



Searcher Safety & Health part II

Staying Part of the Solution Instead of Becoming Part of the Problem

When you respond to a search, you need to be both physically fit and healthy. A lack of either could jeopardize you, your team mates, the search subject, and more.

One important concept in SAR is that the 'scene' is never entirely safe. There are always going to be inherent risks present that cannot be completely eliminated. Your job is to be constantly aware of what they are, evaluate them, and take appropriate actions to mitigate risk to you and others.

Many times it takes a stronger person to say "I cannot respond" or "I cannot go out on another assignment" so we all need to be aware of our fitness to search and pass on the search if you are not prepared.

Situational Awareness

- To be a safe and effective searcher you must maintain situational awareness at all times.
- Situational awareness is the ability to maintain an accurate perception of your surroundings as well as the ability to detect situations requiring action.

**Situational
Awareness**
Why, When and How

Good situational awareness requires a good briefing, understanding the Incident Commander's intent, good communications, and a full awareness of your environment and surroundings during a search.

Have a full understanding of your assignment and what is expected of you (ask if you aren't sure), know what the search area will be like, have contingencies for what could go wrong or what to expect if you find the subject. All members of the team should have a shared mental picture of the plan, what is expected for weather, etc.

Situational Awareness

| | |
|---------------|--|
| WHITE | Unprepared & unready to take action. |
| YELLOW | Prepared, alert & relaxed. Good situational awareness. |
| ORANGE | Alert to probable danger. Ready to take action. |
| RED | Action mode. Focused on the emergency at hand |
| BLACK | Panic. Breakdown of physical & mental performance. |

Being aware of your environment and surroundings will allow you to transition appropriately between 'yellow' 'orange' and 'red.'

Good situational awareness means you are never in the 'white' or 'black.'

Common Scene-Related Dangers

- Weather
- Water Hazards
- Hornets, wasps, bees
- Poison Ivy
- Thorns and brambles
- Loose rock and gravel
- Old wells



Scene safety can cover many factors as are shown here and **is always our first concern.**

Realize that danger can come from any direction: underfoot, overhead, or behind you. Maintain constant situational awareness. SAR members not only need to be comfortable moving through the woods to be effective searchers, they need that skill to be safe in the woods and that means being aware of what may present a danger to you or your team.

This not only means being used to branches and rough terrain underfoot, it also involves developing the savvy to be constantly aware of changes in wind intensity, pattern, and direction; to notice sudden temperature drops; to pay attention to cloud conditions. Being aware of a weather change that could present a danger to you is critical.

Hazards

- Man-Made
 - Searcher Driven
 - Lost Person Driven
 - Driven by the R.O.W.
- Natural
 - Weather
 - Terrain
 - Flora & fauna



The hazards a searcher faces are generally of two types:

Man-Made

- Some man-made hazards are created by the searcher him or herself; avalanches are prime examples. In a broader sense, searchers may also create hazards from ill health, poor physical condition, or extending themselves beyond their training and the capacity of their equipment. Some other hazards are caused by the Rest Of the World outside of the search area.
- Some are caused by the lost person. Examples are the protective dog who stands between a lost person and the searcher, or the forest fire that is created by the person's signal fire gone awry. Still others have to do with other people: members of the search team, residents in the area, guarded marijuana patches, hunters who figure your white mittens must be a flag, or deer's tail, in spite of your orange vest.

Natural

- While we can control many facets of man-made hazards one way or another, it is often much more difficult to mitigate risks from natural sources. Weather is a very obvious potential risk, but so are the terrain features in the area – falling off a 25 foot ledge can be just as fatal, if less dramatic, than falling from a 700 foot cliff.
- Plants and wildlife are also of concern. Everyone thinks of poison ivy and bears, but ticks and spiders (both of which abound in the woods) can also be dangerous. In the spring and early summer bears are notoriously protective of cubs if startled or inadvertently approached.

If it's a danger to the lost person

- It's likely to be a danger to you
- The SAR environment carries with it inherent risks that more often can be mitigated than eliminated



ALWAYS THINK SCENE SAFETY!

Can you think of risks in the SAR environment that could only be reduced and not eliminated?

- *Weather?*
- *Terrain?*
- *Distance from roads and assistance?*

Searcher Driven ... Stirring the Cauldron

- Adrenaline and keen observation don't usually go together.
- Likewise exhaustion and keen observation don't go together.

