

Wilderness Water Safety Outline ©

Course objectives:

Students will demonstrate the ability to assess risk for water emergencies in a backcountry setting.

Students will understand and display the skills and application of appropriate techniques to execute rescue plans in emergency situation.

Students will demonstrate the knowledge of a comprehensive understanding of emergency management for water emergencies in backcountry settings.

Students will perform all rescue skills in a lake or river environment designed to simulate authentic conditions.

Minimum Prerequisite Requirements:

Students must have completed a CPR for the Professional Rescuer course and a minimum of 4 hours of first aid training. *** *Manito-wish Staff taking Wilderness First Aid following the WWS course will be exempt from this prerequisite****

Students must be able to swim at level consistent with the competency to complete the minimum skill levels of the course. This is based on the subjective and objective opinion of the instructor.

Students must be able to complete a five minute continuous swim.

Students must be able to swim a distance of 500 yards.

Student must be able to perform a surface dive to a depth of eight feet.

Students must be able to tow a passive swimmer a length of 30 feet unassisted.

Minimum Skill Requirements for Certification*:

Each participant will demonstrate the ability to conduct a risk assessment for a backcountry waterfront.

Each participant will demonstrate the ability to conduct a continuous risk management strategy for participants engaged in backcountry aquatic environments.

Each participant will demonstrate the ability to assess the condition of the swimmer in trouble, condition of the environment and of the rescuer and apply the appropriate plan for the following circumstances:

Conscious swimmer on the surface of the water

Unconscious swimmer on surface of the water

Unconscious and conscious swimmer below the surface of the water

All of the above conditions will be presented with different variables such as distance from shore, water temperature, depth of water, wind, waves, current, time of day, fatigue of the rescuer, injuries, age and skill level of the group on the trip.

Each participant will demonstrate the ability to recover a submerged, victim without a pulse at a depth of 10 or more feet in a lake or river 25 or more yards from shore using floatation. This will include positioning for pulse check, rescue breathing and CPR.

Each participant will demonstrate the ability to introduce a group and manage risk to a backcountry waterfront including education of campers to recreation in remote aquatic settings.

Each participant will demonstrate the ability to lead a group through the process of removing a victim with a suspected neck injury from the water.

Each participant will demonstrate the ability to utilize the sighting technique to recover an object a minimum of 20 yards from shore and greater than 6 feet in depth in low visibility water. If the water is very clear the depth of the object will be increased.

* The certification is recognized by the American Camp Association; however this course is not appropriate as the only certification for guarding at a beach, pool, wave pool etc. The course is designed for remote aquatic environments.

Course Outline (approximately 20 hours)

- I. Introductions
 - a. Name, location, previous training, swimming ability, reason for taking WWS.

- II. Risk Activity
 - a. Students describe a situation where they were at risk of serious injury in a backcountry setting.
 - b. Discussion regarding risk with groups
 - c. Application of risk management skills with students

- III. Course Introduction
 - a. Goals and objectives
 - b. Medical information
 - c. Prerequisites for the course

- IV. Stroke work and Prerequisites
 - a. Lap work in the pool working on Freestyle, Elementary Backstroke, Breaststroke, Sidestroke
 - b. Towing strokes (inverted whip kick and inverted scissors)
 - c. 5 minute swim
 - d. Surface dives

- e. 500 yard swim
- V. Assessment of risk
 - a. Assessment of condition of swimmer, environment and rescuer
 - b. Swimming environments/potential areas of risk
 - c. Conditions increasing areas of risk
- VI. Drowning
 - a. Epidemiology of drowning
 - b. Physiology of drowning
 - c. Aspiration of water
 - d. Descriptions of drowning swimmer/swimmers in trouble recognition
 - i. Dangers of swimmers in trouble
 - e. A few words about cold water and hypothermia
- VII. Sightings (special note*** sightings are critical to this course. It is nearly impossible to find a submerged swimmer under the surface of the water with limited visibility. As the depth of the water increases the chance of finding the swimmer is reduced. This is one of the most important skills learned in the course.)
 - a. Demo and purpose of sightings
 - b. Dry land practice of sightings
 - c. Discussion of rationale for practicing sightings
 - d. Find the instructor's car keys in 10 feet of water using sightings
- VIII. Non swimming rescues
 - a. Traditional reaching and throwing devices
 - b. Improvised reaching and throwing devices for backcountry settings
 - c. Application of improvised reaching and throwing techniques
- IX. PFD Personal Floatation Devices
 - a. Play with the PFD
 - b. Overall description of role of PFD in backcountry settings
 - c. Taking a PFD off and putting it on in the water
- X. Swimming rescues using PFD
 - a. Rescues when swimmer is on the surface
 - b. Rescues when the swimmer is submerged
 - c. Conscious swimmers in trouble
 - d. Conditions involving 2 or more victims
- XI. Releases and Escapes (optional)
 - a. Front head hold
 - b. Rear head hold
 - c. Everything in between

- XII. Rescue breathing and or CPR in backcountry
 - a. Problems with ABCs in backcountry settings
 - b. Rationale for backcountry CPR/rescue breathing
 - c. Water skills/rescue breathing in shallow water
 - d. Use of a canoe as platform for rescue breathing

- XIII. Search and rescue
 - a. Hasty search
 - b. Searching for swimmers last seen in the water
 - c. Searching for swimmers (unsighted)

- XIV. Use of a canoe as a rescue device
 - a. Swamp and empty a canoe in deep water
 - b. Use of a canoe in a search
 - c. Entering a canoe in deep water
 - d. Unconscious swimmer and canoe use

- XV. Head and Spinal injuries
 - a. Physiology and epidemiology of spinal injuries
 - b. Assessment of spinal injuries
 - c. Removal from water with spinal injuries
 - d. Water complications for spinal injuries
 - e. Implications for management in backcountry settings

- XVI. Documentation and Reporting of Events
 - a. Documentation examples
 - b. Sample document completion

- XVII. Lifeguarding Techniques
 - a. Scanning
 - b. Hydration
 - c. Sun
 - d. Entering the water
 - e. Removal from the water
 - f. Training

- XVIII. Rescue Scenarios Involving Canoes
 - a. Canoe over canoe rescues
 - b. Wind and canoe rescues
 - c. Trim
 - d. Single canoe in deep water rescue

- XIX. Scenarios and policies
 - a. A series of group scenarios designed to allow students to examine tough questions while leading groups in the backcountry.
 - b. Course summary scenarios

c. Final comments and evaluations

This course is scenario based much the same as many Wilderness First Responder courses. Some typical scenarios included in the course are:

1. Swimmer in trouble and out of reach with a reaching or throwing device. Swimmer in trouble is not wearing a PFD.
2. Swimmer has a seizure in the water.
3. A canoe has tipped over in 45° water approximately 200 yards from shore in high winds.
4. Swimmer is suspected of having a neck injury
5. Swimmer in trouble has dropped out of sight in 10 feet of water with no visibility.
6. A group of campers want to jump off a 4 foot rock ledge into 20 feet of clear water.
7. Design a PFD policy.

There are scenarios for almost every aspect of the course. Participants must actively participate in these scenarios in order to pass the course. Students must also pass a series of skill tests which include surface rescues, submerged swimmer rescues, sightings and towing swimmers to safety.