



Tasmania

MAST

MARINE and SAFETY TASMANIA
making boating better

Making Paddling Safer in Tasmania

A reference document for paddling clubs and recreational paddlers

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Introduction

Marine and Safety Tasmania (MAST), Paddle Tasmania and Surf Life Saving Tasmania (SLST) collaborate to provide safety guidance tailored to the Tasmanian paddling community. This reference guide is designed for all paddlers - new and experienced - as well as clubs, coaches, guides, volunteers and others involved in the sport. Its purpose is to promote consistent and accurate safety practices, helping everyone refresh their knowledge and maintain a strong focus on safety.

Community paddlers seeking to build their skills in various paddle craft in smooth waters should refer to this guide and Paddling Australia's *Paddle Smart* guidelines. This document does not cover the specialised safety details and procedures associated with whitewater paddling.

MAST strongly encourages all clubs affiliated with Paddling Tasmania that engage in recreational paddling to appoint a dedicated safety officer. This role is vital in fostering a culture of safety and preparedness. Clubs should also maintain comprehensive safety planning documents and activity plans to guide directors, executives, and leaders in providing education, demonstrating readiness, ensuring support, and maintaining compliance.

This document should also be used in conjunction with Paddling Australia's Safety Guidelines www.paddle.org.au/education/safety-guidelines-v2/

Paddling Australia's *Paddling Code Brochure* is included in the Appendices, along with other documents referred to in this document.



Paddle Australia

Paddle Clubs around Tasmania

Opportunities to connect with other paddlers exist around Tasmania. The clubs listed below cater to a variety of paddling interests and disciplines. For further information on their activities, contact the clubs directly. Local guides and instructors can help you develop your paddling skills, improve safety awareness and refine techniques to match your goals and abilities. Visit the Paddling Tasmania website for up-to-date contact details, as well as information on courses, news and events www.tas.paddle.org.au

- Derwent Canoe Club
- Tasmanian Canoe Club
- Tamar Canoe Club
- Tasmanian Sea Canoeing Club Inc.
- Wynyard Yacht Club
- Storm Bay Stand-Up Paddle
- West Coast Paddle Club
- Peninsula Aquatic Club
- Surf Life Saving Tasmania (SLST) Clubs

Tasmanian Paddling-Related Legislation

Paddle Craft – Kayaks, Canoes and Stand-up Paddle Boards (SUPs) are classified as **Lightweight Craft** in the *Marine and Safety (General) Regulations 2023*.

Definition from Regulations:

“Lightweight craft “means an off-the-beach sailing craft, a canoe, a kayak, a stand-up paddle board or any other craft capable of being navigated that is not also a commercial vessel”.

MAST’s compulsory safety requirements for all Paddle Craft - canoes, sea kayaks, stand-up paddleboards (SUP), surf skis, wave skis, outrigger canoes, fishing kayaks, sit-on-top kayaks and pack rafts can be found at www.mast.tas.gov.au and include:

Minimum Safety Equipment on Kayaks, Canoes, Surf Skis and Stand-up Paddle Boards (Prescribed Lightweight Craft)

Equipment Required	Smooth Waters	Sheltered Waters	Coastal Waters
Life Jacket (AS4758) 	✓ Level 50 Mandatory	✓ Level 50 Mandatory	✓ Level 100 Mandatory
White Strobe Light* (or all-round light with 360 degree visibility) 	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory
Tethering Device (when more than 200m offshore) 	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory
EPIRB or PLB (GPS enabled) 		Recommended	✓ Mandatory
Marine Radio (VHF) hand held 		Recommended	✓ Mandatory
Bailer or Bilge in Craft (unless hull permanently enclosed) 	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory
Compass 			✓ Mandatory
Flares 		Recommended if undertaking a passage paddle	✓ Mandatory 2 x Orange 2 x Red 2 x Parachute
OR EVDS 		OR Recommended if undertaking a passage paddle	OR ✓ Mandatory

