

Be a Safe Boater

WEAR A LIFE JACKET.

Minnesota state law requires a wearable U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket for each person on board a watercraft. It is recommended that boaters always wear a life jacket.

PREVENT CAPSIZING.

Reduce speed in rough water, don't overload a boat, secure loads from shifting and adjust for changing conditions.

PREVENT FALLS OVERBOARD.

Remain seated while underway, avoid a sudden shift in weight.

FILE A FLOAT PLAN.

Leave it with a responsible person. Include a description of your boat, names of passengers, boating location, time of return and description of your car and where it is parked. Tell the person to call 911 if you don't return at the expected time. Stick to the plan.

BRIEF PASSENGERS.

Everyone should know where all safety equipment is, how to use it and how to start, stop and steer the boat.

BE PREPARED.

Always wear a life jacket every time you step on a boat. Trying to put a life jacket on in cold water is extremely difficult (if not impossible) and costs precious time and energy.

CARRY A WHISTLE OR HORN AND A THROWABLE.

Minnesota law requires a whistle or horn and a U.S. Coast Guard-approved throwable on all motorboats 16 feet or longer.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE SKY.

No boater should ever set out in a storm. Check the forecast and return to shore if bad weather is predicted.

BOATERS SHOULD ALSO:

- Carry a compass and chart.
- Carry a cell phone, two-way VHF marine radio or personal locator beacon for emergency communication.
- The U.S. Coast Guard monitors Channel 16.
- Take a boater safety course.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages.



BOAT AND WATER SAFETY

500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040
888-MINNDNR or 651-296-6157
www.mndnr.gov/boatingsafety

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COLD WATER KILLS

YOU MUST FIGHT TO SURVIVE IN COLD WATER



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.



You Must Fight to Survive in Cold Water

1-10-1 PRINCIPLE

1 MINUTE

- Get breathing under control



10 MINUTES OF MEANINGFUL MOVEMENT

- Assess the situation and make a plan
- Perform most important functions first, such as locating other party members
- Self-rescue if possible
- Signal or call for help



1 HOUR (OR MORE) OF USEFUL CONSCIOUSNESS

- Focus on slowing heat loss



IF WEARING A LIFE JACKET, THE 1-10-1 PRINCIPLE MAY SAVE YOUR LIFE!



MINNESOTA COLD WATER

Over 30 percent of boating fatalities in Minnesota happen in cold water with a victim not wearing a life jacket.

Falls overboard and capsizing are the most common causes of boating fatalities in the state.

Males between the ages of 20 and 60 are the most likely to drown while boating, and are the least likely to be wearing a life jacket.

Falling into icy water can be deadly because many boaters do not think about the effects of cold water immersion.

Wearing your life jacket could be the single most important factor in surviving cold water.

Without a life jacket, most cold water victims die long before they become hypothermic.

WHAT IS HYPOTHERMIA?

Hypothermia means the body is losing heat faster than it can produce it and the body's core temperature drops below 95 degrees.

Falling into cold water can increase your chances of hypothermia.

Signs/symptoms of hypothermia include:

- Shivering
- Slurred speech
- Abnormally slow breathing
- Cold, pale skin
- Loss of coordination
- Fatigue
- Confusion or memory loss
- Bright red, cold skin (infants)

GASP! THE STAGES OF COLD WATER IMMERSION

COLD SHOCK RESPONSE

Within the first 2-3 minutes:

- Gasp, hyperventilation and panic.
- Drowning if not wearing a life jacket.

SWIM FAILURE

Within the first 30 minutes:

- Loss of muscle coordination and the rapid cooling of arms and legs impairs the ability to keep the head above water.
- Effects occur regardless of swimming ability.
- Drowning if not wearing a life jacket.

IMMERSION HYPOTHERMIA

After at least 30 minutes of immersion:

- The body's core temperature gets dangerously low, eventually resulting in loss of useful consciousness.
- Drowning if not wearing a life jacket.

POST RESCUE COLLAPSE

After victim is rescued:

- Blood pressure often drops, inhaled water can damage the lungs and heart problems can develop as cold blood from the extremities is released into the body core.
- Proper medical attention is essential to re-warm the body safely.

TIPS FOR AN EMERGENCY

STAY WITH THE BOAT

If the boat capsizes or you fall overboard, stay with the boat and get all or most of your body out of the water.

- Most capsized watercraft will still float.
- A craft in the water is easier for rescuers to locate.
- If you have to remain in the water, do not attempt to swim unless it is to a nearby boat or floating object.
- Keep boots and clothes on. Almost all clothing will float for an extended period of time.

SLOWING HEAT LOSS

Reduce the effects of cold water immersion with the Heat Escape Lessening Position (H.E.L.P.).

- Cross ankles.
- Cross arms tightly across chest.
 - Hands should be kept high on the shoulders or neck.
- Draw knees to chest.
- Keep head and neck out of water and focus on breathing.

Practice H.E.L.P. in a pool before depending on it in an emergency—this technique may not work with all life jacket styles.

If more than one person is in the water and all are wearing life jackets, the “huddle” is recommended.

- This is where small groups of two to four “hug” with chests closely touching.
- Arms should be linked around the backs of the others and kept underwater, while smaller individuals or children can be placed in the middle of the “huddle.”
- The huddle helps to conserve body heat and it is also easier for rescuers to locate than one lone victim.
- The close proximity of victims can also serve as a significant morale booster.

CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH HYPOTHERMIA

All victims pulled from cold water should be treated for hypothermia as signs and symptoms usually develop slowly. People with hypothermia typically experience mental confusion, so they may be unaware that they need emergency medical treatment.

Call 911 or emergency medical assistance.

While waiting for help to arrive, monitor the person's breathing. If breathing stops or seems dangerously slow or shallow, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately.

Move the person out of the cold. If possible, keep the victim in the same position as they were rescued to prevent a stroke caused by moving them incorrectly. If moving is necessary (such as from a boat to shelter), carefully lay the victim on insulation from the cold ground in a level face-up position. Protect the person from the wind and cover their head.

Carefully remove wet clothing. Replace wet things with a warm, dry covering.

Apply warm compresses to the center of the body — head, neck, chest and groin. Do not apply direct heat. Do not use hot water, a heating pad or a heating lamp to warm the person. Do not attempt to warm the arms and legs. Heat applied to the arms and legs forces cold blood back toward the heart, lungs and brain, causing the core body temperature to drop. This can be fatal.

Give the person warm beverages. Do NOT give the person alcohol.

Handle people with hypothermia gently. Don't massage or rub the person because their skin may be frostbitten, and rubbing frostbitten tissue can cause severe damage.

Body to body rewarming. In remote areas where assistance is delayed, and victim's shivering is ineffective, practice “body to body” rewarming. Surround the victim with body heat in a sleeping bag, tent or other sheltered spot.