

Safety Talk Outline-

This is presented as an outline for a guide to deliver to whitewater river rafters and is provided here to familiarize the rafters with the topics to be discussed. All of the following topics are to be elaborated and demonstrated by experienced, professional, and fully licensed guides. This outline is not intended to be an all-inclusive substitute for an actual "Safety Talk" or a Pre-Trip Orientation.

- ◆ Friendly introductions.
- ◆ Welcome to the exciting, wild and scenic, Lochsa River.
- ◆ We will be doing a day of class 4 boating and each boat will be working together as a unified paddle team.
- ◆ Boat Buddy System- we are all in it together and we need each person on the trip to contribute by paddling, listening to your guide, and being aware of what is going on.
- ◆ It is important to pay attention to the information covered in this safety talk – if something unexpected and/or unplanned happens today on our river trip, it will be very important to know how to react to that situation. This safety talk is designed to address many of these potential issues. Understanding the topics covered is critical to the enjoyment and safety of the day.
- ◆ Each person here should have three personal goals for the day: stay in the boat, be a self-rescuer, and have fun! These first two goals will be explained in detail. The third goal, having fun, is easy to attain – everybody has fun!
- ◆ How to stay in the boat – demonstrate paddling positions, how paddling helps a person to stay in the raft, "hunkering down", etc. When these techniques are being demonstrated please pay attention to your guide. These tools are essential to staying safe, staying in the boat, and can make the difference in a fun trip.
- ◆ But if you do fall in, be a self rescuer- this not to say that your guides and your friends will not be trying to provide assistance to your rescue. Being a self-rescuer is more about taking control of the situation that you may find yourself in and working towards alleviating that situation ASAP- with or without the help of others.
- ◆ Demonstrate 1) whitewater safety swimmers position AND, 2) aggressive crawl-stroke swimming. Again as a person about to go on the river, it is important that you pay attention to the guide during these demonstrations.
- ◆ Topics explained and demonstrated: 1) try for a "quick rescue"- the sooner the better, 2) holding on to your paddle- we will need to propel the raft and it can be used as an extension of reach, 3) There is a "safety line" that is attached to the outside of the raft, 4)

being pulled in by the lapels of the PFD– that is why you need to have proper PFD adjustment.

- ◆ Proper PFD adjustment – All straps need to be buckled and tightened securely. Check and test all the straps on guest PFDs and show them how to test the adjustment. When you think your PFD is tight enough; go tighter. During the day be sure to check your PFD and tighten it when necessary. Your PFD will be the “handles” used to pull you into the boat.
- ◆ We want you to get out of the water as soon as possible. This water can be very cold we want to avoid a prolonged swim because it can increase your chances of becoming hypothermic. A prolonged swim in cold water is also tiring. The quicker you are back into the boat the better you will feel as the day goes along.
- ◆ If you fall in and find that the current is causing you to become separated from the raft there is a real “window of opportunity” that a swimmer needs to capitalize on to get back to the raft. This goes back to the “quick rescue” principal – the sooner you get back to the raft, the better. Be aware that there is a point where getting back to the raft may be impractical and/or impossible. DO NOT PANIC, remain calm and listen to the guide, he/she will direct you to safety.
- ◆ In certain situations, situations where getting back to the raft may be impractical and/or impossible it is okay to go to the shore. If possible, it is best to go to the “road side” shore. Pay attention to the guide and if possible swim toward a nearby boat, other boats are always in rescue mode for swimmers and the object is to get out of the water as quickly as possible.
- ◆ At most water levels the Lochsa River is considered a “Pool-Drop” river. This means that there is a pool and then there is a drop, and so on. Another way of saying this is that there are calm spots between each rapid. Often times, if a person falls out during a rapid they wash down to the calm spot and rescue is made a lot easier by this situation.
- ◆ Explain that there is not always a clear course of action while swimming the Lochsa River. Each swimmer will have to exercise personal judgment. One of the most important things is to remain calm and to be aware of the current situation. Be ready to react to the ever-changing conditions and follow your guide’s instructions.
- ◆ Demonstrate and elaborate: 1) breathing in the trough (low part) of the waves, 2) not being in the danger zone between the raft and any upcoming obstacles, 3) how to swim a “strainer”. Again as a boater, pay attention to the guide during these demonstrations.
- ◆ Rescue ropes or “throw ropes” can be a huge assist to a person that is far away from the raft. Demonstrate what the rescue rope is,

how to receive a throw rope, and how to be pulled back to the raft with the help of a rope- 1) pulled in "backwards", 2) over the shoulder or under the arm. Explain the dangers of the rope – never wrap it around yourself, getting caught, etc. Drop the rope and get away if deemed necessary. Again as a boater pay attention to the guide during these demonstrations.

- ◆ Hand signals to a swimmer or another raft – guides "point positive"- they want you to go in the direction that they are pointing, the okay signal, the stop signal, the proceed signal, and improvised hand signals...
- ◆ The raft hitting rocks and other obstacles, "high-siding" explained and how to respond to the command.
- ◆ Explain what a flipped boat situation is like and how to react to it. Coming up under the boat, returning to raft, head count...
- ◆ T grips- please always hold onto your paddle's "t-grip". Doing so can prevent your t-grip from hitting somebody else. Emphasize "in boat" safety. Bags, ropes, straps, paddles, shoulders, and heads can all lead to injury if a boater is not paying attention.
- ◆ No Diving or jumping off of the rocks or the raft- ever.
- ◆ Foot entrapment explained- don't stand up in water deeper than your knees.
- ◆ Most accident happen close to shore – slippery rocks, use caution.
- ◆ Anybody with medical concerns we should know about? (This is a dbl check because the guests have had the chance to inform us before this point). If so you can tell one of your guides now or in private before we go. A boater's personal responsibility is the REAL assessment of ability and health. Any issue however small should be shared with your guide prior to the trip. All issues remain confidential and are used to ensure your safety.
- ◆ Questions from the group?
- ◆ "I know that there have been some scary situations presented in this safety talk. The safety talk is actually designed to present you with all of these situations. Guys, it is very likely that we will not encounter any of these situations today BUT if we do, we want you to be prepared. Just listen to your guide, wear your PFD correctly, paddle hard, and be aware. Doing these things will greatly reduce the chance of an incident.
- ◆ Is there anybody that would like to sit out? You have the choice to sit out and ride with our driver for the day if you would like. You are not obligated to go on the river!
- ◆ Now each guide addresses his or her individual paddle crew. Discuss paddle commands ("The Paddle Talk"). This may be done while still on the shore or it can be done after shoving off, while in the calm water.

These safety techniques and topics are what help make white water river rafting a safe sport. In fact, a recent study conducted by American Whitewater finds that whitewater recreation is twice as safe as bicycling. The risks of whitewater paddling are quite manageable and are mitigated through this safety talk training, use of your personal floatation device (PFD), and the development of good personal judgment. The drive to the river is probably the most dangerous part of any whitewater trip...