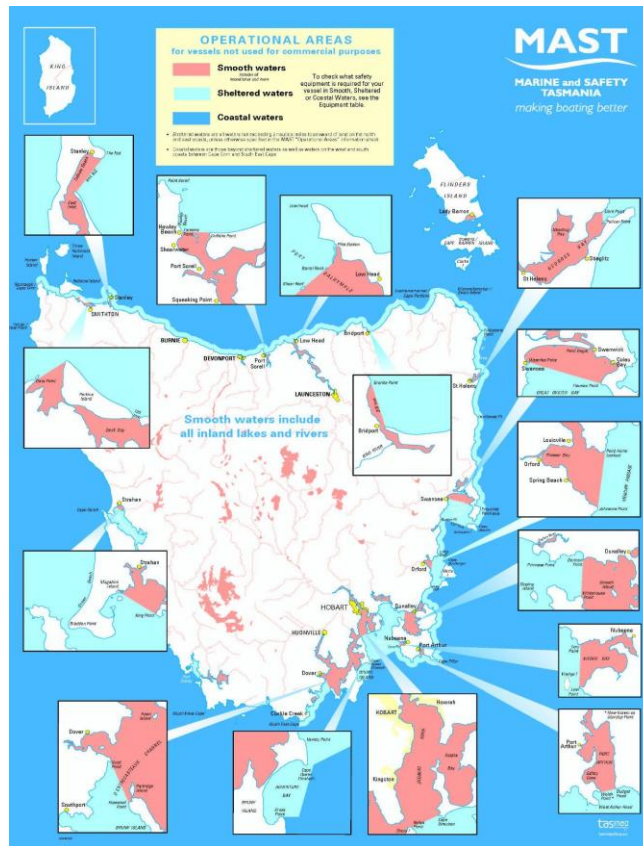
Smooth water = Inland lakes, rivers. * Sunset to sunrise (visibility 1nm)
Sheltered waters = 2nm seaward of land on North and East coast between Cape Grim & SE Cape.
Coastal waters = all other waters.

A mobile phone in a waterproof pouch is recommended.
 For further safety information see www.mast.tas.gov.au


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Recommended to affix sticker to craft.

*All Sheltered Waters are specified in the *Marine and Safety (Limits of Operational Areas) By-Laws 2023* – Clause 7 (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e), as per the map below:



The items below are required when paddling in Smooth Waters. Additional items are required when paddling in Sheltered and Coastal Waters.

Life Jackets

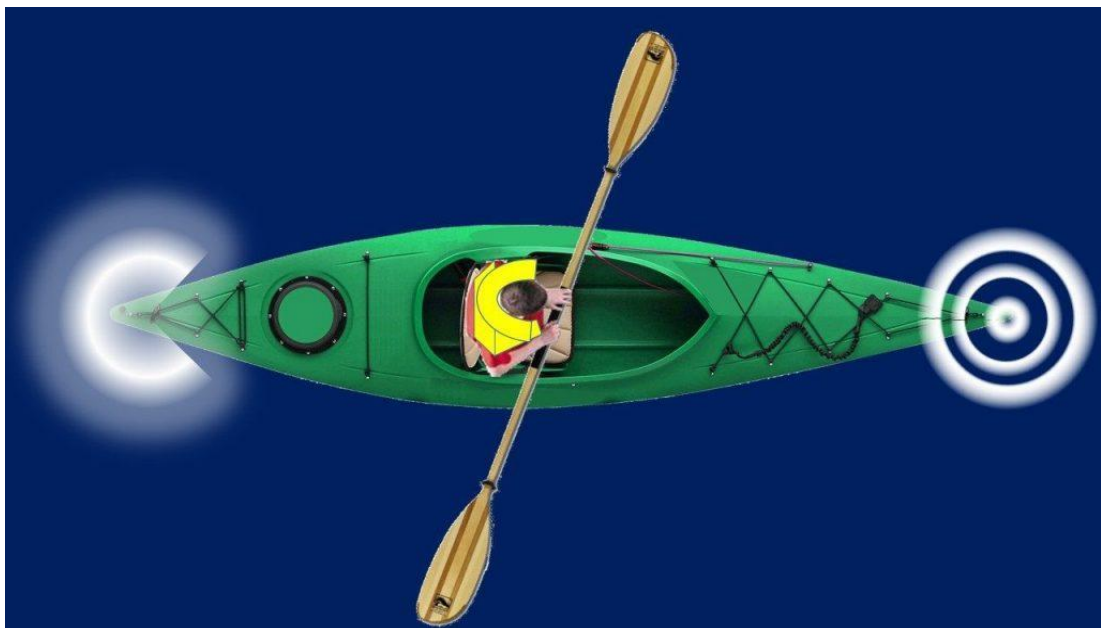
Life Jackets must be worn at all times and can be:

- AS 4758 Level 50 or Level 50S in inland lakes and rivers (classified as Smooth Waters); or
- AS 4758 Level 50 or level 50S in Sheltered Waters (all waters within 2 nautical miles / 3.7kilometres to seaward of the mainland coast of Tasmania between Cape Grim across the north coast and down the east coast to South East Cape), or
- AS 4758 Level 100 in Coastal Waters. (Sea Kayakers are permitted to wear an AS4758 Level 50 jacket in Coastal Waters).



Lighting

When paddling before dawn or after dark, paddlers should display either a strobe light or an all-round white light visible at 360 degrees and visible from 1 nautical mile (1.85 kilometres).