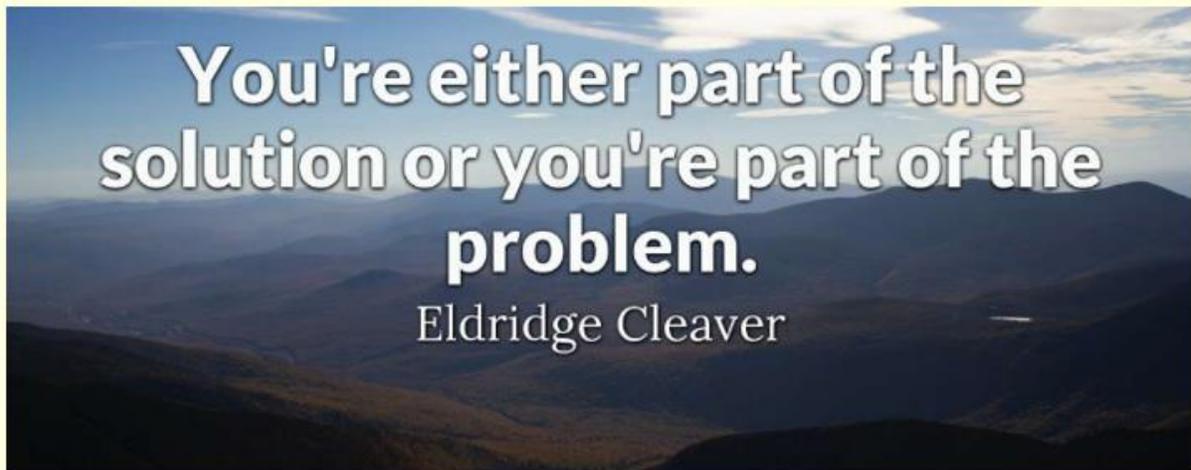


Many times a search will be initiated after night fall. As you jump out of bed to join the search, be aware that your physical and mental condition will determine how effective you are as searcher. It is important to be aware that adrenaline can impact your judgment and ability to perform. It is critical on a search to slow down enough to be a safe and effective searcher.

Exhaustion is an equally significant factor on the opposite end of the spectrum. Searchers need to recognize when they should opt out of an active role in the search - or even when they should decline to respond to the call entirely. It takes strength of character to stay home but the safety of the search team depends on each member exercising self-awareness and self-discipline about their own state of preparedness. The instinct will always be a desire to show up, pitch in and accept any assignment but there will be times when the right thing to do is to stay away.

Searcher Driven ... Stirring the Cauldron

Don't commit to serve in a function for which you are not appropriately trained and/or equipped



Accepting an assignment beyond your training or capabilities may put other searchers, the search subject and the entire mission at risk.

If you don't feel a high degree of comfort and confidence in what you are asked to do, then **SPEAK UP**. There is plenty for everybody to do.

It is important to remember that you can't be part of the solution if you become part of the problem.

There are been several SAR incidents in Vermont where untrained volunteers ended up requiring assistance during a mission, which clearly causes distraction and delays in achieving a successful outcome.

Driving To And From Search

NEVER endanger yourself or others

- Wear your seat belt.
- Drive carefully.
- Stop and take a nap on the way home or before you leave the scene.
- Consider road conditions like snow, fog, ice rain and night time animals.

Your #1 priority is to get home safely after a search!



Wearing your seat belt is not only the law but not wearing it brings your judgment into question and maybe you don't belong in SAR.

It is easy to get caught up in the urgency of getting to a search. NEVER cut corners on safety, excessive speeding on the way won't save you but a few minutes and probably won't get you fielded any sooner. It is also illegal, the search isn't an excuse, and it endangers not only you but your passengers and others.

After a long search it is normal to want to get home to your family, a shower, your own bed. Make sure you do by taking a nap before you leave, stopping for a nap on the way, drink some coffee, chew some gum, or put some CD's in the car you like to sing along with. Some teams will 'caravan' home to keep an eye on each other. Be sure you get home safely!

Thunderstorms...

- Lightning can strike in front of, underneath, or behind the cloud
- Typically, strikes behind have higher electrical power



Try to wait 30 minutes after the last flash or last thunder heard

Lightning is a very dramatic weather feature. It is common in the afternoon, very common in the mountains, and related to cold fronts moving through. Lightning presents significant danger to the searcher particularly in heavy forest or mountainous areas as it may not be possible to maintain good visual contact with all parts of the sky. That makes it easy for squall or storm lines and fast-moving cold fronts to “sneak up” on you.

