

## 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 an instructor approved by the OOPS board.

### EXCEPTIONS:

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 BCU, ACA, Paddle Canada, etc., may waive the OOPS certification by notifying the OOPS Safety director of their certification.

Those members who paddle in canoes shall undergo a modified certification consisting of an assisted re-entry.

Those members who paddle a standup 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 listserve. 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 spray skirt, 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 capsized 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 observing Wet Exit Certifier will then make a recommendation to the board to either accept the member as a new certifier or to deny the status. The board will then vote to approve or deny the status.

### 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 consistently successfully perform self-rescues. It is important that a certifier be able to return to his/her own kayak **with confidence** in the event of a capsized.
- 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 is able to 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 more clearly see 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 is able to 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:

7) be comfortable with allowing the person being certified to make mistakes and then at some point, either at the time of the certification or at a later time, be willing and able to help them correct their mistakes.

8) 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.

9) 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.

10) be comfortable, after observing a Wet Exit Certifier candidate perform a wet exit certification in accordance with "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.

11) 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.