Tethering

A tethering device or leash is mandatory when paddling more than 200m from shore. The type of craft you are paddling will determine how best to use a tether. Generally, those people paddling a sit-on-top kayak or ocean ski would tether themselves to the craft and sea kayakers and canoeists would tether their paddle to the craft, as these crafts do not drift as fast as sit-on-top and skis. More information can be found at <https://mast.tas.gov.au/safe-boating/paddle-craft-paddle-safe/>

Trip Planning

When planning a paddle, a number of important considerations need to be made to ensure time on the water is both safe and enjoyable. This reference document details these considerations and guides paddlers through the preparation needed prior to paddling.

Trip Planning Mobile App

Paddle Australia has developed the Paddle Prep App for paddlers of all levels, from beginners to those who are already hooked on paddling.

The Deckee App is also available to assist with trip planning.

Both apps aim to provide guidance and education on trip planning and encourage paddlers to develop their knowledge before they hit the water. Appendix 1 shows QR codes and further information on these apps.



Weather forecasts

Smartphones allow easy and instant access to weather reports. The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) issues two forecasts a day at 0530 and 1630. These are available almost instantly, and warnings are issued between forecasts when required.

(http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/meteye/?loc=TAS_FA001)

Paddlers should obtain the very latest forecast available to them prior to commencing their trip.

Access to weather is available via BoM, Deckee, or the Paddle Prep App. The Deckee App displays push notifications of warnings for your operating area almost immediately.

Let Someone Know Before You Go

Let someone know before you go and tell them where you are going. Paddlers can create and share trip information using either the Paddle Prep or Deckee apps.

Wind and Paddling - A Major Safety Consideration

- The effects of wind on paddling are very significant and regularly influence paddlers' decision-making about paddle trip safety and paddling route planning.
- Limit your trips to conditions of a maximum of 10 knots if you're a beginner paddler, especially when paddling in a novice group or without an experienced paddler. As you gain more confidence, you can test yourself in slightly stronger winds.
- If it already seems a little too windy, don't head out on a day with an increasing wind forecast. In the summer months it is common to experience a sea breeze from the middle of the day. This is usually forecast.
- Be aware of wind direction. If you head out with a strong wind behind you, it may be very hard to get back.
- Misjudging wind direction, strength and your paddle route can ruin a paddle outing and quickly put a paddler in great danger of losing control, getting blown offshore and possibly needing rescue by emergency services.
- Wind strength often increases as distance offshore increases (meaning there is more wind present offshore than at the shoreline). This occurs when the wind is blowing offshore.

Tides, Rain, Currents and Rapids

- Paddlers should understand tidal movement before going out on the water. It is essential to discuss this information with everyone present before launching. Information on tides is available at <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/tides/#!/tas> or via the Deckee App.
- Paddlers need to be aware of how rain events can affect river levels and currents. Heavy rainfall increases freshwater flow, which can significantly alter the characteristics of a river stretch. Along with stronger currents and more challenging rapids, there is also a higher likelihood of debris being present in the water. Always paddle within your skill level, and ensure you have safety training and proper preparedness. Local knowledge and experience are invaluable.
- Paddlers should be aware of the increased strength of tides and currents around river mouths.

Safe Operation

When navigating or paddling in shared waterways, you are likely to encounter ocean swimmers, commercial and recreational vessels, other paddlers, and even seaplanes. Pick a paddling location away from busy areas. To ensure safety, follow these guidelines:

Avoid Larger Vessels: Stay well clear of larger vessels and avoid entering shipping channels. Paddlers should wear bright clothing and caps to enhance visibility for other water users.

Enhance Visibility: Apply reflective tape to either side of the bow to make it easier to locate with a torch in low-light conditions or if lights fail. Also, attach reflective tape to your paddle blades to increase visibility.

Follow Navigation Rules: As outlined in the *International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea*, paddlers should keep as far to the starboard side (right-hand side) of narrow waterways as is safe and practical. Be mindful of water depth and potential obstructions. This practice helps ensure water users travelling in opposite directions pass on each other's port side.

Communications

- Paddlers must be aware of their need to communicate in an emergency or advise someone of a change in plan. It is highly recommended that paddlers carry a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch and/or a hand-held (VHF) marine radio.
- VHF radio Channel 16 is used to raise the alarm in an emergency or dial 000 on a mobile phone.

If paddling in "Coastal Waters", a VHF marine radio **MUST** be carried. A VHF *Short Range Operator Certificate of Proficiency (SROCP)* is required to operate a VHF radio.

An Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) or a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) must also be carried. Coastal Waters are defined in Marine and Safety Tasmania's Operational Areas map in Appendix 2.

Self-Rescue

- Learn how to self-rescue, i.e. get back into your boat and get yourself out of trouble. Investing time in learning these skills could save your life.
- **If you can't self-rescue, don't go out alone.**

Cold Water Immersion Information

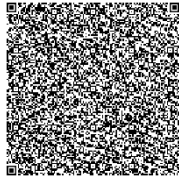
- Water temperature in Tasmania rarely gets above 20°C.
- The risk of drowning increases nearly five times if the water temperature is below 15°C.
- All research points to the fact that by wearing a life jacket, the chances of survival are far greater.
- Dress appropriately - wear warm clothing.
- Tables detailing the three stages of cold-water immersion and survival times are included in Appendix 5.

