



Designation: F1729 – 96 (Reapproved 2014)

Standard Practice for Single Person Cold Water Survival/Rescue Technique: HELP Position¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the recommended water rescue procedure for performing the heat escape lessening posture (HELP) position.

1.2 This practice is one in a set of self-rescue techniques for the water rescuer.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Terminology

2.1 *HELP position, n*—heat escape lessening posture (HELP) is a single person water rescue technique for heat conservation when immersed in cold water. This technique conserves heat by using personal flotation devices, clothing, and body posture to limit exposure of the body's major heat loss areas to the cold water.

2.2 *personal flotation device (PFD), n*—a buoyant device suitable for use by one person in water emergencies. These devices may be vests, ring buoys, life preservers, cushions, and other special purpose buoyant devices.

3. Significance and Use

3.1 This practice establishes a single person cold water survival/rescue procedure.

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F32 on Search and Rescue and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F32.02 on Management and Operations.

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3.2 All persons who are identified as water rescuers shall meet the requirements of this practice.

3.3 This practice is intended to assist government agencies, state, local, or regional organizations; fire departments; and rescue teams and others who are responsible for establishing a minimum performance for personnel who respond to water emergencies.

3.4 A rescuer needs to be wearing a personal flotation device to perform this technique. These devices should conform to standards set by the appropriate national regulatory authority, that is, the U.S. Coast Guard in the United States, and be in good and serviceable condition.

3.5 A water rescuer sometimes may be immersed in cold water for prolonged periods of time. They are unable to get to shore or shore is too far away, rescue is not imminent, no boat is available to get into or on top of, and no flotsam is available. The water rescuer needs to assume a defensive posture to conserve heat and increase survival time.

4. Procedure

4.1 Upon initial immersion in cold water, the rescuer should cover the mouth and nose to prevent the aspiration of water.

4.2 Float in a sitting position with the legs drawn up, knees together, and with the ankles crossed.

4.3 Place arms against the sides of the torso, bent at the elbows, and across the chest.

4.4 Remain calm and think clearly.

4.5 Leave all clothing on.

4.6 Wait for rescue.

5. Keywords

5.1 cold water survival; Heat Escape Lessening Posture (HELP) position; self-rescue technique; water rescue; water rescuers