

# L. A. SOUND BIGHT

A **bight** is a length of rope that does not cross itself. Knots tied without use of the working end are called knots on the bight.

## Remain Calm!

Depending on your size and physical strength, you may only retain the necessary motor skills to swim for between 10 to 30 minutes. In most cases, you will drown ~ not from exposure or hypothermia, but from swimming failure.

## What to Expect:

- You lose body heat 32 times faster in cold water than in cold air. Once in the water, all your strength and effort **MUST** go towards getting out of the water.
- Most accidents involve small boats that, with practice, can be righted and re-boarded. If you are not alone, huddle together facing each other to maintain body heat.
- **DON'T PANIC.** Let your life jacket work for you. Swimming or treading water can shorten survival time by more than 50%.



## Cold Water Immersion

Falling into cold water is more than just an inconvenience, it's downright dangerous. For example, your body may react to the cold water or sustained immersion in cold water in uncontrollable ways. Experts have described what happens to the body when immersed in cold water and have summarized the features and characteristics into four distinct stages. Failure to recognize this can lead to hypothermia.

- **COLD SHOCK** Falling into cold water provokes an immediate gasp reflex. If your head is under water, you will inhale water and it's unlikely you'll resurface if not wearing a life jacket. This stage lasts 3-5 minutes and you should concentrate on getting your breathing under control and getting out of the water.
- **SWIMMING FAILURE** In just 3 - 30 minutes, due to loss of muscle coordination, swimming becomes a struggle and the body tends to go vertical making forward movement difficult.
- **HYPOTHERMIA** True hypothermia sets in after about 30 minutes. Most victims never make it to this stage since 75% of individuals succumb and die in the earlier stages of immersion. At this stage, regardless of your body type, size, insulation of clothing, acclimatization and other factors, your body's core temperature gets dangerously low. Victims are usually unconscious at this stage.



## What to Do... or NOT

- Gently move the victim to a warm shelter.
- Check for breathing and a heartbeat. Start CPR if necessary.
- If you have dry clothes or a blanket, remove the wet clothes. Use a minimum of body movement since rough handling can cause cardiac arrest. If available, put a stocking cap on the victim's head to reduce heat loss.
- If possible, keep the victim in the same position as rescued to prevent a injury caused by moving them incorrectly.
- NEVER give a hypothermic person alcohol. Alcohol dilates veins which will accelerate heat loss.
- DO NOT apply heat to the arms and legs. This forces cold blood back toward the heart, lungs, and brain, lowering core body temperature and causing "after drop" which can be fatal.
- DO NOT massage the victim or give the victim a hot bath.

• **POST RESCUE COLLAPSE** A rescued victim must be handled very carefully. When a person is removed from cold water, the body will react to the surrounding air and the body position. Blood pressure often drops, inhaled water can damage the lungs, and heart problems can develop as cold blood from the extremities is released into the body core. Proper medical attention is essential to re-warm the body safely.

Any victim pulled from cold water should be treated for hypothermia - this is the very dangerous and important stage of survival which is a result of cold water immersion. At this point, you should seek trained medical treatment immediately. Symptoms of hypothermia may include intense shivering, loss of coordination mental confusion, cold and blue (cyanotic) skin, weak pulse, uncontrolled breathing, irregular heartbeat, and enlarged pupils. Once shivering stops, core body temperature begins to drop critically. Try to prevent body cooling and get the victim to a medical facility immediately.



### *If it's YOU Waiting for Help to Arrive*

Huddle with others if there are several people in the water. However, if you find yourself alone, button up your clothing, cinch your life jacket down, keep your head out of the water as much as possible and, if you're wearing a hat, pull it down tight. Kick off any heavy shoes or boots, but know that some boots like waders can be turned upside down to create an air pocket making the boots good emergency flotation.

Use the H.E.L.P. position to maintain heat: cross your calves, bend you knees and pull your legs close to your body. Cross your arms and tuck your hands flat under your armpits.



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