

# HYPOTHERMIA

## The 120 Degree Rule:

If the combined air & water temperature is 120 degrees or LESS:

**WET SUIT  
DRY SUIT &  
INSULATING LAYER  
Are Essential!**

The first layer of protection between you and the river is your gear.

Choose your gear for:  
**COMFORT • FLEXIBILITY  
INSULATION**

## The Right GEAR Can be a LIFE SAVER

### Helmet:

The most important feature of a river helmet is good coverage of the head, including the ears, temples & back of the neck. It should have a well-fitted chin strap. An insulating layer, such as fleece or neoprene offers additional warmth and protection.

### Wetsuit:

How it works: Once water fills the suit, it is warmed by your skin. A wetsuit provides maximum protection from injury & adds flotation and padding. It maintains its effectiveness even when it is ripped or damaged. A paddle jacket can eliminate wind chill factor.

### Drysuit:

Functions as a wind & water proof shell, creating a barrier against the elements. Layering underneath for warmth can vary with conditions.

### Shorts:

Protect your wet or dry suit from abrasion and give you traction when seated and wet.



### What is Hypothermia?

Hypothermia is a medical emergency. Untreated, it results in death. Body temperature falls when the body cannot produce heat as fast as it is being lost. Deep-body, or core temperature falls and the body begins to malfunction.

### What does it do?

Hypothermia can occur rapidly during cold-water immersion. Because water has a tremendous capacity to drain heat from the body, prolonged immersion in water even slightly cool can cause hypothermia.

### What does it look like?

Hypothermia may be difficult to recognize in its early stages of development. Things to watch for include unusually withdrawn or bizarre behavior, irritability, confusion, slowed or slurred speech, altered vision, uncoordinated movements, and unconsciousness.

### What do I do about it?

At the first signs of hypothermia, move the person away from the water, into dry clothes and near a source of heat. If nothing else is available, walk the victim along the bank until he warms up and stops shivering. Rewarm the victim by covering them with blankets, sleeping bags and body-to-body contact.

### What happens next?

As the victim's core temperature drops further, muscles become rigid, there is a loss of consciousness and the victim can slip into cardiac arrest. Immediate evacuation and hospitalization is mandatory.

### How can I prevent it?

- Anyone coming out of the water after a long swim should be evaluated for hypothermia.
- Adequate food consumption, warm clothing and constant activity provide the first line of defense against hypothermia.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine. These drugs dilate blood vessels, making warming more difficult.

### Personal Flotation Device:

PFD's should be worn by all boaters on the South Fork. The most important factors in selecting a PFD are Fit & Flotation.

**FIT:** A properly fitted life jacket cinches snugly at the torso and does not ride up around the face in rapids. A good test of fit is to have a paddle buddy yank the shoulders upwards before you leave shore. A well-fitted PFD will budge only slightly.

**FLOTATION:** The main purpose of a PFD is to keep your head above water so you can breathe. Your PFD must have enough flotation for your body weight combined with the level of difficulty of the river. What is merely exhausting to someone wearing a proper PFD, might be fatal to an unprotected swimmer.

The conditions of the South Fork warrant PFD's rated Class III or Class V. All Coast Guard approved PFD's must have a tag denoting Classification. What's your PFD rated?

### Gloves:

Cold air and water can rapidly sap energy and sensitivity from a paddler's hands. Even on a borderline weather day, carry hand protection for the possibility that conditions may change later in the day.

### Foot Wear:

Warmth PLUS traction. A must for walking on slippery surfaces. Wet suit booties may not be enough. Sneakers with Polypro socks are often better. Remember, part of boating happens on land.

**COLD FEET? - WEAR A HAT!** A hat will help keep your hands & feet warm by reducing loss of body heat through your head.

**Cotton Kills!** When cotton gets wet - it stays wet, and it gets colder in the air. Synthetic layers dry quickly, wick away moisture, and retain body heat even when wet.

Save your cotton t-shirt for after the river run.



flyingslog.com  
The National Fly Fishing  
Incorporated 1984