

Swift Water Rescue Course Overview

The Swiftwater Rescue workshop teaches recognition and avoidance of common river hazards, execution of self-rescue techniques, and rescue techniques for paddlers in distress. Emphasis is placed both on personal safety and on simple, commonly used skills. Fundamental and more advanced techniques for dealing with hazards that carry greater risks for both victim and rescuer, such as strainers, rescue vest applications, entrapments, and pins, also are practiced. Scenarios will provide an opportunity for participants to practice their skills both individually and within a team/group context.

Course Objectives:

- Promote proactive prevention of river accidents and injuries.
- Develop and practice key self-rescue skills.
- Identify and avoid river hazards by understanding hydrology, hazards, and river features.
- Focus on fast, low-risk strategies for early management of river accidents
- Develop and practice methods for recovering swimmers, and loose boats and equipment
- Develop and practice more advanced rope-based and in-water skills
- Gain experience using the rescue PFD, and understand its strengths and weaknesses
- Utilize rescue scene management principles needed within a paddling group medical device to sustain breathing)

Course Prerequisites: All paddle craft are welcome. Ideally, students should be able to competently maneuver their craft in at least class II whitewater. However, all boaters, and non-boaters with an interest in swift water rescue (e.g., professional rescuers), will benefit from the class. Participants should be in good health and overall fitness, possess solid swimming ability, and be comfortable swimming in moving current during river drills. Participants should dress appropriately for weather and temperature and should expect to be in the water for extended periods of time.

Minimum personal equipment for class:

PFD designed for whitewater use, whitewater helmet, protective clothing suitable for extended swimming in cold water, protective footwear, boat, paddle, whistle, throw rope, 15+ feet of one-inch tubular nylon webbing, 2 locking carabiners, and 2 prusik loops.

Course Duration: Two days (16 – 18 hours)

Course Location / Venue: A chute of water with deep, clean wave action, well-defined eddy lines and no immediate hazards or risks below. Ideally, the site should contain class II rapids, although it may be taught on less difficult rapids. Protected space is needed for on-land work, with adequate shelter for inclement weather.

Succeeding courses:

Level 5: Advanced Swiftwater Rescue

Class Ratio: 12 Students: 1 Instructor; with an additional instructor the ratio can be 24: 2

The following is a general summary of course content for the Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue course. Safety and Rescue Instructors should use this document as a general guide for conducting programs. Depending on the program, specific content points might be studied and practiced in depth, briefly reviewed, or skipped entirely. Specific program content should be adjusted as necessary to accommodate student skills, goals and experience, as well as weather and water conditions during the program.

Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics
- Review waiver, assumption of risk, challenge by choice, medical disclosure
- About the ACA
- PFD policy (always wear on water)
- Appropriate personal behavior
- No alcohol / substance abuse
- Proper etiquette on & off the water
- Respect private property
- Practice Leave No Trace ethics

The Paddling Environment:

- Wind
- Waves
- Weather
- Water

Personal Preparation:

- Personal ability
- Swimming ability
- Water comfort & confidence
- Fitness, conditioning, and warm up
- Safe paddle and boat handling
- Safety and rescue considerations
- Personal equipment (reviewed by Instructor)

Rescue Philosophy

- Accident avoidance and proactive rescue

Questions

For more information contact Zachary Mason at H2O Idaho via email at nwoutdoorsafety@gmail.com.

For more information about safety equipment, clothing, PFDs and more contact Idaho River Sports at (208) 336-4844.