



National Center for Cold Water Safety

What's Your Cold Water Backup Plan?

by Moulton Avery



Shortly before 1pm on October 14, 2017, a solo paddler capsized in rough ocean conditions near Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The water temperature was 48F (9C) – cold enough to cause maximum-intensity cold shock to an unprotected paddler.

Repeated attempts at a paddle-float rescue failed. This was a very bad situation – one that's often fatal - but it ended well because the paddler had a backup plan that worked:

He wore a PFD, he dressed for the water temperature, and he was able to call for help using a VHF radio. See the link below for a news account of the rescue.

Pro Tip: Be realistic. Safety-conscious paddlers understand that “stuff happens”, and they prepare for the unexpected by making backup plans. The Fifth Golden Rule of Cold Water Safety highlights the importance of this type of thinking and planning.

Full News Article:

<https://www.surreynowleader.com/.../video-dramatic-water.../>

Contrast that success story with the tragic, December 2016 case of Navy Seal, Devon Grube, who was kayaking fishing with a friend on Chesapeake Bay about 4.5 miles from a Coast Guard Station. No thermal protection, just a PFD. Water temperature was 46F. Grube got separated from his buddy and capsized. He was unable to self-rescue. He didn't have a VHF radio, but he had a cell phone and was able to call his wife before it quit working. The info was relayed to the Coast Guard, but he died from hypothermia and drowning before they were able to find him.