Water Awareness and Charge Certificate Manual

Module 16: Swimming Rescue Procedure

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Module Contents

Revision History

Module Title		Comments	Rev No	Revision Date
Module 6:	Rescue Procedure	Initial Release	1.0	3 Jan 2010
Module 16:	Swimming Rescue Procedure	previous Module 6	1.1	23 Mar 2010
Module 16:	Swimming Rescue Procedure	Added Instinctive Drowning Response	1.2	7 Oct 2011
Module 16:	Swimming Rescue Procedure	Major revision and update	1.3	19 Jan 2014
Module 16:	Swimming Rescue Procedure	Canoe / Kayak rescue updated Outcomes Added	1.4	24 Nov 2016

Outcomes

After completing this module, the certificate holder will:

- Recognise swimmers who are in difficulty
- Be able to execute basic lifesaving techniques.
- Demonstrate how to rescue a swimmer without endangering themselves.

1 Role of Lookout and Rescue Personnel

As the Water Awareness Certificate holder it is your responsibility to ensure that a vigilant watch is maintained over the Cubs and Scouts under your care during a water activity.

Three key elements to maintaining a vigilant watch are:-

- Watchfulness
- Assessment
- Action

- Recognition of risk areas and activities
- Recognizing a casualty in difficulty
- Assessing the situation
- Immediate response to a situation
- Calling for back-up: by whistle
- Carrying out the rescue – using some form of flotation
- Getting the casualty to a secure position

2 Instinctive Drowning Response

The Instinctive Drowning Response (IDR) – so named by Francesco A. Pia, Ph.D., is what people do to avoid actual or perceived suffocation in the water. And it does not look like we expect as most of us have learned what drowning looks like by watching television. There is very little splashing, no waving, and no yelling or calls for help of any kind. To get an idea of just how quiet and undramatic from the surface drowning can be, consider this: It is the number two cause of accidental death in US children, age 15 and under – of the approximately 750 children who will drown each year, about 375 of them do so within 25 yards of a parent or other adult. In ten percent of those drownings, the adult will actually watch them do it, having no idea it is happening. Drowning does not look like drowning – Dr. Pia described the instinctive drowning response like this:

"Except in rare circumstances, drowning people are physiologically unable to call out for help. The respiratory system was designed for breathing. Speech is the secondary or overlaid function. Breathing must be fulfilled, before speech occurs.

Drowning people's mouths alternately sink below and reappear above the surface of the water. The mouths of drowning people are not above the surface long enough for them to exhale, inhale, and call out for help. When drowning people's mouths are above the surface, they exhale and inhale quickly before their mouths start to sink below the surface again.

Drowning people cannot wave for help. Nature instinctively forces them to extend their arms laterally and press down on the water's surface. Doing this permits drowning people to leverage their bodies so they can lift their mouths out of the water to breathe.

Throughout the IDR, drowning people cannot voluntarily control their arm movements. Physiologically, drowning people who are struggling on the surface of the water cannot stop drowning and perform voluntary movements such as waving for help, moving toward a rescuer, or reaching out for a piece of rescue equipment.

From beginning to end of the IDR people's bodies remain upright in the water, with no evidence of a supporting kick. Unless rescued by a trained lifeguard, these drowning people can only struggle on the surface of the water from 20 to 60 seconds before submersion occurs".

Of course, this doesn't mean that a person that is yelling for help and thrashing isn't in real trouble – they are experiencing aquatic distress. Not always present before the instinctive drowning response, aquatic distress doesn't last long – but unlike true drowning, these victims can still assist in their own rescue. They can grab lifelines, throw rings, etc.

Other signs that a person may be drown:

- Head low in the water, mouth at water level
- Head tilted back with mouth open
- Eyes glassy and empty, unable to focus
- Eyes closed
- Hair over forehead or eyes
- Not using legs – Vertical
- Hyperventilating or gasping
- Trying to swim in a particular direction but not making headway
- Trying to roll over on the back
- Unable to pull themselves out of the water.

So if a crew member falls overboard and everything looks OK – don't be too sure. Sometimes the most common indication that someone is drowning is that they don't look like they're drowning. They may just look like they are treading water and looking up at the deck. To be sure, ask them "Are you alright?" If they can answer at all – they probably are. If they return a blank stare, you may have less than 30 seconds to get to them. **NB; children playing in the water make noise. When they get quiet, you need to get to them and find out why.**

This section is based on an article by Mario Vittone. This and many other informative articles can be found at http://mariovittone.com/

3 Rescue Procedure

3.1 Identify The Victim

If possible, first appoint a lookout to keep track of the victim while you start the rescue.

