

COLD WATER SURVIVAL — THE ONE PAGE CHEAT-SHEET

The very best Cold Water Survival advice is: Stay warm while out of the water! — If shivering starts: RE-WARM by Stopping! Add more dry clothing, eat high sugar foods, and drink hot non-alcoholic fluids. Some dry-land exercise may help re-warming.

As humans cool down: available glycogen (blood sugar) is depleted and core temperature drops from the normal 98.6 F. to the mid 90 degree range. A boater who is shivering, may show signs of weakness and fatigue and will probably be less coordinated (symptoms of Mild Hypothermia). They can make really stupid decisions, and may be irritable or apathetic. They are much more likely to have an accident and be forced to swim.

Since water is much denser than air: it conducts heat from the body approximately 22 times faster than air. When boaters with Mild Hypothermia enter water below 60 degrees F: remaining body heat is quickly lost and in as little as 2 minutes swimmers can lose all ability to save themselves. Warmer boaters have a longer survival window in cold water because: body temperature and glycogen levels are higher.

Water temperatures March - July, in the Northern Rockies. These temperatures are a summary of measurements taken on Fish Creek, a tributary of Idaho's Lochsa River, and at the Sawtooth Fish Hatchery near Stanley on Idaho's Salmon River.

Month	Fish Cr. Temp	Salmon R. Temp
March	35-39°F	33-43°F
April	39-43°F	36-47°F
May	43-46°F	41-52°F
June	46-54°F	45-58°F
July	54-66°F	51-59°F

Recommended Clothing for Water Temperature

Water Temperature	Recommended Clothing
Over 80° F	Minimal.
60-79° F	Light wetsuit vests, paddle tops, Kayakers-drytop 60-69° F.
50-59° F	3mm body, 2mm arms/legs Full or "Steamer" wetsuit, or drysuit with light insulating layer, Kayakers add drytop with insulation.
40-49° F	Drysuit-light to midweight insulation inside. 5mm "steamer" wetsuit (availability limited). Kayakers need heavier insulation: drysuits with head, hand and feet insulation.
Below 40° F	Drysuit with midweight or heavier insulation, head, hand, and feet insulation. Or just say no!

The U.S. Coast Guard, which has Gore-tex drysuits available for its small craft crews, mandates those crews wear drysuits when water temperature is below 50°F.

Stay Warm, wear a drysuit if water temperature is below 50 F, and enjoy the water!