

NON-EMERGENCY TOW PROTOCOL FOR ML CANOE CARNIVAL

Updated 2021

1. The Parade's Command Post Marshal (CPM) will have authority to request float-towing from Medford Lakes Police/Fire Joint Command in a non-emergency capacity when a float shows an inability to navigate forward after several minutes, and after a verbal warning to paddlers from a Safety Marshal. This decision must be accepted by the paddlers or a disqualification will occur. (See below for this new objective position, CPM.)
2. A towed float will incur a single 50-pt deduction in scoring, regardless of distance towed or number of tows required. (Extra paddler deductions are reduced to 25 pts per person and will not be applied if towing deduction also applies, i.e., the most a float can be deducted for conveyance beyond two paddlers is 50 pts total.)
3. Any float awaiting a tow that is not yet available will temporarily anchor in the closest stable cove, or tie off to closest available dock. If conditions become more favorable during this waiting period, the paddlers may ask a Marshal to call in a review of the tow decision, but the CPM's decision shall remain intact unless he/she specifically reverses it. Lack of an answer means "tow remains in effect". If the CPM reverses their decision and the float is able to proceed without a tow, there will be no point deduction.
4. This protocol does not supersede or affect Medford Lakes Police/Fire Joint Command (PFJC)'s ability to announce an "emergency situation" at any time, or to take whatever actions they feel necessary to address what they feel is a dangerous situation. In such event, all protocols become secondary to PFJC official instructions, and all Float Parade personnel and participants will immediately comply with same.

ADDITIONAL ITEM

FLOAT REQUIREMENTS TO BE ADDED TO SAFETY CHECKLIST PER MLFD (\$37 total)

- A. Four marine cleats, one added to each corner of any platform.
https://www.amazon.com/Mizugiwa-Nylon-Cleat-Black-Pack/dp/B01DYNMJCG/ref=sr_1_11?crd=EAPQ6Q6C1ED1&keywords=dock+cleats+4+inch&qid=1568745005&srefix=dock+cleats+4+inch%2Caps%2C155&sr=8-11
- B. Two tow harnesses, one at each end of any platform or single canoe.
https://www.amazon.com/AIRHEAD-Tow-Harness-12-ft/dp/B000ZYCLHG/ref=sr_1_6?keywords=airhead+tow+harness&qid=1568744925&sr=8-6

1. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- A. Shortly after the 2019 Canoe Carnival, The Chairman established a Sub-Committee to perform a detailed review of various weather-related parade issues. Not just the larger wind problems (notably 2009, 2012, 2019), but all in total. This Committee included Chairman Miller, Immediate Past Chairman Frame, Head of Marshals O'Neill, Head of Safety Smolarski, and Committee Member Blanchard with extensive float-paddling experience (incl '09, '12 & '19). What they found were:
- a) Improvable communication issues at the parade level
 - b) A lack of understanding by many float groups of MLFD requirements when a Water Emergency is declared
 - c) Confusion between an "MLFD Water Emergency Declaration" and a "courtesy tow"
 - d) Inconsistent towing decisions at the parade level (ie, some floats were towed directly to home ports, some were permitted to be towed farther around the parade route, and some were not offered tows at all)
 - e) Inconsistent and unequal judging based on A-D above
- B. To effectively address these inter-connected issues, the Sub-Committee revisited the fundamental objectives of Canoe Carnival. From its inception in 1929, the priorities have been a) Participant & spectator safety, b) Friendly competition and judging to recognize the best entries, and c) Enjoying the parade from waterfront homes with friends and family. While imperfect and a bit weather-dependent, the tradition of Canoe Carnival hasn't changed much.

However, times HAVE changed a lot, and after a full analysis – including research and comments from many spectators and participants – the Sub-Committee is recommending "flipping the priority of items B and C" in the best interests of the event. This means more importance will be placed on getting the floats safely around the lake, so that all homeowners, spectators and competing float groups can better appreciate everyone's creativity and hard work. Also by doing this, judging can then be uniformly addressed.

