

Kayaking, canoeing and stand up paddling (SUP) are becoming increasingly popular in Norway, both along the coast and in lakes and rivers.

Paddling offers endless opportunities to exercise and explore nature. Sadly, serious accidents happen every year.

Skills and knowledge are key to safe paddling. This brochure provides you with information on how to stay safe when paddling.

We wish you a safe and enjoyable time on the water.

*Best regards, Norwegian Maritime Authority*



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## Safety code for paddlers

1. **Choose a boat appropriate for your skills and trip.**
2. **Check that the equipment is in good condition.**
3. **Dress for the water temperature. Bring extra clothing.**
4. **Always wear an approved lifejacket.**
5. **Do not overestimate your ability. Practice your rescue skills.**
6. **If you capsize, hang on to your boat or paddle.**
7. **Avoid paddling in poor weather conditions, and always check the forecast before you set out.**
8. **Keep a safe distance from other boats. Make sure to be seen.**
9. **Learn life-saving skills.**
10. **Be environmentally conscious, treat nature with respect, and leave no traces.**



## Stay safe paddling - kayak, canoe and SUP



Photo: Jan Hausken

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# Stay safe paddling

## 1. Take a paddling course

You will be introduced to the equipment, paddling techniques, safety rules, rescue techniques and risks involved with paddling. WetCard (Våttkort) is the course programme of the Norwegian Canoe Association and consists of several different paddle courses. Some countries offer equivalent courses that result in certificates, such as the "Paddle Pass".

Many commercial hire companies, clubs and associations renting out canoes or kayaks require a paddle certificate. The largest paddler group are those who use a kayak or canoe for training purposes, day and overnight trips or excursions from their cabin. People in this group benefit greatly from the introductory and/or basic course in sea kayaking or canoeing. Contact your nearest club for more information.

## 2. Practice

To stay safe in the canoe, kayak or SUP it is particularly important to practise self and buddy rescue. Know your own limits.

## 3. Wear a lifejacket

Wearing a personal flotation device is required on boats of less than 8 metres in length. The same requirement applies to kayaks, canoes and SUP boards. Once you are in the water, it is not easy to put the lifejacket on. In addition, it is important to make sure that you float before you help others. The lifejacket should be put on correctly and fit snugly. A lot of people wear inflatable lifejackets. These are not recommended

for canoeing and kayaking, but there are a number of quality paddle lifejackets on the market. Make sure you use one that is CE marked and in good order.

## 4. Be visible and properly dressed

As a paddler you are not easily visible to larger and faster boats, which makes you very vulnerable. Get to know your local fairway and other areas with heavy traffic. Due to poor visibility you should paddle along the coast. Make sure to cross fairways quickly and effectively. Wearing colourful clothing, paddling in groups, keeping close to the shore and using headlights will improve your safety. In addition, you can fit lights at the back and front of your lifejacket and use a reflector. This is particularly important in low visibility conditions, for instance at dusk and night. Wearing a dry suit will extend the paddling season and also improve safety considerably. You should use a wet suit when the sea temperature rises. Remember that the water temperature is not equal to the air temperature. It is always a good idea to bring spare clothing in a waterproof bag.

## 5. Bring waterproof communication devices

Prepare a plan for how to get help for yourself or others. It is a good idea to keep your mobile phone in a waterproof bag, preferably close to your body. The Norwegian emergency services have Advanced Mobile Location technology (AML), which is compatible with most types of smartphones. This technology allows the operator to track your location when you dial 110, 112 or 113.

Moreover, you can download the Norwegian Air Ambulance Foundation's app called "Hjelp 113", which enables you to send your location to an emergency operator. At sea, the nearest coastal radio station is

reached by dialling telephone number 120. Some areas suffer from poor mobile coverage. There are many different types of communication devices that can provide additional safety, such as hand-held VHF/DSC equipment or various types of satellite emergency position-indicating radio beacons. Find out what is recommended for your paddling area.

**After a capsized, call for help if you are unable to get back on board within reasonable time.**

## 6. Check the weather forecast

Weather conditions can change quickly. Check the forecast regularly. We recommend the websites yr.no, storm.no, windy.com and the Norwegian Coastal Administration's app "Kystvær" (Coastal weather). Let someone know where you are going and what time you plan to be back.

## 7. Choose a suitable kayak

There is a variety of kayaks available. When choosing the right kayak for you, you should ask for advice at a club, talk to other paddlers and try out different models.

## 8. Equipment

There are a lot of accessories on the market, such as paddle bags, paddle leashes, spray skirts and pumps. What you need depends on the type of boat you have and the type of trip you are planning. We recommend that you take a paddle course, which will introduce you to the equipment and teach you how to use it safely. If you intend to paddle on a SUP board, an ankle strap will prevent the SUP from drifting away if you fall into the water.

Have a great time paddling  
- and always wear a lifejacket!

