



Cold Weather and Water

Preparation and prevention are essential in protecting against the effects of the cold-water environment.

- All persons should wear protective clothing appropriate for the conditions and their activity, and as far as possible commensurate with the needs of the rowing motion and activity, with the objective being to keep the body dry and to insulate against heat loss.
- When the water temperature is at 10 degrees Celsius or below, or otherwise when the environmental conditions may warrant, special safety precautions, proposed by the club safety officer, should be considered. Possibilities for additional safety precautions include:
 - Allowing members to go out on the water, where appropriate, only if attended by a safety craft carrying a PFD of appropriate size for all individuals being attended.
 - Or in extreme weather, not allowing rowers to go out on the water

Swamping in Cold water

If your boat is swamped, stay with the boat. The boat and oars should still float. Keep as much of your body out of the water as possible. You should not generally try to swim ashore even if you are a good swimmer. This is because of your exposure to other boat traffic and, in cold water conditions, you may not be able to swim as far as you would otherwise expect.

Cold Induced Conditions

If you cannot right the boat, lay on top of it until help arrives. You can use your feet to kick while holding onto the boat, and move yourself closer to shore. Try to use as little movement as possible in cold

weather, as you will lose heat and energy very quickly if you move around too much.

Hypothermia

Signs and Symptoms – When body temperature falls, early warnings signs are, feeling cold, shivering, clumsiness and slurred speech, apathy and irrational behavior, heart rate may slow.

Treatment

- Assess for environmental dangers and proceed if safe to determine whether the patient has any life-threatening conditions and if any immediate first aid is necessary.
- Remove patient to warm, dry place. Protect patient and yourself from wind, rain, sleet, cold and wet ground.
- Avoid excess activity or movement. Maintain casualty in horizontal position.
- Remove wet clothing.
- Warm patient and place between blankets or in a sleeping bag, and wrap in thermal blanket or similar. Cover the head to maintain body heat.
- Give warm drinks if conscious but do not give alcohol.

The above course of action for the assessment and treatment of Hypothermia is presented on the St John Ambulance Australia website. This information is not a substitute for first aid training. St John Ambulance Australia and Rowing Australia recommend that everyone is trained in first aid.