



Standard Practice for Multiple Persons Cold Water Survival/Rescue Technique: Huddle Position¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the recommended water rescue procedure for performing the huddle position.

1.2 This practice is one in a set of self-rescue techniques for the water rescuer.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Terminology

2.1 *huddle position, n*—a multiple person water rescue technique for heat conservation when immersed in cold water and the majority of the rescuers are wearing personal flotation devices. This technique conserves heat by using personal flotation devices and clothing, group body contact, and body posture to limit exposure of the body's major heat loss areas to the cold water.

2.2 *personal flotation device (PFD), n*—a buoyant device suitable for use by one person in water emergencies. These devices may be vests, ring buoys, life preservers, cushions, and other special purpose buoyant devices.

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This practice establishes a multiple person cold water survival/rescue procedure.

3.2 All persons who are identified as water rescuers shall meet the requirements of this practice.

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F32 on Search and Rescue and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F32.02 on Management and Operations.

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3.3 This practice is intended to assist government agencies, state, local, or regional organizations; fire departments; and rescue teams and others who are responsible for establishing a minimum performance for personnel who respond to water emergencies.

3.4 The majority of the rescuers performing this technique must be wearing personal flotation devices. These devices should conform to standards set by the appropriate national regulatory authority, that is, the U.S. Coast Guard in the United States, and be in good and serviceable condition.

3.5 A water rescuer sometimes may be immersed in cold water for prolonged periods of time. They are unable to get to shore or shore is too far away, rescue is not imminent, no boat is available to get into or on top of, and no flotsam is available. The water rescuer needs to assume a defensive posture to conserve heat and increase survival time.

4. Procedure

4.1 Upon initial immersion in cold water, the rescuers should cover the mouth and nose to prevent the aspiration of water.

4.2 “Huddle” together, side by side, in a circle.

4.3 Float in a sitting position with the legs drawn up, knees together, and with the ankles crossed.

4.4 Place arms against the side of torso, bent at the elbows, joining the rescues together.

4.5 Place small children, injured people, and those without flotation in the center of the huddle.


4.6 Remain calm and think clearly.

4.7 Leave all clothing on.

4.8 Wait for rescue.

5. Keywords

5.1 cold water survival; huddle position; self-rescue technique; water rescue; water rescuers

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