There are a few reasons for recommending this change. First, this should provide for a safer event. County Emergency Shared-Service Agreements now exist that allow more powerboats to potentially be on standby, and by utilizing some of these resources earlier if needed, we can prevent floats from "stacking up" in problem areas. This in turn reduces the likelihood of actual water emergencies occurring in those areas, which maximizes overall safety.

Second, over the past few decades, building materials, lights and audio components have become far more efficient and cost-effective, which has resulted in larger, more detailed floats capable of resting on two canoes.

And third, because float groups are spending more time and resources than ever creating more ambitious entries, the Committee has noticed a related increase in expectations for the event (ie, more party planning, increased ticket sales due to additional beach and dam seating, etc). Attendees have recounted profound disappointment when lake conditions change unexpectedly and prevent various floats from navigating the parade route. In 2019, some lakefront homeowners reported that as few as six of the 17 floats passed their property.

In summary, it is the Committee's opinion that these factors outweigh the traditional desire to force two paddlers to navigate the entire lake regardless of conditions, especially since entries will still have a significant scoring advantage whenever they can complete the route without assistance.

2. REVISED MARSHAL & POWER BOAT ALIGNMENT

- A. Twelve (12) total Safety Marshals will staff the Parade. The Head Marshal (#1) will assign ten Safety Marshals (#2-11) to specific locations around the lake, where they will remain throughout the parade to monitor safe passage and convey directives with the latest info to every float entering their area. The Head Marshal will physically patrol the entirety of the lake at his/her discretion.

The Head Marshal will also assign a **Command Post Marshal (CPM)** (#12) to be positioned at One Beach & Lower Aetna Dam for the duration of the Parade. To the greatest extent possible, the CPM shall be a person with no personal connection to a specific float group and a proven reputation for good judgment and impartiality. His/her responsibilities will include, a) deciding when a float should be towed to keep the parade moving, b) forwarding tow request(s) to PFJC Personnel, c) ensuring that any Head Marshal directives, comments or requests are being received by PFJC, d) conveying updates to the Beach One PA Announcer as needed so that accurate info is announced to the public, and e) keeping a list of which floats are being towed for scoring adjustments later. PFJC will supply a two-way radio to the CPM, who will then have the ability to communicate on both the PFJC and Marshal radio systems.

- B. The CCC will request up to eight (8) total power boats be available on the lake, although it is understood that a lower number may actually be available based on the capabilities and determination of the PFJC. Any quantity above the four power boats typically utilized by PFJC during the Parade will be docked at various points along the lake.

3. NON-EMERGENCY TOW PROTOCOL & PROCEDURE

- A. Towing is no longer an option, it is now a criteria-based action dictated by EITHER the CPM or PFJC at any time, in the interest of safety and the event in general.
- B. The Non-Emergency Tow Protocol shall begin when the Command Post Marshal (CPM),

- or any Safety Marshal in contact with the CPM, notices a float struggling to maintain control, forward momentum, OR risks the Parade “stacking up”. The CPM will use his/her judgment as to when a float, a) proves incapable of continuing forward, or b) continues forward at such a slow rate that it impedes the floats behind them from continuing their own momentum forward to an unacceptable degree.
- C. The CPM will use their two-way radio to issue a Tow Warning to the Safety Marshals, advising that he/she feels towing may be required. This will allow the closest Safety Marshal to advise the float’s paddlers of the warning and that an actual decision to tow may be imminent.
 - D. If the struggling float remains unable to proceed as detailed above, **the CPM will have the final non-emergency authority to request towing by a JPFC tow boat at his/her sole discretion. JPFC then has full authority to agree or decline the request.**
 - E. Towing will involve using a motorized watercraft to pull a float VERY SLOWLY, in the same direction and at the same speed as was intended by the paddlers, past properties along the parade route. **The towing shall continue for the length of the up-wind route to the end of the lake (or to a closer point that completes the float’s round trip).** EXCEPTION: If there is an emergency situation anywhere on the water, a tow boat may secure their float-under-tow to the closest available dock and respond to the emergency. That float will remain docked until the situation has been remedied or a Marshal gives updated instructions.
 - F. If the PFJC determines that a float cannot safely be towed, that float may be ordered to dock at the closest property until the parade ends. The float will only accrue points from the judges it has already passed to that point (ie, “build big at your own risk”).
 - G. The CPM will continue to monitor the Safety Marshal radio system and make towing decisions for each potential tow situation throughout the remainder of the parade under the protocol listed above.
 - H. CLEAR THE LAKE: Air horns being sounded from tow boats and/or the Command Post means “All floats and paddlers clear the water immediately and dock in a safe manner”.

