



AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION INTRODUCTION TO RIVER SAFETY AND RESCUE

COURSE OVERVIEW: To introduce the student to basic safety and rescues on moving water, that are meant to be done in the first few minutes of an emergency, with a minimum of equipment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Understand that prevention is the key to a safe river trip.
- Understand how to avoid potential dangers.
- Learn to concentrate on the safest, simplest and quickest methods of effective rescue.
- Develop the skills to manage minor river incidents.

PREREQUISITES: All paddle craft are welcome. Students should be an intermediate paddler, capable of ferrying and catching eddies in moving water up to and including Class I difficulty. They should be in good physical condition, with good or solid swimming skills. Students should dress for swimming and prolonged immersion.

COURSE DURATION: 6-8 hours

LOCATION: A moving river up to and including Class I difficulty with a deep, clean chute, and eddies. In case of bad weather, sheltered classroom space is required.

(Class I: Easy. Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions, all obvious and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self rescue is easy.)

COURSE OUTLINE

I: Introduction to Basic Safety and Rescue:

Avoiding Trouble
Trip planning, competent leader
On-water Group Management
Rescue Philosophy
The Big 3 - near drowning, hypothermia and spinal mgt. - need for further training
RETHROG
KISS
Rescue Organization
Reality of injuries and death

II: Overview of Equipment:

Clothing
Boats with short painters and floatation
Rescue Gear
PFD
Helmet
Knife & Whistle
First Aid Kit
Radio and/or cell phone when appropriate

III: Swimming Skills:

Swimming- the basis for self-rescue
Defensive and aggressive Swimming
Moving water entries
Crossing eddy lines
Swimming into strainers (Discussion Only)
Swimming over pour overs and ledges (Discussion Only)

IV: Wading Skills:

Basic Principle – always maintain your balance!
Individual – with paddle
Group wading: Wedge and Line Astern

V: Rope handling skills:

Selecting a Rescue Line
Rope Materials & Construction
Breaking Strengths
Throw bag design and lengths
Webbing and Prussiks
Throw Bag Management
Handling a rope in current
Avoid “Standing in the Loop”
Throw & Stance (Underhand, overhand, sidearm)
Re-stuffing and carrying
Use of Coiled Line
Positioning to pendulum a swimmer
Setting up the throw
Catching the line
Vectoring the line
Belaying Skills
Individual and Buddy Belays
Dynamic Belays
Ferrying Lines across the River
High Lines
Floating Lines
Tag lines for stabilization of foot entrapment



VI: Rescue of Loose Boats and Gear:

Self Rescue

Swimmers should hold on to boat and paddle when appropriate.

Rescue people first, gear second

When manpower permits, split up the load, one person helps the swimmer, another the boat, and the third the paddle

Using "Snowplow boat bump" rescues.

Boat over boat rescues

Curl or side by side boat rescues

Towing

VII: Communication and River Signals:

Use of hand, paddle and whistle signals
(AWA Handout)

VIII: Releasing Pins (Lecture only – If Time Permits):

Boat Pinning Mechanisms

Strong Arm Releases

IX: Closing:

This is just an introduction

Highly recommend the three days ACA Swift Water Rescue Course

Recommended Resources:

Whitewater Rescue Manual by

Walbridge & Sundmacher

River Rescue by Bechdel & Ray

Swiftwater Rescue by Slim Ray

Whitewater Self Defense (Video) by

Ford, Walbridge, & DeCuir

River Safety Reports by Walbridge

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