

# Hazards of Paddling in High Water

## A Safety Note from the Outdoor Program and Safe Scouting Teams

Summer 2019



**Rivers are running high.** Heavy spring rains have led to flooding over large areas of the nation. Record water releases from many full reservoirs will continue even after the rains have passed. In addition, melting snowpacks are adding to the problem in some rivers.

This is also the season that many Scouts head to rivers for canoeing, kayaking, and whitewater rafting, either under their own leadership, assisted by a whitewater outfitter, as part of a BSA high adventure trek, or during an excursion at summer camp.

High water increases the risk of river paddling. Fatalities attributed to higher than normal water levels are being reported in the media. Checking water level should be a standard procedure in advance of any float trip. If the flow is high, it is likely prudent to delay or cancel the activity.

Various state and federal agencies provide online flow information for rivers. A good resource for that data is the American Canoe Association [Paddle Ready](#) app available for free download. [American Whitewater](#) also publishes details for individual rapids for many rivers.



**Resources:** In addition to the websites listed above, Scouts and leaders may learn more about paddling on moving water by consulting BSA references. [Aquatics Supervision](#) is the manual for the [Paddle Craft Safety](#) courses that supplement [Safety Afloat](#) knowledge with skill instruction. [Reading the Rhythms of Rivers and Rapids](#) is a joint BSA and American Canoe Association DVD used with the Paddle Craft Safety river modules. The video may be viewed [here](#). The [Whitewater Rafting BSA](#) brochure is available for free download from the Aquatics tab under Outdoor Programs at [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org). (Click menu on the main page.) [River Paddling](#) incident reviews cover actual cases of injuries and fatalities.

