

Operating Practices – RSU #34  
Non-Motorized Boating Events with Students Grades 3-12

This document is intended to guide field trips involving non-motorized boating (grades 3-12): outlining practices that should be used for student and staff safety, while maintaining a sense of discovery and adventure for students. Particular organizations that are visited by RSU #34 field trips may have differing practices; following those practices is acceptable provided they are reasonably similar to, or exceed, these safety practices.

1. **Certification / Licensure:** The event must be led by an adult who holds an appropriate certification (e.g., Maine Guide, Camp Trip Leader, etc.). At least two adults must be certified in First Aid / CPR.
2. **Number of Staff:** The minimum number of boats containing adults is two.
  - a. Additional personnel may be needed to maintain a staff:student ratio of no more than 1:8 for grades 3-8, and 1:10 for grades 9-12. Staff members providing individual services (e.g., providing 1-to-1 assistance per a students' IEP) should not be counted toward this ratio.
  - b. Additional personnel, or modified practices, may be needed in order to ensure reasonably quick response to a student accident (i.e. a winding stream where boats would be frequently out of sight of each other)
  - c. One of the adult boats should be near the front of the group, and one near the rear, in order to keep the trip together and quickly assist students.
  - d. If an overnight boating/camping event is planned, relevant Maine regulations (e.g., Camp Trip Leader) and RSU #34 policies for overnight events must be observed.
3. **Equipment**
  - a. Each staff member counted in Part 2 (above) shall have a throwable device (e.g., floatable cushion or throw bag), and a means of communicating with other staff members (e.g., whistle or radio).
  - b. One first aid kit per 30 participants, including a CPR mask.
  - c. Properly fitting, Coast Guard approved, life jackets in good condition.
  - d. Depending on the circumstances of each particular trip, other equipment (e.g., wetsuits, drinking water) may be needed.
4. **Safety Discussions:** The event must include a discussion with students of safe boating practices, including:
  - a. Properly fitting a life jacket
  - b. Why standing in a canoe or kayak is not allowed
  - c. Basic paddling techniques
  - d. What to do if a boat flips over
  - e. Other rules specific to the event
5. **Trip Alteration or Cancellation:** RSU #34 shall consider local conditions on the day of a planned trip. These conditions include, but are not limited to, air temperature, water temperature, water level, current, storm conditions, and the likelihood of downed trees (“strainers”) in the water. There is no expectation that the water body to be traveled be inspected prior to a trip, merely that the trip be planned in consultation with those familiar with that water body. There is no formula to determine whether an event should be altered or cancelled; the RSU #34 staff member in charge shall make this determination, considering due regard for the safety of staff and students.

6. **Documentation:** The staff member in charge shall retain records including:
  - a. the insurance policy of the group hosting the event,
  - b. the safety plan of the group hosting the event, and
  - c. assurance that safety discussions covering each area in part 4 above were held (an initialed and dated copy of that section is sufficient).

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