Labelling your Paddle Craft

It is advisable to label your paddle craft with your name and contact number. This could help emergency services locate you more easily in an emergency.

Prohibited Areas for Navigation (Paddlers and Boaters)

Schedule 5 of the *Marine and Safety (General) Regulations 2023* designates certain areas as "No Paddle Zones," where navigation by paddle craft is strictly prohibited. These areas often contain significant hazards that pose a serious risk to life, such as water intakes for hydroelectric power generation. A comprehensive list of Prohibited Areas for Navigation is available at the following link: [Marine and Safety Tasmania \(General\) Regulations 2023](#)



Marine and Safety (General) Regulations 2023

Choosing a Paddle Craft

Stand-Up Paddleboard (SUP)

Flat water stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is a popular leisure activity across Tasmania, enjoyed in calm, smooth water conditions. It is considered a fair-weather sport, best suited for winds below 12 knots (22 km/h). Beyond this threshold, the surface of the water becomes increasingly choppy, which can destabilise the board and impede movement, while wind resistance against a standing paddler can push them in the wind's direction.

Stand-up paddleboarding is particularly sensitive to wind, and conditions can become unsafe as winds strengthen. It's important to note that wind speeds often increase farther offshore, meaning it may be windier on the water than it appears from the shoreline.

Surfing on a SUP is an advanced skill and should be initially undertaken in clean, small, 'soft', or 'weak' waves. The locations where these conditions can be found vary depending on local weather conditions.

Sit-On-Top Kayaks

Sit-on-top kayaks are inexpensive and easily accessible. They are best suited to smooth waters and are very popular with families, providing an ideal way to learn how to paddle. They are also very popular during holiday periods and in the warmer months.

Recreational Kayak

Recreational kayaks are typically described as having a closed-over form with a cockpit the paddler sits inside. Whitewater or sea/surf kayakers fit 'skirts' over the cockpit opening to keep splashing water out. However, not all recreational kayaks are suitable for whitewater, even with the addition of a skirt.

Ocean/Surf Ski

Ocean ski paddling is popular both inside the Australian Surf Life Saving Club system and outside for fitness, recreation and in club or group settings. Ocean skis are extremely light, sleek and unstable. They glide through the water with little resistance and can reach higher speeds than other paddle craft.

Sea Kayak

Sea kayaking can occur in smooth, sheltered and coastal waters. It usually occurs in a sit-in kayak with a skirt, so you are fully enclosed in the boat. Most sea kayaks have rudders or skegs to help with steering and tracking. Sea kayaks are more comfortable and stable than skis but are often slower. Sea kayaks have the option to store “gear” in hatches. Sea kayaks can enable multiday trips with campovers and paddling further offshore. However, such trips involve risk and require meticulous planning.

White Water Kayaks

White water kayaks are sit-in boats designed to be used with a skirt. They do not have rudders, so steering the kayak relies on using a paddle, boat placement and water flow. Wearing a helmet is essential when paddling in white water to protect against head injuries from rocks in the river. Paddling in white-water kayaks, pack rafts, and white-water rafts is a popular activity on many fast-flowing rivers in Tasmania. World-class slalom courses can be found in the Forth River and at Brady’s Lake.

Fishing Kayak

Fishing from a kayak can vary from using a traditional rod on a standard kayak or canoe to using a specially designed paddle-powered kayak.

Dragon Boats

Dragon boating is typically a group activity conducted in a club setting, often involving larger groups of participants. Dragon boat clubs are located across the state and generally paddle in waterways close to their club facilities and population centres.

Pack Raft

Pack rafts are inflatable kayaks designed for whitewater use. Compared to traditional kayaks, they are lighter and easier to transport over rough terrain. Packrafting often involves walking upriver or upstream for a considerable distance—sometimes for days—before inflating the narrow-style raft and paddling downstream.

Canoe

Recreational canoes are usually pointed at both ends and open on top. Canadian canoes, a common type, feature seats and are designed for use in rivers, light rapids, and smooth and sheltered waters. They are typically paddled with a single-blade paddle.

Choosing A Craft?

Levels

1. Sheltered inland waters.
2. Coastal waterways with easy access to shore.
3. Ocean Paddling with no immediate access to land.
4. Surf and White Water.

