

MPA Travel Policy Highlights

1. Background: Youth athletes have been traveling to MPA organized regattas and training camps for over 25 years. During this time, the MPA has been fortunate to never have a motor vehicle accident that resulted in significant injury to any athlete, coach, driver, or volunteer.
2. Transportation of Equipment: Due to the nature of our sport, equipment must be transported to virtually all paddling events. It is the responsibility of the Technical Director to oversee the transportation of the equipment, including selection of route, vehicle & trailer preparation, scheduling, management of adverse weather and/or road conditions, and selection of drivers. These decisions are made based on his more than 25 years of experience in this area.
3. Additional Guidelines recommended by MPA Board March 5, 2009: All drivers must be appropriately licensed to drive on MPA trips, and experienced drivers should be preferentially selected. There must be a minimum of 2 drivers/vehicle for any overnight road trips and an overnight stop is required for any trip in excess of 30 hours to avoid 2 consecutive nights on the road. All efforts should be made to avoid driving in poor weather or dangerous road conditions; to this end, athletes traveling by Association vehicle should be prepared to leave up to 24 hours before schedule. There must be a working seatbelt for every passenger traveling in an Association vehicle. The MPA Board expects that these guidelines will be followed in all but unusual or extenuating circumstances, which must be described/explained at the next Board meeting.
4. Transportation of Athletes: Because the MPA is already transporting equipment to events, athletes (or their parents, on their behalf) may request to travel in MPA vehicles instead of making their own arrangements. In doing so, they are accepting whatever risk is associated with road travel, and with the drivers & driving arrangements made by the MPA's Technical Director. It is the athletes' responsibility to behave appropriately while traveling in an MPA vehicle. This includes cleaning up after themselves, avoiding disruptive behaviour that can distract the driver, and making the decision to wear a seat belt. Any fines for failure to wear a seat belt will be the full responsibility of the athlete or his/her parents if under the age of 18. Parents of minor athletes should not expect coaches to police the use of seatbelts and athletes who cannot be trusted to abide by these rules should make their own travel arrangements at their own cost.
5. Supervision of Athletes: For each event, the Technical Director selects coaches, chaperones, and drivers, to assist with the supervision & support of athletes. He does so based on his knowledge of the athletes, their ages, numbers, needs, and the duration of the event. There is no specific ratio of adult: athlete that is routinely imposed. In general, coaches attend to coaching, while chaperones help coaches carry out their duties by running errands and ensuring that athletes in need of medical attention get it. In the event of an accident or crisis of some kind, all responsible adults available pitch in to help resolve the situation. Because there is little direct supervision of athlete nutrition, bathing, etc, the MPA encourages the parents of young athletes (12 and under) to consider attending events with their child. In fact, all parents are welcome at any MPA event or training camp

- and under most circumstances, make for healthier race experiences for athletes and coaches alike. Regardless of the ages of the athletes, when they are away, the coaches/chaperones are expected to leave someone in charge who can reach them. In general, whether accidental or deliberate, damages that arise from the actions of athletes on MPA trips will be the responsibility of the athletes and/or their families.
6. Enforcement of the MPA Code of Conduct: The coaches, chaperones, and managers in charge at any MPA sanctioned event, whether it be a practice, training camp, regatta, or other event, are responsible for addressing unacceptable behaviour by an athlete, parent, or other team member. Whenever possible, it is encouraged that this be done in an informal, direct manner, by communicating with the individuals involved and/or assigning consequences if necessary. The person(s) displaying the behaviour in question are expected to respond to the direction of the coaching staff, but may appeal to another coach/chaperone if they feel they are being treated unfairly. If a second member of the coach/chaperone staff supports the initial decision, the individual must comply, but may appeal/complain to the MPA Board at the next meeting. Any difference of opinion between the staff must be negotiated between them. In the event of a “major infraction” of the Code of Conduct or significant behavioural issue, the coaches and chaperones are expected to deal with the matter directly, using the Code of Conduct as a guide to assigning consequences. A written report of the incident must be submitted to the Board following the event for review. Recognizing that the behavioural culture at a practice or event is primarily the domain of the coach and his/her athletes, the Board’s role is usually to support the direction taken by the event staff unless it is clearly in conflict with the Code of Conduct. Because issues of discipline and behaviour involve a certain amount of personal judgment, it is expected that there will be inconsistencies between individual members of the coach/chaperone team and in the management of apparently similar issues on different occasions. When individuals feel they have been treated unfairly, they are first encouraged to explore the rationale for the assigned consequences with the coaches and managers involved, and if still dissatisfied, appeal the decision to the Board.
 7. Special Notes Regarding Drug & Alcohol Use: It should be noted that athletes of legal drinking age are only permitted to drink alcohol at MPA events with the permission of the coach/chaperone staff, and that drinking to the extent that it results in disorderly or violent conduct, or the inability to perform official functions (racing, training, or in the case of a coach or manager, supervising athletes) is considered a major infraction. The consumption of alcohol by athletes under the legal drinking age is not sanctioned by the Manitoba Paddling Association, but is treated presently categorized as a minor infraction unless it results in intoxication, violent or disorderly conduct and/or the inability to perform official duties. Use of illegal substances by athletes of any age, coaches, or chaperones is a major infraction of the Code of Conduct and must be handled as such.
 8. Canada Games/Western Canada Games Codes of Conduct: These Codes of Conduct are distinct from those of MPA, developed specifically for the Games,

and administered by Team Manitoba, not MPA coaches or chaperones. Rightly or wrongly, expectations of conduct at the Games tend to be higher, there are no exceptions to curfew violations, and security guards police athlete residences. MPA is not in a position to advocate for paddlers who find themselves in trouble at the Games, so save any shenanigans for another occasion!