

Risk Assessment – SUP Induction / Refresher (Supervised) – River Itchen

Activity: SUP Induction / Refresher (Supervised) – River Itchen

Location: River Itchen, Southampton (St Denys Boat Club area)

Activity Type: Supervised Session (skills & safety familiarisation)

Date last reviewed: 23 January 2026

Assessor: James Wardle

Reviewed by:

Review due: January 2027

Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers supervised stand-up paddleboard (SUP) induction and refresher sessions on the River Itchen in the vicinity of St Denys Boat Club.

The session focuses on safe launching/landing, basic paddling skills, turning and stopping, self-rescue (remount), and group safety. The river is generally sheltered, but currents, cold water, and other water users can increase risk.

Supervision is active: a nominated lead supervises and manages the group, with additional helpers where required.

Additional Controls (Activity Specific)

- Pre-session briefing: boundaries, expected behaviour, signals, hazards (bridges, debris, anglers), and the plan if separated.
- Mandatory equipment: buoyancy aid, suitable clothing for immersion, leash policy agreed for river use (waist leash preferred; avoid ankle leash near snag hazards), and suitable footwear.
- Remount practice carried out in a controlled area with close supervision; no remount practice near bridges, moorings, or obstructions.
- Ratio and supervision: keep novice numbers manageable; consider 1:4 or better; add an assistant for larger groups.

- Weather/temperature controls: cancel/shorten if wind makes boards hard to control or if cold conditions increase immersion risk beyond participant kit.
- Check boards before launch (fin secure, leash quick release working, inflation pressure, no damage).
- Buddy system used for novices; headcounts at regular intervals.

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures	Risk Level	Further Actions
Falling in / immersion	All participants (especially novices)	Cold shock, panic, hypothermia, drowning	Appropriate clothing for conditions; buoyancy aids worn; supervised remount instruction; keep close to bank where safe; stop session if repeated immersion leads to fatigue/cold.	Medium	Shorten session in cold conditions; provide warm-up plan
Separation / drifting	All participants	Loss of group control; delayed assistance	Define boundaries and regroup points; buddy system; leader positions (lead + sweep where needed); headcounts; conservative route into wind/current first.	Low-Medium	Turn back early if control deteriorates
Leash entanglement / snag	Participants	Entrapment risk, injury	Use waist leash with quick release where possible; brief and demonstrate quick release; avoid leashes near known snags; keep away from overhanging trees/debris.	Low-Medium	Check quick releases before launch
Collision with other users (canoes, kayaks, rowers)	Participants and other users	Injury / capsize	Keep to agreed side; look ahead; slow down near traffic; avoid blocking channels; clear instructions for passing and regrouping.	Low-Medium	Adjust timing/area if busy
Trips/slips at slipway/pontoon	All participants	Sprains, cuts	Controlled launch/landing; assist novices; keep area clear; no running; footwear recommended; adequate lighting if dusk.	Low	Use alternative access point if needed
Medical issue / fatigue	Participants	Injury/illness, delayed response	Encourage disclosure; regular breaks; easy exit options; carry phone and first aid kit; leader monitors signs of cold/fatigue.	Low-Medium	Record emergency contacts for supervised sessions

General Notes

- Leads/organisers remain responsible for dynamic risk assessment and adapting the activity to conditions and participant ability.
- Participants must follow instructions, communicate concerns promptly, and be honest about competence and health.
- This risk assessment should be reviewed annually or following any incident or near miss.