SIT ON TOP
Level 1, 4

Sheltered Inland Waters,
Surf or Coastal

SEA KAYAK
Level 1, 2, 3

Sheltered Inland Waters
or Sea

**STAND UP
PADDLE BOARD**
Level 1, 4

Sheltered Inland Waters,
Surf or Coastal

FLAT WATER
Level 1

Sheltered Inland Waters

WHITE WATER
Level 1, 4

Sheltered Inland Waters
White Water or Surf

Essential Safety Equipment



Using Shared Waterways

Cruise Ships, Ferries & Commercial Vessels

- Paddlers intending to paddle around port areas where commercial vessels operate should confirm when cruise ships and commercial vessels will be arriving in ports, including Hobart, Bell Bay, Devonport, and Burnie. Arrival times are generally early morning, which is when some people paddle. It is highly recommended and encouraged that at least one paddler carries a hand-held VHF radio switched onto Ch 12 to enable communication with Tasports Vessel Traffic Services (VTS). The QR code below provides a link to shipping movements and should be checked prior to departure on the water.



Tasports Shipping Schedule

The shipping schedule is also available via

<https://www.tasports.com.au/shipping-schedule-all>

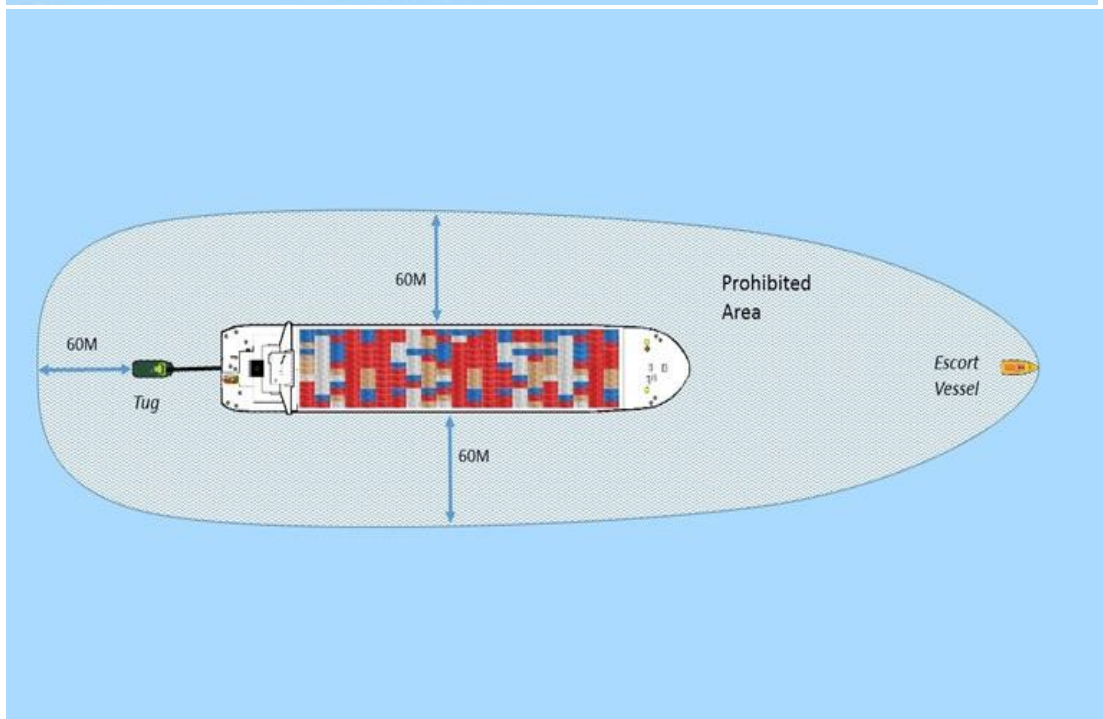
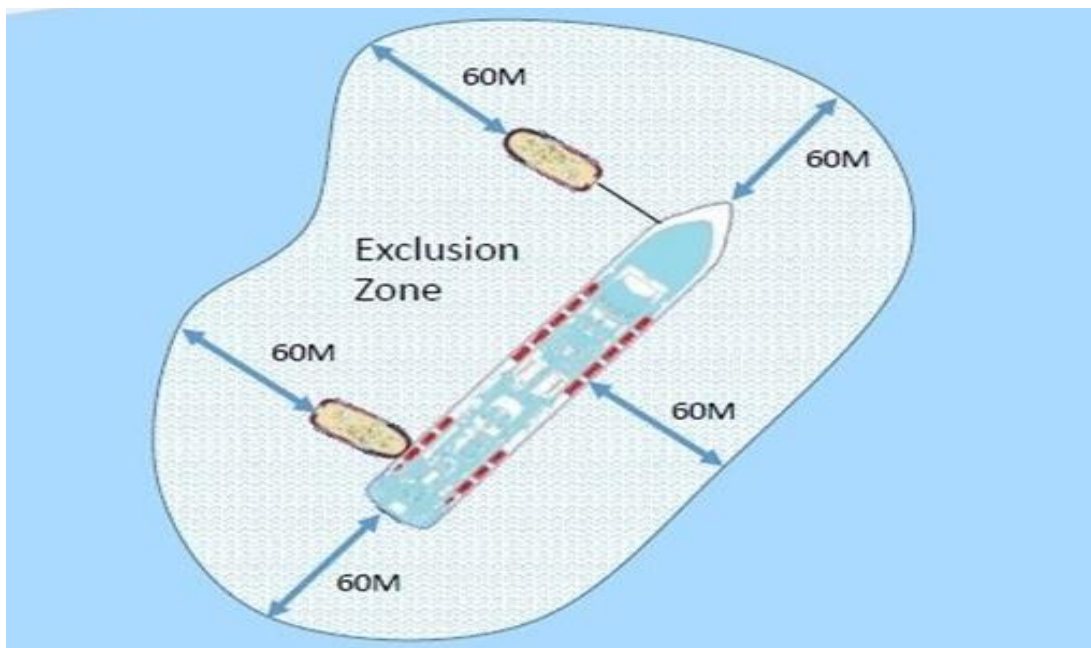
- Paddlers should be aware that if a ship or commercial vessel, such as a ferry, is concerned or unclear of a paddler's actions, five rapid blasts may be sounded in accordance with the *International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea* to alert the paddler.
- Carrying a VHF radio will allow paddlers direct communication with commercial vessels if required.

