

# Safety Article



The Utah Safety Council cares about your safety outside of the work setting. We offer resources that keep you and your loved ones safe at home, at play and on the go.

## RESCUING A DROWNING VICTIM

Drowning victims are probably the most dangerous to try to rescue. In a panic, drowning victims are likely to claw at rescuers and climb to the surface at all costs. NEVER attempt a direct rescue of a conscious drowning victim without proper training.

Remember always: REACH, THROW, but only GO with training and equipment.

### HERE'S HOW:

1. Stay Safe. Wear a personal flotation device if available. The most important thing to remember is not to become a victim yourself.
2. If more than one rescuer is available, have someone call 911 immediately. Remember, if calling 911 from a cell phone, be sure to say your location carefully and do not hang up until the 911 dispatcher tells you to do so.
3. If the victim is conscious, try to reach the victim with something rigid enough to pull him or her back. An oar or a water noodle is a good option.
4. If nothing will reach, throw the victim a rope and encourage him or her to grab on. A life-preserver with a rope attached is a very good option.
5. If the victim is too far for a rope, then there are few additional options for untrained rescuers. Make sure 911 has been called. If enough people are available, try making a chain by holding hands out to the victim. A rescuer may try swimming out to the victim, but follow these steps:
  - a. Tie a rope around the rescuer's waist before heading out to the victim and have someone on shore or on a nearby boat holding the rope.
  - b. Take a pole, oar, rope or other object to reach the victim. Untrained rescuers should not attempt to directly touch a panicking drowning victim.
6. If the victim is unconscious, take a boat to the victim or tie a rope around the rescuer's waist and let the rescuer pull the victim to shore.
7. Once a drowning victim is safely out of the water, perform basic first aid. In cold weather, remove all of the victim's wet clothing to help prevent a drop in body temperature. Cover the victim with a blanket and watch for symptoms of hypothermia. If the victim is not breathing, begin CPR.

### SAFETY TIPS:

- All victims of near drowning need medical attention. Water in the lungs, even small amounts, can lead to them filling with fluid later. Called "dry drowning," this condition can be fatal.
- Closely watch anyone who chokes on water while swimming, especially if swimming in anything other than a pool.
- Only swim in areas protected by lifeguards. Swimmers at a lifeguard-protected ocean beach have only a 1 in 18 million chance of drowning, according to the CDC.
- If an unconscious victim is found in the water with no witnesses, always assume the victim has a neck injury.