry extra items in your cockpit, as they will be lost or hard to retrieve if you capsize.

Water bottle/energy snacks

If you are paddling any distance you need to keep well hydrated. You can use an ordinary water bottle, but make sure it is tied onto your Waka. Most paddlers use a backpack drinking system for long distance paddling. Energy bars or similar can also provide nourishment.

Knife

A sharp knife attached to your PFD can have many uses from freeing yourself or others from entanglement, to fishing.

Survival kit

On a serious trip paddlers should carry a small bag containing survival gear that they can grab if they get washed onto some remote shoreline. This can contain first aid gear, an emergency blanket, emergency shelter, fire lighting equipment, energy food.

First aid kit

A small, basic first aid kit should be carried.