General Tasports' Advice to Paddlers

- Paddlers are very difficult to see from the bridge of a ship, especially in low-light conditions.
- The wash from large vessels can be unpredictable, so it is important to give them a wide berth.
- Large vessels are typically difficult to manoeuvre; paddlers must maintain a safe distance at all times.
- Paddlers will be difficult to detect on ships' radar or shore-based CCTV.
- Tasports Vessel Tracking System (VTS) is available for information on VHF Channels 12 (Hobart), 14 (Burnie, Devonport, Launceston) and 16 on a 24/7 basis.

Exclusion Zones and Prohibited Areas

- A 90-metre exclusion zone exists around any vessel that is under pilotage and engaged in berthing operations. Only vessels engaged in assisting with the berthing operation are permitted to operate within the exclusion zone. Paddlers should be aware that tug wash can be dangerous.
- There is a prohibited area of 60 metres on either side of any vessel under pilotage. If that vessel is accompanied by an escort vessel (blue flashing light), you cannot pass between the escort vessel or the vessel under pilotage.
- A vessel under pilotage control is identified by a red and white vertical flag.



- Some vessels have a pilotage exemption. The same rules apply to a vessel under pilotage, but pilot-exempt vessels are identified by a white flag. Pilot-exempt vessels will generally be seen on the River Derwent and often include larger fish farm vessels.
- Waterside-restricted security zones apply to certain TasPorts wharves and vessel activities. Additionally, cargo and routine operations of vessels may pose a hazard on the waterside of vessels. At times, vessels may also operate a ship's propulsion system, such as thrusters, to hold the vessel alongside the berth in elevated wind conditions. Paddlers should maintain a distance, where possible, of **not less than 50 metres** from any TasPorts wharf when there is a vessel at a berth in port.
- Paddlers must make themselves aware of any Notices to Mariners that may have been issued that could impact their activity. Notices to Mariners are found on www.mast.tas.gov.au/noticestomariners
- The Deckee App provides push notifications of Notices to Mariners when issued for your area of operation.

Reporting of Incidents

Under the *Marine and Safety (Maritime Incidents) Regulations 2017*, an incident must be reported to MAST as soon as possible.

A maritime incident relevant to 'lightweight craft' paddlers may include:

- the collision or near collision of a vessel with another vessel or with another object; or
- a significant incident resulting in death or serious injury to a person.

Incident forms are available on the MAST website:

<https://www.mast.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Incident-Report-Form-November-2017.pdf>

Under the *Marine and Safety (Maritime Incidents) Regulations 2017*, MAST may investigate a maritime incident by appointing an investigator.

Reporting incidents provides important learning for ongoing education.