It is important to understand there is a good reason for the old saying “bolt from the blue.” That’s because there have been many lightning strikes with blue sky overhead. Typically, these strikes in front of or behind the storm cloud itself are not only unexpected, they are more powerful than strikes underneath the cloud. Strikes have been known to happen as far as 10 miles away from the storm! While relatively rare, they need to be considered as a potential risk.

From the time you can hear the thunder you are within the potential strike area. Remember, these storm features move at speeds of over 35 mph so it doesn’t take long for them to cover a lot of ground. The National Weather Service recommends waiting for 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard before resuming outdoor activities.

Electrical storms don’t circle around and come back, but often occur in recurring bands, so one storm may be followed shortly by another.

How to Respond

- Split the group
- Seek lower ground
- In a vehicle
- Under uniform trees
- Insulate
- Lightning Position



The basic rule is to act immediately! If you hear buzzing in your ears or your hair stands on end you are at particular risk of an imminent strike. The whole idea is to make you a less likely target for the lightning as it seeks a path to the ground.

Split up the group, at least 75-100 feet in between, make sure you know where everyone went in case they need help. Why might splitting the group be an important tactic?

- *If lightning does strike someone, and the party is split up it will not injure everyone and there will be someone to respond or get help.*

Seek lower ground, if a vehicle or significant structure is available get inside, close the doors and windows and stay away from the windows.

If you are caught in a sloping open area try to get to a lower area.

The basic defensive position is to squat on the balls of your feet, not sit or lie down, and not to touch the ground with your hands. Try to insulate yourself from the ground as best you can – perhaps a sleeping pad, coil of rope, backpack with no metal in it etc. Cover your ears and close your eyes. The best strategy is when you hear or see a storm approaching the focus should be on getting to less exposed ground (lower elevation, away from tall trees, out of open areas, off the water, into a vehicle, etc.). Once you are exposed IN the storm staying in the ‘lightning position’ is recommended until the storm passes.

How NOT to Respond

- Don't be tallest
- Avoid isolated trees
- Avoid unusually high trees
- Stay out of "caves" and depressions on a ridge line
- Get rid of metal (packs with frames or stays, trek poles, etc.)



Don't be highest point or near anything that is highest. That means avoiding sentinel trees or trees that are unusually tall in the canopy, mountain or hill tops, fields, or being on the water.

Anything that is metal can make you a prime target for lightning. External frame packs, climbing hardware, and hiking poles should be put aside, as should wire basket stretchers and the like.

Caves are generally unsafe because if lightning strikes near it, the current may follow down through the cave.

Try to avoid wet areas as water transmits electricity more effectively than dry ground.

Mountain Weather

- Know what weather to expect where you are searching and be prepared for it
- Air generally cools as it rises
- Be prepared for the weather!



Searches in Vermont can easily involve mountainous terrain and mountain weather is notorious, and for good reason. The crest of the Green Mountains is especially prone to severe storms as well as white-outs. Before you leave the command post be sure to ask for a weather report. Understanding some generalities of mountain weather helps.

Air cools as a function of increasing elevation and will drop around 5 degrees for every 1,000 feet of elevation gained; that 70 degree noon temperature at the base becomes 50 or 55 a few thousand feet higher up the mountain.

Mountains tend to be windy places, and on a fair day the breeze generally travels uphill during the day and down during the evening. There is a lot of “over-the-top” flow as well and such flows often compress and expand the air involved.

In saddles, cols, and notches we frequently see accelerated winds as the moving air mass pushes through at the choke-point and speeds up (this is the Venturi Effect).

Clouds in General

- Clear in morning and getting cloudier – instability
- Cloudy in morning – precipitation potential
- Lowering and thickening clouds mean rapid deterioration
- Lumpy layered clouds often bring precipitation



Cumulus clouds, these cottony clouds can tell several stories:

- When it is generally clear in the morning with progressively more of these fluffy clouds appearing, it is because of instability caused by heating of the earth's surface by the sun. When they appear in the morning there is increased potential for precipitation during the day.
- When they start to lower and thicken or “congest”, it is a good indicator of conditions that are deteriorating rapidly. It is often in such conditions that you can feel drops in temperature and changes in the wind pattern and direction (*pattern refers to steady versus gusting*).
- When cumulus clouds start looking darker (thicker with more moisture content), and get a lumpy appearance it is also a good indicator of deteriorating conditions. Add cloud layering and the news gets worse. Layering is usually visible when we can see distant ceilings of clouds at different heights, an effect made more apparent when the clouds at different altitudes are going in somewhat different directions from each other...also not a good sign.

