

COLD WATER BOATING SAFETY

With cooler temperatures, there is added responsibility for boaters to be prepared for unexpected hazards. It's important for a boater to have the proper gear when boating in cold weather, including wearing the proper clothing for the water temperature (not air temperature). Often boaters venture out alone on early morning fishing or hunting trips during the cooler temperatures, so it's crucial they are prepared for the unexpected.

1. **Proper clothing.** Wear waterproof fabrics and layer clothing (i.e. layer 1 wicking base, layer 2 clothing for added warmth, layer 3 outer shell to keep out water or wind). Avoid cotton as it absorbs water and quickly reduces body temperature. Please note, *water resistant* fabrics will eventually let water through.
2. **Float coat.** A float coat provides the comfortable fit and warmth of an insulated jacket, while providing the functionality of a life jacket. Please note, a float coat does not provide hypothermia protection and does not replace anti-exposure coveralls or a dry suit. Be sure to check that it is U.S. Coast Guard-approved.
3. **Dry suit.** A dry suit, or anti-exposure coveralls, keeps the boater dry and protects them from hypothermia. It is worn over proper clothing layers. A boater should be sure to try it on with the clothing layers to ensure they still have needed mobility for the boating activity.
4. **Life jacket.** If the boater is not wearing a float coat, they should wear their life jacket at all times while on the water. A life jacket that does not need to be manually deployed is the better option for the lone boater in case they are rendered unconscious and unable to deploy their manual inflatable life jacket. Wear inflatable life jackets over, never under, all clothing, including rain coats.
5. **Communication devices.** A boater should carry at least two communication devices that will work when wet, such as a VHF FM-DSC marine band radio and an [EPIRB](#) or [PLB](#).
6. **Blankets.** Keep emergency spare blankets on board in case someone is suffering from hypothermia symptoms.

More Information

[Communication Device Comparison](#)

[Dos and Don'ts of Cold-Water Boating](#)

[Stages of Cold-Water Immersion](#)

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