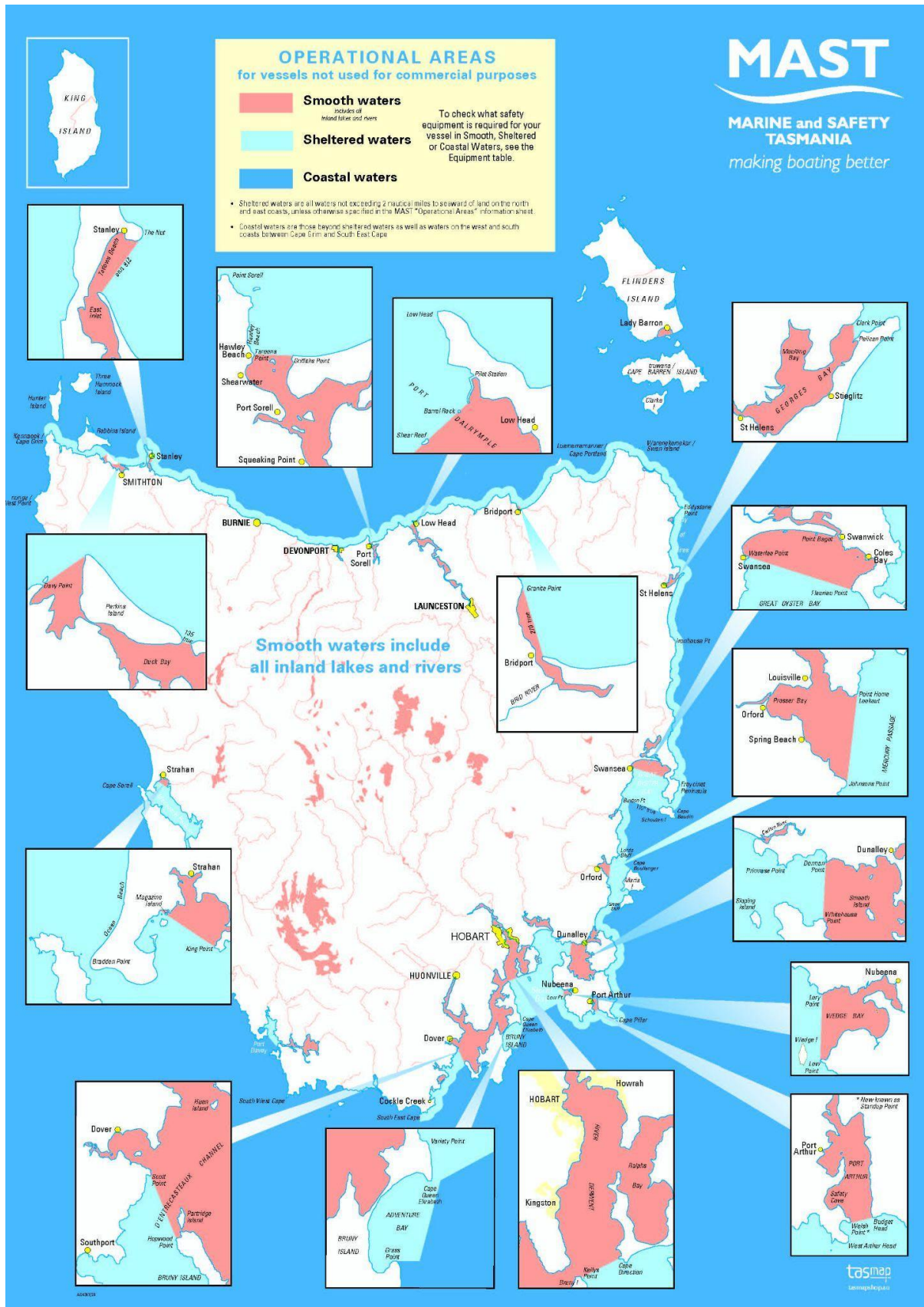
This document has been compiled by MAST and Paddle Tasmania, with input from Surf Life Saving Tasmania and Tasports.

Disclaimer

The protocols and warnings contained in this document, 'Making Paddling Safer in Tasmania,' are current at the date of the last update and are provided for information purposes only to assist clubs, schools, coaches, recreational and community paddlers and other connected parties ('Participants') with the health and safety of the sport of paddling. Paddling Tasmania Inc. and its sponsors, by this publication or at all, accept no responsibility in relation to the health and safety of those participating or connected to the sport of paddling. Participants are urged to develop their own health and safety procedures in consultation with appropriate advice, with protocols and warnings that are adapted to their own circumstances. The protocols and warnings herein published may well need to be supplemented by further and other measures referable to the Participants' individual circumstances. Participants engage in the sport of paddling at their own risk.