Cold Fronts & Squall Lines

- Increase in wind
- Drop in temperature
- Heavy precipitation
- Long line of dark clouds
- Shift in wind direction
- Frequently preceded by quiet



While precipitation of any type is just as wet, warm fronts tend to take longer to come in, tend to have winds that are steady rather than gusting, and generally are more “placid.”

Cold fronts (and squall lines that are related to them) come in faster and much more violently, so it’s a good chance that our “problem” weather might be related to a cold front.

The slide shows the key points to watch for. Note the last bullet point... there really is a calm before the storm (insects, birds, mammals (except SAR folk) are getting to shelter and hunkering down. You might note that birds sing much less, if at all as a storm (low front) approaches and will start to sing again as the low front passes.

Water Hazards

The basic problem...

Water is Darned Hard to Breathe

The intent of this information is to help the searcher stay safe, not to rescue others

Searchers are faced with a variety of water hazards, stream crossings, lake edges to check, and the like. This module is intended to focus on searcher safety in such environments, not on responding for rescue of victims in an aquatic environment.

Be careful in wilderness areas about water depth. What may look like the bottom may in fact be the top of a couple feet of silt and you will go in well over your knees

Water is not our natural element, it is, as the slide says, “damn hard to breathe”.

Good Initial Decision-Making

Time will often preclude a second chance

A mistake in/around water is often a fatal error



A mistake around the water is all too often a fatal mistake...and even when not fatal it can have serious consequences in a wilderness setting.

Strolling down to the lake and breaking through one inch of ice, knee deep, is shocking in your backyard but may quickly lead to hypothermia or frostbite in the woods and can become fatal.

Because it is not our natural element, self-rescue and partner rescue techniques are very time sensitive – there is often no time for a second chance. As an example, several studies have shown that after only 7 minutes many people are incapable of self-assistance after falling into 45 degree stream water.

While searching near frozen lakes and ponds watch for holes in the ice and report them.

**DO NOT GO INVESTIGATE - IF IT WAS TOO THIN FOR
SOMEONE ELSE IT IS TOO THIN FOR YOU.**

Bad Decisions

- Inexperience
- Lack of Respect
 - You don't conquer water
 - Macho loses
- Misplaced Priorities



If you're not a safe rescuer – you're just another victim

Remember your priorities in SAR: You, your team, the SEARCH subject, the rest of the world.

Water can be incredibly powerful, don't ever think you can handle it if you haven't been trained.

If the ice wasn't strong enough for someone else, it probably isn't strong enough for you... then there are two people needing rescue!

Good Decisions

- Time is critical
- Efficient Skills are needed
- Reducing the risk to others on scene is important too
- Simplicity (relates to the time issue)



Gut instinct is often exactly the wrong thing to do in an aquatic emergency, yet speed is indeed critical. That means that you want to be secure with your basic skills, assess the stream or pond carefully, come up with a “what if” plan and then act. It is important to practice basic skills such as a rope throw with bag, without bag, etc. ahead of time. Remember, the more folks you need to involve in a rescue attempt the more coordination and team practice it will take to pull it off successfully.

Introducing multiple rescuers also introduces a further element of risk. When involving multiple rescuers the “avalanche rule” applies, expose only one person at a time to the risky element, in other words, all other rescuers should be shore-based support whenever possible. As a matter of fact, if there is any way to do it, the initial rescuer should also remain dry.

Remember, anyone you put into the water is subject to the same powerful currents, numbing cold, and other conditions as the victim.

