



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

Buy yourself some time by always wearing a lifejacket.

Research has shown that many people who die in cold water don't die of hypothermia; but rather, they drown in the first minutes from cold shock. Many people are surprised to hear that a person can drown in as little as 10 seconds and that drowning is silent.

The shock of cold water immersion causes an instant gasp reflex in which a person can inhale more than a litre of water. Continued gasping and uncontrollable hyperventilation will continue for a minute or so impairing one's ability to control movement and causing panic.

Even in the coldest of conditions you have approximately one minute to gain control of your breathing; 10 minutes of meaningful activity to affect self-rescue and; approximately 60 minutes before you become hypothermic enough to lose consciousness.

Quite simply, cold water can kill.

Ninety-four per cent of Canadians who drowned did so in water less than 20 degrees Celsius and 90% of boaters were found NOT wearing a lifejacket. That's because many think that they can find their lifejacket and can put it on if they fall into the water, but the shock of cold water makes it very difficult.

Already having a lifejacket on before you end up in the water will make it easier for you to rescue yourself or to remain floating until someone else can find and help you.

After the initial cold shock, even in ice-cold water, you can expect that it will take about one hour to become unconscious and still longer before you succumb to hypothermia. But that is only possible if you are wearing a lifejacket to help you remain afloat.

The Lifesaving Society urges you to buy yourself some time if you end up in the water...always wear your lifejacket.

Go to www.lifesaving.ca for more information on tips to stay safe around water.

313 words

H:\Education\2009 National Drowning Prevention Week\Matte Story Cold Water News Release.doc