

# STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDING

## Safety Guide



**Kia Mataara**

Know the ways of the water  
before you let go of the land



**Safer™  
Boating**

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# THE SUP SAFE CODE

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**WEAR THE CORRECT  
TYPE OF LEASH FOR  
THE CONDITIONS**

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**WEAR A  
BUOYANCY AID**

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**KNOW THE CONDITIONS,  
NOW AND FORECAST**

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**TAKE TWO WATERPROOF  
WAYS TO CALL FOR HELP**

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**TELL SOMEONE  
ONSHORE YOUR PLANS**

## Following the SUP Safe Code when you go out for a paddle will greatly reduce the risk of becoming a rescue statistic.

Stand-up paddleboarding is on the whole a pretty safe sport, as it is conducted at low speeds. However, like any water sport there is the potential for things to go wrong! And this is especially true here in New Zealand where the weather can often change rapidly.

So, however experienced a water-person you may be, we strongly advise that you follow the SUP Safe Code whenever you are going out for a paddle. Obviously if you are just splashing around at your local beach and never more than a few metres off shore, in shallow water, then

it's not so important. But if you're going more than, say, 100m offshore and/or travelling any significant distance from your starting point, then you really should follow this code. It's not difficult, it's not a hassle, it only adds a few extra seconds to your preparation, and could be the difference between a nice paddle and a horrible disaster.

The logo features a stylized figure of a person standing on a surfboard, positioned above the text 'SUP safe' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.



[SUP Safe Code Explained](#)



[watch a video](#)

# LEASHES SAVE LIVES

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## Wear the right one (this is our #1).

Without a leash it's easy to become separated from your board, especially in a breeze. So it is very important to wear a leash. In certain conditions it is essential to wear the right type.



### For strong currents

The only leash suitable for strong currents (i.e; rivers, harbour mouths etc): is a leash with a quick-release system that can be operated from above the waist. Do not wear a leash attached to your ankle or calf in strong currents. If it catches on something you will not be able to undo it while it is under tension.



### For surf conditions

In surf conditions, only use a straight ankle/calf leash.





# WEAR THE RIGHT PFD!

A buoyancy aid or Personal Flotation Device (PFD) will greatly increase your survival time should you become separated from your board.

It is also a legal requirement in New Zealand. A PFD with permanent built-in flotation (as opposed to the inflatable type) is essential if you are a weak or non-swimmer.

A backpack inflatable PFD is a good option for the more experienced paddler.

For more information on the pros and cons, usage, care and maintenance of backpack PFDs check out [www.supsafe.nz](http://www.supsafe.nz).



# KNOW YOUR LIMITS – PADDLE SAFE

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It's easy to get carried away on the water, so try and always be aware of how far offshore you are and what the weather is doing. Remember – the further out you go, the greater the risk! Here are a few tips for staying safe while you're on the water.

- Where possible stay close to the shoreline
- Paddling with others is always safer than going solo
- Wearing high-vis clothing is always a smart plan
- Dress for the water temperature as well as the air temperature
- Keep to the right when paddling in channels and waterways, and passing oncoming traffic
- Where possible paddle outside the channel – avoid the centre of a channel or river
- Keep clear of other vessels as much as possible
- If crossing the path of larger vessels, pass behind them, not in front
- Start out paddling upwind (or up-current), so that you'll get the easy ride home!



# FREE APPS AND ONLINE ADVICE



## SupSafe.nz

Safety courses, where to get lessons and advice.



## Predict Wind App

Comprehensive forecasting and nowcasting weather information.



MarineMate

## MarineMate app

Local bylaws, boat ramps and boating info.



## saferboating.org.nz

Safe boating tips.



## YouTube search

'boating safety in nz'

Videos on safer boating. Learn how to launch and safely cross a bar.



## Coastguard

Click [here](#) for the Coastguard app user guide



MetService

## metservice.com

Marine forecasts and tide information.



# NEW TO PADDLING

Our best advice – get a lesson! It will set your SUP progression off on the right path. If you don't know how to paddle properly (and it's not as simple as it looks) then you're much more likely to get into difficulties if the conditions deteriorate.

When you're learning the basics stack the odds in your favour as much as possible. Restrict your paddling to flat, shallow water, and light winds.

The most important factor to consider is that in your early days, the wind is not your friend. It's hard to paddle against the wind, so just don't take any chances with it.

- If it's looking breezy, don't go out – or find somewhere more sheltered to paddle
- If you do find it's getting a bit windy, then turn back, or head for more sheltered water, straight away

- If you're struggling to make headway against the wind or finding the water a bit rough, then drop down to a kneeling position. Hold the paddle with both hands low down the shaft and you'll find it easier (and more stable) to make progress. Just because it's called stand up paddleboarding doesn't mean it's compulsory to stand.

For advice on choosing the right board and paddle for your requirements and bodyweight check out [www.supsafe.nz](http://www.supsafe.nz).

Check out our FREE practical and online SUP safety courses, where to get lessons and advice, plus much more safety information [www.supsafe.nz](http://www.supsafe.nz).





# IF YOU CAN'T CALL FOR HELP NO-ONE CAN RESCUE YOU

Make sure you can call for help if you need to. (Remember, it might not be you in trouble, you might encounter someone else in difficulty on the water!) Having two waterproof ways of calling for help is the best plan.

## CELL PHONE

A cell phone is great for SUP, as it's more than just a safety device, you can also use it for taking pictures or videos, fitness/activity tracking, music and much more.

- Keep it in a sealed waterproof bag around your neck or in a secure pocket of your clothing.
- Ensure you have enough charge for the session!
- You can call 111 if in distress.
- If you are paddling in an area with bad cellphone coverage you may be better off with a marine VHF or an EPIRB beacon.

## WHISTLE

The other ideal signalling option for SUP is a good waterproof whistle – your PFD should have one, if not, they can be bought from most sporting shops. Make sure it's easily accessible.

## PADDLE WAVING

This is a very effective way of attracting attention. You can wrap your rash vest or even your PFD around your paddle blade to make it more visible.



# TELL SOMEONE ELSE YOUR PLANS!

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Even if you are paddling with others (always safest), make sure someone onshore knows that you're on the water, where you're going and how long you'll be. Remember to tell them when you get back, too!

A simple text or call to a friend will do the job, but there's also a great (and free!) app that you can use. The 'Log A Trip' function on the Coastguard App is a great resource for this, and will automatically text your designated contact if you don't check in on time.



# SUP SURFING

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Catching waves on your SUP board is great fun but don't even think about taking your board out into the surf until you are confident in paddling in bumpy conditions, can turn it quickly, and – most importantly – can get back onto it swiftly after a dismount. Because you WILL fall in when you try SUP surfing!

- Start slowly in the surf, going to places with easy, small waves where there are FEW people, if any, around you.
- Learn to catch and ride the smaller ones before even going anywhere near a proper surf break.
- Always wear a straight leash attached to your ankle.
- NEVER paddle out into a busy line up – the beauty of SUP is that you don't need the most perfect wave to have fun.
- Paddle further down the beach away from the most crowded areas. You may well find your own, empty wave.

There are also a whole lot of rules and etiquette you also need to understand about surfing, both for your own safety and that of everyone else out there.

- Keep your board under control.
- Don't drop in on people (i.e. paddle onto a wave that someone else is already riding).
- Don't snake people (turn so as to take a wave that someone else has already set up for).
- Don't surf dangerously.
- With a SUP board you can catch a lot of waves. This does not mean you should. Don't be a wave hog.



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