4. JUDGING & SCORING TOWED FLOATS

- A. All Parade Judges will be instructed to judge each float by the criteria on their scorer’s sheet, irrespective of being towed or not. Towing is not a Parade Judge’s concern.
- B. Since the goal of Carnival is to paddle canoes around the lake under human power, the ability to do that will always receive a scoring advantage of zero point deductions vs those that are towed. **If a float is towed or otherwise assisted at any point, for any reason or duration, there will be a 50-point deduction assessed to the float.** There will only be one 50-point deduction even if the float requires towing multiple times – and this is important – that 50-pt deduction will replace any 25pt/pp deductions for 3rd or 4th paddlers on the float (i.e. you cannot be penalized for both attempting ‘extra paddlers’ and ‘being towed’. In that case, only the tow deduction applies).
- C. The current point deduction for using a 3rd or 4th paddler will be reduced from 30pts per person to 25 pts/pp, so as not to exceed the 50 pt deduction for simply being towed.

- D. Directly upon the conclusion of the Parade, the CPM and/or Head Marshal will compile a list of all towed floats and forward the list to the Carnival Chairperson via text or email.
- E. Any float failing to comply with Marshal or PFJC instructions will be disqualified.**
- F. Any float with a person entering the water will be disqualified.**
- G. Floats must always proceed around the shore-side of orange-lighted navigation markers, and may not “cut the route short” to avoid winds or being towed. Paddlers are advised to familiarize themselves with the markers on Saturday afternoon if necessary. Any float unable or unwilling to remain within the designated parade route throughout the parade will be disqualified.**
- H. Any non-competitive float falling into 4E, 4F or 4G above will be ordered to dock at the closest property until the parade is over, with future CC participation TBD (ie, “Being non-competitive does not give license to ignore or bypass these rules”).

5. ADDITIONAL ML FIRE DEPT COMMENTS, FOR REFERENCE

When a float touches the dam or is in obvious distress and/or people from the dam are entering the water or interfering with a float, the situation becomes an active emergency scene and is fully under the control of emergency services (Police/Fire Joint Command).

Once the carnival is underway, any persons who enter the water will be considered an emergency rescue situation which will be fully under the control of emergency services.

6. ADDITIONAL CARNIVAL COMMITTEE COMMENTS, FOR REFERENCE

While the formal directive to initiate a tow could occur at any time or at any lake location, paddlers are advised to familiarize themselves with the following known “trouble spots” where wind and/or currents can prove particularly challenging:

1. One Beach at the Lower Aetna Dam upwind turn
2. Big Timbers (147 Stokes Rd)
3. Reinhart Peninsula (171 Commanche Tr)
4. Commanche Trail Fire Lane just before the Beach Drive Dam

Please keep in mind the spirit of Canoe Carnival. The CC Weather Committee will continue to make decisions about the parade, there are no changes to this. But weather is fickle, and the parade’s many uncontrollable variables don’t always break evenly. Your float may be in the wrong place at the wrong time and need to be towed, where others may hit the same area in a calmer breeze and paddle through. These rules are designed so that as many attendees as possible can safely enjoy your creativity and hard work, regardless of judges scores. That’s the primary goal of Medford Lakes Canoe Carnival. THANK YOU for your team’s wonderful efforts!