A victim requiring rescue can be in one of 3 mental states:

- Responsive: the victim will be cognisant and able to call for help. The victim will respond to instructions, be able to describe their problem to you and assist in their own rescue.
- Panicked: the victim will be thrashing in the water and making every effort to get out of the water. This includes climbing onto anyone or anything within reach. The victim will not respond to instructions
- Unresponsive:

Victims can change state in an instant, so always be alert during a rescue

3.2 Lifesaving Procedure

The first things you learn in lifeguard training (lifesaving classes) is: **reach, throw, row and go:**

REACH, THROW, ROW AND GO:

Reach The most drowning occur within 7 meters of safety. One reaches out to the victim with a hand or leg, or any available object, like an oar, paddle, tree branch, towel, etc.

Throw If the victim is beyond reach, try a throwing rescue. A float with a line is best. But anything that floats that is big enough to support the victim life jacket, tires, inflated tube will do.

Row If the victim is too far from the shore for reaching or throwing to be effective, then use a boat, if one is available.

Go A go rescue is a swimming rescue. **Go in after the victim, only if you have lifesaving training.** It is best performed with some type of floating support and should not be considered until the faster, easier, safer methods, REACH, THROW, ROW, have been rejected as unsuitable.

Never expose yourself to unnecessary risk as you may worsen the situation by becoming a victim yourself

Do not attempt a rescue without the aid of equipment

Whenever possible appoint a lookout on shore to keep the victim in sight while you conduct the rescue

Many a brave life has been lost attempting rescues through ignorance of these simple skills

3.3 Reaching Assists

a. If someone is drowning near shore, hold a pole, oar, long stick, shirt, towel or anything close by for him to grab.

b. Wade out from shore a little if it is not very deep and the water is not very fast. Do not wade out unless you know the bottom is safe. Do not wade deeper than chest deep

c. Many public facilities have Torpedo Rescue Buoys available for emergency rescue purposes.

3.4 Throwing Assists

a. If someone is drowning further out, throw or push something to him.

b. Examples: push a boat, spare tire (it floats). Ice chests or throw a plastic bottle, life jacket etc. Anything that will float will work-anything for the victim to hang onto.

c. Throw the buoyancy device within arm's reach, but without hitting the victim. Often providing the victim with buoyancy device will solve the immediate problem. Encourage them to hang onto the device, rest and then swim to shore.

d. If a rope is around, tie it to something that floats and throw to him. Then pull him in.

3.5 Rowing Assists

a. If the victim is very far out and a boat is available, you can row row out to him.

b. Once you get to the victim, stop out of reach or extend pole to be grasped by the victim. DO NOT let him grab hold of the side of the boat. He could turn it over. Pull the victim towards the transom of the boat

c. It is best then to have him hold on as you return to shore. If he must get in, be very careful not to capsize the boat

d. If the boat does tip over, hang on to it. It will float.

e. If the boat does tip over and you manage to turn it right side up, it will be filled with water. Get into the boat (It will float) and start paddling back to shore

3.5.1 Canoe rescue

Rescuer approaches victim slowly with the nose of the canoe. Assist them to climb aboard over the nose, using your weight to balance the canoe. Once they are aboard, paddle to shore

3.5.2 Knee-boards, paddle ski's or windsurfer boards

Approach the casualty from the side. Grasp the casualty's wrist and slide off the rescue board to the opposite side. Help the casualty extend his / her arm across the rescue board. Assist the casualty onto the board. Have the casualty lie on his/ her stomach facing the bow. Kick to turn the bow of the rescues board towards the shore. Carefully climb onto the rescue board between the casualty's legs, keep your legs in the water for stability. Paddle to shore.

3.5.3 Kayak rescue

Rescuer approaches victim slowly with the nose of the kayak. Instruct the victim to hug the nose of the boat and lift their feet. This position allows you to see and talk to the victim without them being able to easily capsize you. Once the victim is secure, push the victim to safety

3.6 Go: Swimming Rescue

A swimming rescue should be a last resort and only used if the other methods are not feasible

a. It is difficult for anyone to make a swimming rescue while dressed, so don't try. Remove any unnecessary clothes you may be wearing.

b. Enter the water slowly keeping your head above water so you can keep the victim in sight if he is floating. Do not dive in.

c. Take a flotation device if at all possible. Any object that floats well enough to support the victim's weight and is light enough to move through the water should be used. Lifejackets, inflated tubes, etc can be used. Unless you are a very strong swimmer, trained in rescue techniques, a GO swimming rescue is very tiring and some floating device should be used.

