Evacuation Plan
2026 Water Safety and Weather Emergency Evacuation Plan

I. Introduction: Weather Related Concerns

The Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival will be held rain or shine. There is no "rain date." The on-water dragon boat races cannot occur, however if either or both of two conditions prevail:

- Lightning
- Dangerously High Waves.

All dragon boat teams and steerspersons will be advised concerning on-water safety protocols prior to the Festival Date. Each team will be trained in on-water safety and boat capsize protocols at the pre-Festival practice.

The safety of the spectators and Festival participants that are not engaged in on-water activity is also a vital concern to the Festival organizers. This document will address the procedure to be utilized in the event that a weather emergency arises during the day.

II. Severe Weather/Lightning/Evacuation Plan

Forecast Consistently Monitored

Race officials (primarily the Race Director and the Race Management Team) will monitor the weather forecasts and satellite radar readings in advance of the Festival in order to be advised of the possibility of storm activity. In addition, the weather forecast will be monitored throughout the day via cell phone. Should cell service fail, race officials will consult the U.S. Coast Guard in their second-floor office to monitor approaching weather patterns. It is difficult to imagine circumstances where, aided by modern smart phone technology, the Festival staff will not be able to monitor approaching storm activity.

Suspension of Race Schedule

Should lightning occur that is within a 20-30-minute range of the Festival site, all racing events will be suspended until the lightning/storm activity has passed, typically 20 minutes from the last strike. Boats will be instructed to return to the closest point of shore and seek proper shelter as directed by the DHVT festival safety crew.

Evacuation of Festival Site

If severe inclement weather is observed on the satellite radar systems and such severe weather is approaching within 20 to 30 minutes of the Festival Site OR if the severe weather pattern is clearly discernible, then the Festival Site will be evacuated. The decision to evacuate will be made by the Race Director in consultation with the Race Management Team, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Burlington Police Department.

Police Department/Traffic Flow

Once the decision to evacuate the Festival Site has been made, the Police Department (if not already cognizant of the decision) must be immediately notified so that police officers will be able to facilitate traffic moving from the area.

Notice to Participants/Spectators

The decision to evacuate the Festival Site will be communicated as follows:

- Loudspeaker announcements (Festival announcers and entertainment tent announcers)

- Festival personnel/volunteers will visit each site in the Athlete's Village to advise the participants of the evacuation order and direct individuals to the evacuation sites.
- Festival personnel/volunteers will canvas the spectators' area to advise of the evacuation order and direct spectators to the evacuation sites.
- This Water Safety and Weather Emergency Evacuation Plan will be posted on the Festival website.
- This Water Safety and Evacuation Plan will be provided, in advance of the Festival, to each team captain.
- This Water Safety and Evacuation Plan will be posted at the Registration Tent and a copy provided to each team participating in the Festival.

Evacuation Sites

- Personal vehicles parked within the immediate area
- Burlington City Parking Garage behind Hilton Hotel
- Union Station Lobby
- Main Street Landing – Underground Parking Garage
- ECHO
- Hilton Hotel Lobby
- Numerous area restaurants

III. Water Safety

Suspension of Races due to Wave Activity

Should high winds or other circumstance result in high waves within the breakwater area, then the decision to suspend racing activity will be made by the Race Director in consultation with the Race Management Team.

Moderate Wave Activity/Paddler Reduction

In the event of moderate wave activity that, in the view of the Race Director and Race Management Team, may substantially increase the likelihood of a capsizing event, interim solution(s) will be to (a) remove drummers from the dragon boats; and/or (b) reduce the number of paddlers per boat. The decision on whether to implement this interim solution will be made by the Race Director in consultation with the Race Management Team. If this modification in the race rules is implemented, the decision will be communicated as follows:

- Loudspeaker notification
- DHVT staff and volunteers will visit each team site in the athlete's village area
- Staging area managers, on deck managers and dock managers will check to ascertain that the correct number of paddlers board the boat.

Capsize Protocol

All teams will be advised concerning the capsize protocol at their training session. Should a team capsize, the steersperson will implement the capsize protocol. One or two of the safety boats/race marshals will immediately move to the area where the dragon boat has capsized and assist paddlers in the water. Once all paddlers that are in the water have been moved to safety, one of the safety boats will tow the capsized boat back to the dock area where it will be fully bailed out, checked for damage and either returned to service or removed from service.

In the event a dragon boat capsizes, experience has demonstrated that a number of the paddlers will likely swim to shore and climb up the rock embankment. In this event, a pre-selected crew of

volunteers (“The Rock Brigade”) will immediately move to the area where paddlers that have elected to swim ashore emerge from the water. The volunteers will provide assistance climbing the rock embankment. All “swimmers” will then be escorted to the first aid area to obtain towels/blankets and to ensure that there are no injuries.

Festival Water Patrols/On-Water Emergency Response

The US Coast Guard has ultimate authority to police the waters in Lake Champlain. The local Coast Guard station has agreed to have at least one auxiliary boat in the water at the race site throughout the day. The Festival will have at least two race marshal/safety boats in the water during each race.

IV. Modification of Race Schedule Due to Wave or Storm Activity

Every effort will be made to adhere to the established race schedule.

Should a delay occur due to wave or storm activity; and the delay is so lengthy as to render adherence to the original race schedule impossible, then the Race Director, in consultation with the Race Management Team, will modify the schedule.

Should the wave or storm activity occur during the first heat, the recommended modification will be to suspend the first heat and separate the crews into divisions and begin the play-down process.

Should the suspension occur during the second heat, then the recommended solution will be to base quarter final qualification for the championship heats on the first heat time.

Should the wave or storm activity occur during the championship finals, the races will be suspended until the wave or storm activity has passed. If the wave or storm activity is still in active progress when there is only one hour left before projected nightfall, then the championship finals will be either cancelled or postponed to an evening date later in the month.