

Topic:

Cold Shock

QC-1701

Resource:

[Sutherland:
Cold Water
Immersion
Guide](#)

Basics: Statistics tell us that otherwise healthy paddlers frequently die when falling into cold water. They also indicate that spring paddling especially risky for novice paddlers. Why? Cold water effects on the body are not universally known and understood by untrained paddlers and this lack can get them into serious trouble. Experienced paddlers know the 1:10:1 rule and use protective clothing and gear to mitigate cold water dangers. In 45F water you have 1 minute to get breathing under control, 10 minutes before succumbing to swim failure and 1 hour before succumbing to hypothermia.

Question: *What is "Cold Shock"?*

Answer: Cold shock is the bodies "gasp" reflex when contacting cold water. If immersed the gasp reflex causes the body to inhale water and potentially drown in less than 60 seconds. Wearing protective clothing (wetsuit + paddle jacket, drysuit, etc.) can mitigate this problem.

Question: *What causes "Swim Failure"?*

Answer: As the body cools down the first stages of hypothermia result in contraction of blood vessels in extremities. When this happens, we quickly begin to lose control muscles in our hands, arms and legs and lose the ability to swim. Without a PFD (life vest) we have about 10 minutes before this happens in 45F water.

Advanced Concepts: You may want to get more information about the following:

- What are the signs of hypothermia?
- How should you treat stage 1 and stage 2 hypothermia?
- What can you do for stage 3 hypothermia?
- How can I safely paddle in cold water?

For more information contact

Changing Tides PaddleCraft Instruction

at: www.CTPC.com