Updated February 2025

APPENDIX 1 – MAST Operational Areas Map



APPENDIX 2 – How To Choose a Craft that is Right for You

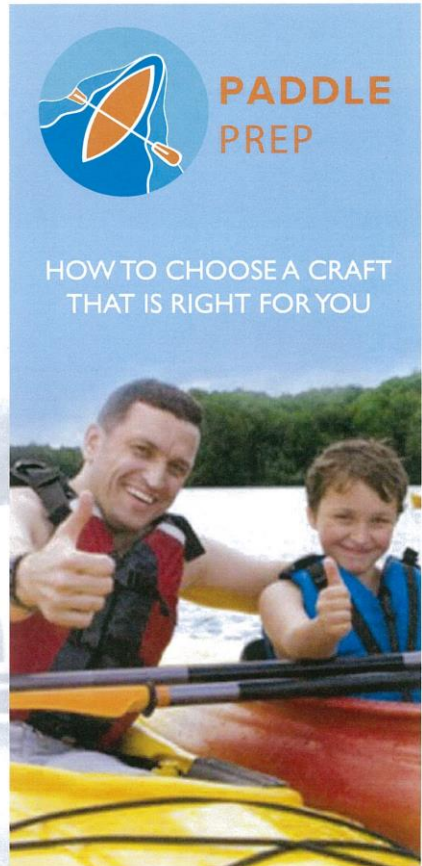


PADDLING CODE

- Wear a Life Jacket
- Tell someone wear you are going
- Paddle with a friend
- Keep a look-out
- Carry Communication
- Know your personal limits
- Know your craft & equipment limits
- Check the weather, tides & river levels
- Dress for the conditions & forecast
- Learn some paddling & rescue skills



FURTHER INFORMATION
www.canoe.org.au/paddle-prep



APPENDIX 3 – Paddle Australia – Paddle Smart



Being safe on the water starts with always wearing your lifejacket. A properly fitted lifejacket feels snug and comfortable to wear. Find out more about lifejackets on the Paddle Prep app.



Let someone know before you go and tell them where you are going. Using the Paddle Prep app, create and share a float plan.



Stay clear of large vessels and keep out of shipping channels. Learn the right-of-way rules. You must always navigate on the right (starboard) side of a river or channel.



Paddle within your limits – and that includes your craft, your experience, the conditions on the day and your level of skills. Be realistic about your fitness and capabilities and save strength for the return journey.



Check the weather before any paddling trip. Use Paddle Prep to save your favourite location for quick and easy access to the most recent BOM forecast.



Stay attached – using a paddle leash will help prevent you being separated from your paddle if you capsize. If you do end up in the water, stay with your craft as it will be easier for rescuers to see you.



Paddle craft sit low to the water and can be difficult for other craft to see. Make yourself visible by wearing bright clothes and using reflective tape on your paddle. Consider fitting a flag to your craft and



You may need to communicate in an emergency or advise someone of a change of plan. Check out the option for communication in the Paddle Prep app.



Keep watch for what is ahead, behind, and to either side of you. At all times, look out for other craft, swimmers, and potential danger.

use a bright all-round light at night.

APPENDIX 4 Essential Apps

- **Deckee - Mobile App for Boating - Marine and Safety Tasmania**



- **Paddle Australia – Paddle Prep App**



Paddle Australia's Paddle Prep App has been designed for all paddlers, from those who are new to paddle sports to those who are already hooked on this great lifelong activity. The objective of Paddle Prep is to provide guidance and education on safety matters to encourage paddlers to develop their skills, knowledge and experience safely while having fun on the water.

On Paddle Prep, you can:

- Discover 'top tips' before going paddling
- Watch a demonstration of paddle strokes and rescues
- Search for places to go paddling around Australia
- Prepare, save and email your trip intentions to a friend
- Find weather, tides, swell and river levels for your paddling location
- Research what equipment you may need for your type of paddling
- Find equipment lists for day and overnight trips
- Search for national and state paddling and maritime organisations
- Search for training providers and Paddle Australia Instructors

Paddle Prep is available on Apple and Android.

APPENDIX 5 – Cold Water Immersion

Sea Temp °C	T-Shirt and Shorts		Light Wetsuit and Life Jacket	
	Functional Time	Survival Time	Functional Time	Survival Time
0°C	1.1 hours	2.3 hours	1.8 hours	3.6 hours
4°C	1.4 hours	2.9 hours	2.7 hours	4.8 hours
8°C	2.0 hours	3.9 hours	4.3 hours	7.2 hours
12°C	3.5 hours	6.1 hours	8.1 hours	12.2 hours
16°C	7.6 hours	11.6 hours	16.8 hours	23.5 hours

THREE PHASES OF COLD-WATER IMMERSION

1:10:1 PRINCIPLE

1 MINUTE: COLD SHOCK RESPONSE

The body's response to cold water is to increase breathing to a rapid rate, which can cause you to inhale water. A sudden shock of cold-water immersion can also cause a heart attack in some people.

10 MINUTES: COLD INCAPACITATION

After 10 minutes, cold water can cause swim failure due to blood vessels in your arms and legs constricting. This makes it difficult to keep your muscles moving properly, which then makes it difficult to swim, wave for help, or grab a throw ring, which can quickly lead to drowning.

WEARING A LIFE JACKET GREATLY REDUCES THE POSSIBILITY OF DROWNING FROM SWIM FAILURE

1 HOUR: HYPOTHERMIA

When the body drops below 35°C (normal is approximately 36.5°C), hypothermia occurs, which results in uncontrolled shivering and mental confusion.

If body temperature continues to drop, unconsciousness will occur, followed by death.