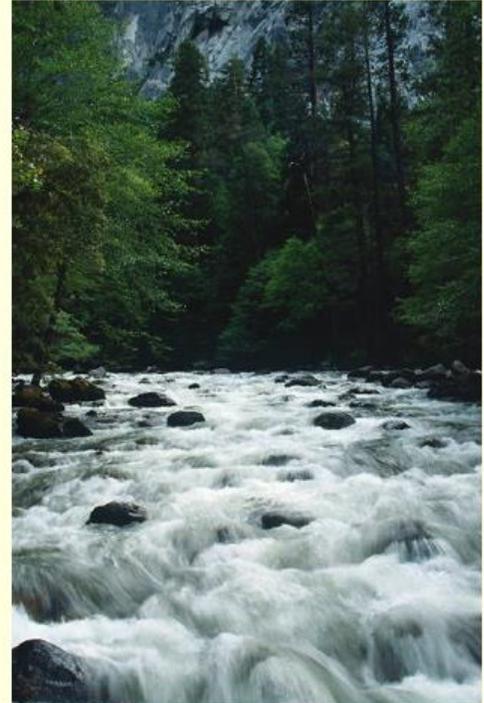
There are multiple concerns but drowning and hypothermia pretty much top the list. Aquatics rescue systems have been greatly simplified in recent years for a number of reasons. For one thing you will have very limited equipment to use during a search, for another, you just won't have the time to rig an elaborate system with redundancies.

Cold Water

How quickly we cool in water

- Immersion - 25x faster than air
- Submersion – 50x faster than air
- Moving Water – at 5 mph, 240x faster than air

On average in 45 degree water a person will be unable to save themselves after 7 minutes



TAKE A LITTLE TIME AND THINK ABOUT THIS SLIDE!

Basic Rescue Rules

- Reach
- Throw (or row)
- Don't Go !

In moving water, nothing is tied
(pendulum effect)



Good decision-making dictates that the exposure to rescuers is minimized at all times. There are three considerations when performing water rescues:

- Maintain a position of balance and safety
- Communicate with the person
- Maintain eye contact with the person

You can reach with an arm (without falling in), and sometimes a leg if you have a good grip to keep you from being pulled in, but usually with a branch or perhaps a hiking pole is best.

When you throw something there are three possibilities

- Throw something that is buoyant enough to support the person (e.g. life jacket)
- Throw something that attaches you to the person (e.g. throw bag or rope)
- Throw something that does both (e.g. rescue ring with rope)

Do NOT attempt a swimming rescue, swimming rescue attempts by untrained persons all too frequently result in double-drowning. In the wilderness setting we rarely have a boat to row out to the person but if available AND SAFE, one could be used.

It is very critical that neither rescuers nor victims ever be tied to a rope when moving water is involved, invariably the current will swing them downstream until the rope goes taut and then it will help keep them submerged.

Stillwater

- Sudden changes in depth
- Wet clay and silt
- Shore slope & bottom slope may not match
- **Work Water Edges in Partners Only**

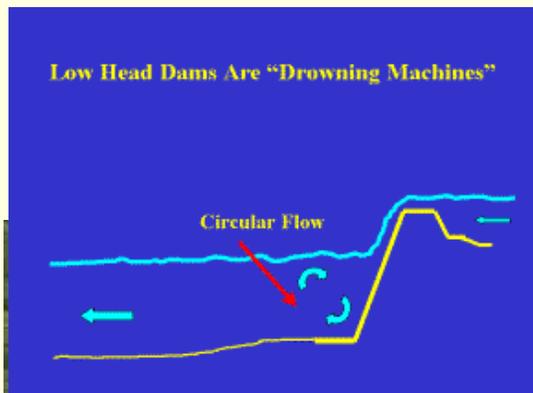


Lakes and ponds are subject to several potential threats:

- There can be sudden changes in depth due to irregularities in the bottom contour.
- Frequently there is a slick clay and a silt layer under and around the water that can take you off your feet faster than you can respond.
- While it is true that shore slope and bottom slope off that shore are related, it is only a generality without a lot of precision, don't bet your life on it!

It is a very good idea, when searching the edges of ponds or lakes, or for that matter, any shoreline, to work in pairs at all times and wear appropriate PPE (life jackets in particular).

Moving Water



Low Head Dams



Precaution: stay away from the immediate upstream and downstream area of any small dam – it is not a safe area to be searching from the water. Often times these dam tops have only an inch or so of water pouring over them and make an all-too-tempting “crossing.”