d. Where circumstances permit, the rescuer should have a line attached to himself or the floatation device so people ashore or on a boat can help to recover the victim to safety

e. Speak to the victim as you approach and stop out of reach. Assess their mental state and push the flotation device to the victim.

f. If the victim is responsive, they will take hold of the flotation. Tell them to relax and tow them safety using one of the tows described in section 3.8

g. If the victim is unresponsive, turn them face up in the water. Check for breathing for 10 seconds. If the victim is not breathing, give 2 slow rescue breaths. Keep the victim's head clear of the water tow the victim to shore as quickly as possible

h. If the victim is panicking, you can attempt to control the victim using one of the methods described in section 3.7.

3.7 Panicking Victims

Victims will panic when the stress of a situation overwhelms their ability to manage it. As mentioned above, the victim will be thrashing in the water and making every effort to get out of the water. This includes climbing onto anyone or anything within reach. The victim will not respond to instructions. This poses a real danger to the rescuer as the victim could hurt or even drown the rescuer.

You want to get behind a panicking victim. This will allow you to hold them with your legs in the knee cradle position. You can achieve this in 3 ways

- Swim around behind the victim. Make sure you remain out of arms reach while doing this.
- Swim underwater and surface behind the victim. You must submerge completely to do this, so it will not be possible if you are wearing a PFD.
- As the victim reaches out to you, grab their wrist with your opposite hand and pull them towards you. This will spin the victim towards you and you will be able to hold them in a knee cradle.

In most circumstances, as soon as the victim has positive buoyancy and the security of contact with the rescuer, they will stop panicking

If the victim does manage to grab you, they will attempt to climb on top of you as a way to get out of the water. The surest way to escape is to descend below the water. This is the last place the victim wants to go and they will not try to follow. If you are wearing a PFD and cannot descend, you can escape from the victim by placing you hands on his chest and pushing up and away.

If you do not feel confident that you can control the victim without risking your own safety, stay clear and wait for the victim to exhaust themselves, and then follow the procedure for an unresponsive victim. This puts the victim in a more serious situation, but it is preferable to you becoming a victim as well.

3.8 Unresponsive Victims

As you approach a assumed unresponsive victim, splash them to check they aren't just looking at the fish.

Once you have determined they victim is unresponsive, get someone ashore to call for medical assistance immediately. Brain damage occurs within 4-6 minutes, so quick response is vital.

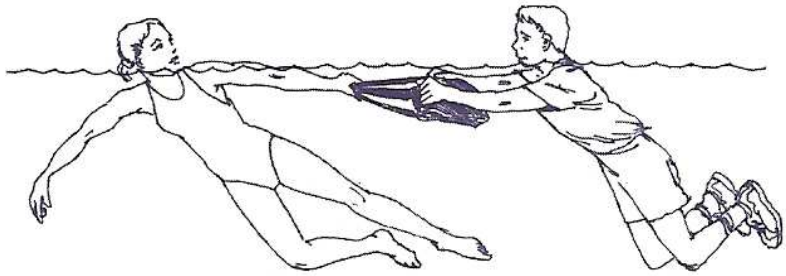
Typically, unresponsive victims will be face down in the water. The priority with any unresponsive victim is to get their face clear of the water so they may breathe. The easiest way to achieve this is to cross your arms, take hold of the victims hands and then uncross your arms. The victim will turn face up.

Assess the victim for breathing. If there is none, you can give 2 rescue breaths. If the victim responds, continue giving rescue breaths while getting the victim to sore as quickly as possible. If the victim does not respond to the first 2 breaths,

abandon rescue breathing and get the victim ashore without delay so that a proper assessment and CPR can begin.

3.9 Tows

A **non-contact tow** is carried out with the use of a towing aid such as a flotation device, tog bag, towel or clothing. While towing the victim, talk to them and keep eye contact as much as possible. This is the preferred method of performing a swimming rescue on a responsive person. The rescuer can quickly release the towing aid if the casualty panics and 'climbs' along it towards the rescuer, thereby ensuring his/her own safety.



The **underarm tow** can be in two different positions. The position on the left allows for fast tows while controlling the motion of the victim. The position on the right allows you to keep eye contact with the victim

The **Collar Tow** is very efficient and the fastest way to get an unresponsive victim to safety. It is not recommended for responsive victims as you cannot keep eye contact with the victim.

The **Modified Swimmers Push** is effective for victims wearing PDFs. Place their feet on your shoulders and push the victim to safety. It is effective for controlling the movement of the victim while remaining in contact.