

Safety Rules for Float Trips on the Kansas River

Please review these rules on safe river recreation particularly if you are planning a float trip on the Kansas (Kaw) River. Novice paddlers should not float during high water events without the supervision of experienced paddlers.

There are several hazardous areas on the Kansas River that are marked with black dots on the access map. Portage on the left bank of the river is mandatory when floating by these structures.

- The Topeka Water Department Dam at river mile 87.
- Bowersock Dam at river mile 51 in Lawrence.
- The WaterOne Dam at river mile 15 just east of I-435.

There is a fourth low head dam next to the Tecumseh Power Plant just above river mile 75 and 1.5 miles east of the Seward Avenue Access in east Topeka. Slowly approach the dam to access passage. In high water you will float over the dam but in lower water there is access just above an island in the middle of the river.

Regardless if you are an experienced or novice boater it is important to point out some of the basic river safety rules. Be aware that it will take some **muscle power** to paddle down the Kansas River and **it is advised that participants be in good health and physically in shape**. As participants in this type of outing each person is responsible for his/her own personal safety. That being said, please read the following rules that will help us all end the day with a smile.

- 1. While on the river personal floatation devices (life jackets) must be worn as hazardous situations can develop quickly. Children playing on sandbars or on the edge of the river should always wear a life jacket.**
2. It is recommended to float with others. If you are floating with a group is safest if you stay together. Do not move ahead of the lead boat, but try not to fall behind. You should try to stay within 60 seconds travel of the lead boat. This makes it possible for help to arrive quickly in case of an emergency.
3. If you are a novice boater consider going on a Friends of the Kaw float trip to better understand paddling skills needed, safety protocol and the Kansas River.
- 4. Trees and other objects in the water can be dangerous. Stay away from them.**
5. Fishermen leave hooks on fishing lines tied to trees and stumps. Stay away from these hanging strings and fishing lines or you may end up with a fishhook imbedded somewhere in your body.
6. The most common spills are when people are getting in and out of their boats. Use extra caution at this time.
7. The Kansas River is shallow in most areas. If you fall out of your boat try to stand up if the current is not too strong. If you can hold on to your boat and float down river until you can stand up. If you cannot stay with your boat aggressively swim to shore, keeping your feet up near the surface and staying away from downed trees in the water. Keeping your feet up is important (to be sure that your feet and legs do not become trapped on an

underwater snag). If someone offers you help, hang on to their boat and let him or her pull you to shore. **Do not try to climb into their boat.**

8. Do not float after dark and research the section of river you plan to float for any dams, weirs or other areas that need special consideration.
9. The signal for any emergency is a loud whistle. Do not whistle except in an emergency. Nearby participants should also whistle loudly and waive their paddles in the air or paddle aggressively to the victims. If safety allows, offer any assistance you can, but do not jeopardize your own safety during a rescue attempt. Let others who have this type of training direct your help.
10. When recreating in raw water always sanitize your hands before eating to keep harmful bacteria out of your digestive system.

Things that you should have with you on the river:

Water, lunch, hand sanitizer, cell phone in waterproof bag.

Things you might want on the river:

Sunscreen, hat, rain jacket, camera & binoculars (in protective bags if not waterproof.)

Things to leave behind: Radios, car keys, jewelry.

Things to do before getting on the river: Use the restroom.

Things to do on the river: Have a safe, fun day!