Rescue: if it's you, get rid of your pack. You'll be getting pounded by all the debris trapped in the recirculation so protect yourself as best you can – visibility is typically poor as well, so it's not the easiest thing to see something coming. Get a big breath of air when you pop up and when you drop to the bottom try to swim along the bottom downstream clear of the “boil” or downstream line of the hydraulic. If a partner stays on-shore he can throw a line and drag them over the boil and downstream. An alternative is to have them work to the side and have the on-shore partner use a branch, pole, etc. to pull them clear of the boil.

Moving Water

- Cold Water
- Entrapment
- Turbulence reduces visibility – can also happen in still water
- Strainers



As we saw earlier, cold moving water will chill you much faster than cold still water.

Water temperatures in Vermont (Lake Champlain) range from a low of about 34° in mid-winter to 75° in mid summer.

Moving water is incredibly powerful: it can pin you against an immovable object, such as a rock or tree, with such force that you become trapped.

Strainers are obstacles in the water that allow water through and act like a net – typically trees or branches that have fallen into the stream or river (see the photograph above). Strainers are frequently where drowning victims are discovered. When a body in the water is washed into a strainer, the branches can flex enough to let it part way through, where it can be held in place under water. If you are in a stream and see that you are headed for a strainer with no room to maneuver, prepare to take action. Just before hitting the strainer, kick with your legs, push with your arms and lurch, grabbing as high up as possible onto the strainer. The goal is to do everything possible to avoid being swept under the water. Ideally, your aim is to climb up onto the strainer but at the very least you may be able to buy some time until your shore-based partner can assist.

Wading

- Anything over knee – moving
- Anything to chest height makes you too buoyant
- Seek the low spots
- Use a pole
- Face into current
- Do a team wade
- Move one thing or person at a time



THE BEST ANSWER IS DON'T!

It is probably worth walking several miles to find a safe crossing.

Remember, anything over knee depth can be very forceful and have significant consequences if anything goes wrong. Anything approaching your chest will cause you to start to become buoyant reducing your footing and should never be attempted unless you are properly trained.

Seek low spots, you can't slip off them as easily and use a pole whenever possible (a sturdy sapling trunk works). Face into the current, bury the pole in a low spot, lean on it, move one foot at a time, repeat the process.

An alternative is to do a team wade a straight line with everyone holding a tree limb or pole in their hands at waist level, moving with the line upstream to downstream with one person moving a step at a time (see photo of a wedge team wade above).

Crossings In General

- Waist strap off
- Sternum strap off
- Shoulder Straps loosened

- Pick the widest & straightest part of the stream or river



Whether crossing on rocks or wading, there are precautions you should take whenever attempting a stream crossing:

- Remove your waist and sternum straps
- Loosen your shoulder straps

Most packs are buoyant enough to provide floatation for you in an emergency if you get it off and hold onto it.

When assessing the scene for a crossing point **it is always OK to divert off your search track to cross and then come back into line.**

Pick a spot that is both straight and wide. Straight parts have fewer deep channels carved into them by current (such as would be found at the outside of a bend), and wider sections are very likely to be more shallow. Look for strainers, low head dams, rapids, or other potential dangers downstream before attempting any crossing.

Ice – The Winter Dimension

A state of constant change

Ice Safety is often compromised by:

- Inlets and outlets
- Culverts
- Objects protruding through ice
- Currents and Springs
 - Water on otherwise dry ice
 - Wet snow

There are NO guarantees when dealing with ice on ponds, lakes, or creeks. Generally speaking, newer ice (being clear and more elastic) is stronger than aged ice (white and more brittle). While 2” of new ice will usually hold a person’s weight if there are no other complications, 4” is the minimum recommendation for safe travel on foot for one person.

One of the problems is that ice is often compromised from below, not above. While the surface may be a flat sheet, the under-side may vary dramatically in thickness.

On ponds be particularly cautious of areas near inlets, outlets, or culverts because these are areas where moving water can be a factor. Be it still or moving water both currents and springs can dramatically affect ice, wearing it thinner from below. Objects protruding through the ice cause potential weak areas due to heating of the different material (wood, etc.) by the sun.

The presence of snow on a water body or course does not guarantee ice below. Under some conditions a micro-layer of ice forms to support very light fluffy snow.

Ice forms safety cracks due to expansion and contraction during temperature changes. Sometimes water pools on low spots on safe ice, sometimes it is open water entirely. Wet snow (looks grayish compared to white snow around it) should also trigger you to potential problem areas.

