



Dec. 4, 2009  
Ron Aidikonis: 847-323-0359  
[dso-pa@cgaux9wr.com](mailto:dso-pa@cgaux9wr.com)  
[www.9thwestern.com](http://www.9thwestern.com)

# News Release

## **Coast Guard Auxiliary offers presentations on cold water survival techniques**

Chicago – Winter season is upon us and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is reminding boaters and others who are around the water about the risk of cold water immersion. Water temperatures are their coldest this time of year and even a strong swimmer can experience difficulty. Research has demonstrated that in cold water, under 59 degrees the risk of drowning increases by 500% and many of those drownings will occur within 6 feet of safety.

“When boaters fall into cold water, it can take just a few minutes before their ability to swim and rescue themselves becomes compromised. The real risks can take effect in the first few seconds,” said District Commodore Randy Podolsky of the 9<sup>th</sup> Western District U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. “The use of a life jacket will always increase their survival.”

The effects of cold water immersion are predictable and well documented by Dr. Gordon Giesbrecht, a thermophysiologicalist with the University of Manitoba and a world expert hypothermia through his 1-10-1 principle:

- 1 minute: Upon accidental immersion the body reacts with an involuntary GASP followed by hyperventilation of up to 10 times regular breathing. If your head is underwater during that initial deep gasp you can inhale enough water to drown. Do not panic. Breathing will return to close to normal.
- 10 minutes: In cold water a person will become INCAPACITATED to the point that the muscles in their limbs stop working and they will no longer be able to swim or rescue themselves. Try to rescue yourself before incapacitation becomes a factor and if you cannot, at least try to get as much of your body out of the water as possible to delay the onset of hypothermia.
- 1 hour: After an hour, depending on the water temperature, the body continues to cool and the resulting HYPOTHERMIA can create a range of symptoms from confusion to unconsciousness and eventually leading to death.

The best way to survive an accidental cold water immersion is to wear your life jacket. It will help keep your head above water in the event of an accidental immersion until you can get your breathing under control. It will also keep you afloat while you concentrate on rescuing yourself. If you are unable to rescue yourself, your life jacket can provide some thermal protection against the onset of hypothermia and keep you afloat until someone else can rescue you.

Additional water safety information can be found on the 9<sup>th</sup> District Western Region Coast Guard Auxiliary website [www.cgaux9wr.com](http://www.cgaux9wr.com) . Cold water safety presentations by the Auxiliary are available to local organizations, and can be arranged by contacting the Coast Guard Auxiliary District Public Affairs Officer [dso-pa@cgaux9wr.com](mailto:dso-pa@cgaux9wr.com).

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard created by an act of Congress in 1939. The Auxiliary, America's Volunteer Guardians, supports the Coast Guard in nearly all of the service's missions including Water Safety. For membership information, or to find a meeting location near you [www.9thwestern.com](http://www.9thwestern.com) .

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