

## How to Stay Safe

### Wear your PFD



**Remember, it floats, you don't!**

In New York, it is the law that you must wear your PFD on a boat under 21 feet in length

from November 1- May 1.

### Know Before You Go

Check the weather forecast and the water temperature before going out. Be prepared for sudden changes.

### Wear the Proper Clothing

Dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature. Consider a fleece-lined wetsuit or a full dry-suit. Layers that would keep us warm on land are useless on the water, unless worn inside a completely waterproof shell.



### Carry Safety Gear

Consider carrying a bailer or water pump, a VHF radio, spare dry clothes and a boat horn. Attach a whistle to your PFD.

### File a Float Plan



Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.

### Be Aware

Watch for changes in water and weather conditions. Know your limits.

For additional information on safe boating, please visit:



[www.wearitnewyork.com](http://www.wearitnewyork.com)

[www.AmericanCanoe.org](http://www.AmericanCanoe.org)      [www.cgaux.org](http://www.cgaux.org)  
[www.coldwaterbootcamp.com](http://www.coldwaterbootcamp.com)      [www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
[www.safeboatingcouncil.org](http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org)      [www.usps.org](http://www.usps.org)  
[www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org)  
[www.ussartf.org/survival\\_sea.htm](http://www.ussartf.org/survival_sea.htm)

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**References:** "Survival in Cold Waters" by Dr. C.J. Brooks:  
<http://www.tc.gc.ca/marinesafety/TP/Tp13822/menu.htm>

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Marine Services Bureau  
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# Cold-Water Boating

Tips for off-season boating and surviving cold-water immersion



## Did you Know?



Cold water (less than 68°F) cools the **body 4 times faster** than air at the same temperature.

Swimming or movement while in the water can double that rate of heat loss.

## What Can Happen During Cold Water Immersion?

### Cold Shock

- **Powerful gasping** and water inhalation that can cause drowning or unconsciousness in minutes
- **Cardiac Arrest**- exposure of the head and neck to cold water causes a sudden spike in heart rate and blood pressure
- **Hyperventilation** – uncontrolled rapid breathing that may cause unconsciousness.

### Swimming Failure

Hands, arms and legs become numb and useless within a few minutes of cold-water immersion. You are unable to swim, climb out of the water, or even hold on to a floating object. **Without a PFD, you can drown quickly in cold water.**

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia develops when your core body temperature drops below 95° F. It is a **life-threatening condition**



## Symptoms & Treatment of Hypothermia

### Mild Hypothermia

**Victim is:** shivering but coherent

**You should:** Get victim into dry clothes; give warm, sweet drinks (no alcohol or caffeine)

### Moderate Hypothermia

**Victim is:** rational or irrational and losing coordination. Shivering may stop or slow.

**You should:** GENTLY lay victim on their back; Do not move arms or legs as cold blood suddenly moving from extremities to the core can cause cardiac arrest; do not give food or drinks; remove wet clothes and apply dry cover to victim.

**Call for help immediately!**

### Severe Hypothermia

**Victim is:** semi-conscious, unconscious, or may resist help. Shivering may stop.

**You should:** follow the same steps as for moderate hypothermia.

### Victim Appears Dead

If there is little or no breathing or pulse, handle victim as above. Check for a pulse or breathing for 2 minutes. **If any trace is detected, do not give CPR** or it can cause cardiac arrest. If pulse and breathing are totally absent, CPR should be started. Get medical help immediately!

## What to do if you are immersed in cold water

- Try to get back in or on your boat immediately

- **If you are alone** and floating in the water, fold your arms and cross your legs in the Heat Escape Lessening Posture (H.E.L.P.) until help arrives.

*Remember that lots of movement will cause you to lose body heat faster.*



H.E.L.P (Heat Escape Lessening Posture)

- **If 2 or more people** are in the water, put your arms around one another, stay still and close together in the Huddle Position to hold in body heat.



Huddle Position

- Only swim if safety is close by!