In streams, brooks, and creeks it is not unusual to have “bottom” ice. This forms when ice is covered by rising water. Whether the ice below the water is safe or not is very difficult to determine unless you can be sure it is true “bottom” ice that goes all the way to the bottom of the water course, leaving no chance for water beneath it.

Ice Safety (1)

- 2” to be safe for a person – 4” minimum recommended
- Always work in partners
- Groups should be spread apart just like in thunderstorms



Generally you will not be and should not be searching on ice.

When making the decision to cross ice on a body of water, remember to look for 4” of ice. A good precaution is to cross with a rope in hand if you carry one in your ready pack. As in open water, work in partner grouping but spread people out like you would in an electrical storm. It is usually not necessary to be more than 30 or 40 feet apart on ice.

Ice Safety (2)

- Time is critical
- In general at 32 degrees a victim can't help themselves after 3 minutes and can't even assist in their rescue after 7 minutes
- Partners assume the horizontal – spread on ice
- Use swimming motion to swim onto ice
- Traction helps (crampons, pole tips)
- Roll to Safety (Do NOT attempt to mantle out or stand up until back on safe ice)

If anything happens and someone ends up in the water, remember that time is critical. Don't move to the person in trouble while upright. Immediately all others should assume a horizontal position, spreading their weight out on the ice. It may be possible to move closer to the person in trouble by crawling to gain reach with a rope or hiking pole.

The person in the water should use a swimming motion to "swim" up onto the ice.

Using crampons removed from boots, hiking pole tips, or a knife, etc. to give you a purchase on the ice will help. Either use these devices to drag yourself back to safety or roll. Under no circumstances should you attempt to mantle up (pushing down on the ice) onto the ice. It is very likely to result in a further collapse of the ice and risk submerging you out of contact with the hole. Do not attempt to stand until clearly back to safety.

The Aftermath

Remember – victims of immersion are noted for secondary hypothermia (after-drop) but can respond to appropriate rewarming better than most hypothermia victims



All ice water immersion victims should be treated for hypothermia, regardless of how they appear to be doing once they are out of the water. Be aware that such cases are prone to a condition called 'after drop' where the body temperature drops significantly 20-30 minutes after warming. This is due to the body circulating previously sequestered cold blood back to the core from the extremities. To prepare for after drop, keep the victim stationary (which is somewhat counter-intuitive) and apply warming methods - blankets, heat packs to the groin and armpits - and wait for 30 to 60 minutes if possible before moving on.

Also it is important to keep in mind that even if somebody has been submerged in cold water and appears lifeless after removal from the water, they are not dead until they are 'warm and dead.' The body can go into a 'diving reflex' condition where it can actually survive in cold water without breathing for an extended period of time. This is particularly true for young children.

The Core of Safety

- ✓ Honest appraisal of skills and equipment
- ✓ Honest appraisal of abilities TODAY
- ✓ Constant situational awareness
 - ✓ (around you and skyward)
- ✓ Maintain your equipment regularly
- ✓ Training - Training - Training

Health and Safety are often a matter of choice and mindset. It is also a matter of choice in the sense that developing a safety-oriented view takes a commitment on your part and constant vigilance.

Remember the points shown in the slide because if you have a problem, you won't be part of the solution.

Priorities As A First Responder

- You
- Your Partner
- The Search Subject
- The Rest Of the World (ROW).

This may seem cold-hearted but it is the way it has to be.

Your first priority is to get home safely so you can deploy effectively many more times in your career, much like when flying in an airplane putting your oxygen mask on first THEN helping others.

Next priority is to keep your partner safe. He or she will help you if you get in trouble, and this helps maintain an effective SAR team.

Once we are safe we then look at what we can do for the subject of our search. Keep in mind, if they are known to be deceased your willingness to take risk must drop measurably.

After the above, make every effort to protect the rest of the world. A good example is driving too fast to a search or driving home when too tired. Both will potentially endanger the ROW, certainly you and any passengers in your car as well as the subject if you never arrive at the search. Driving a reasonable speed may delay your arrival at the scene by 5 minutes and is highly unlikely to make any difference to the outcome of the search.

Keep in mind as discussed earlier that all SAR missions will have some inherent risks and are not completely safe. Your job is to recognize hazards, mitigate when possible, and evaluate the risk/benefit of proceeding with a particular course of action.

Congratulations, you have finished this module

You may close this window to return to the main course and select another module to complete.

Be sure you keep track on your course checklist so you know which modules you have completed