

# Guide Training and Global Best Practices



# Before We Get Started

- This is a river guide specific talk
- I will at times share my opinion
- My main goal is to spark conversation
- QR Code for the slides and more at the end
- Short Q&A the end

# Objectives

1. Have a better understanding of third party training courses
2. Discuss best practices vs. industry standards
3. Share some best practices

# What Are Some Things We Can Do To Make Our Trips Safer?

- Experienced Guides
- Professional Guide Schools
- Ongoing Guide Training (IRF, ACA, In House)
- Post Trip Debriefs
- Proper Equipment
- Develop a Culture of Keeping People Inside Rafts



# How Do We Train for When Something Goes Wrong?

- In House Training
- Rescue Courses
- First Aid Courses
- IRF Trip Leader Workshops
- Critical Incident Response Training (Recreation Law Group)





# Paying for Courses

- Is training required or voluntary?
- Is the training prior to employment or for currently employed guides?
- Are courses paid for immediately or do they result in an increase in pay?

**Training is expensive and should be REALLY good**



# First Aid Training

# First Aid Courses

	Risk	Reliable Communication?	Time For Assistance	Course Length
First Aid and CPR		Yes	Very Short	4-6 hours
WFA	Low	Yes	A Few Hours	16+ Hours
WAFA	Low or Medium	Yes	Up to 12 Hours	36+ Hours
WFR	High	No	Extended	70+ Hours



# Wilderness Medicine

- Hybrid and other online courses are growing fast
- There is no accrediting body for wilderness medicine schools
- The Wilderness Medicine Education Collaborative (WMEC) provide practical, industry-wide standards for WFA, WAFA, and WFR certifications
- If you have questions contact the WEMC directly



# WEMC Member Schools

- Aerie Backcountry Medicine (MT)
- Desert Mountain Medicine (CO)
- NOLS Wilderness Medicine (WY)
- SOLO Schools (NH)
- Wilderness Medicine Associates International (ME)
- Wilderness Medicine Training Center International (WA)

# Other Schools

- Backcountry Medical Guides (WA)
- Longleaf Wilderness Medicine (ID)
- Remote Rescue Training (WA)
- Sierra Rescue (CA)

**These schools state that they teach to the WMEC's Certification Standard:**

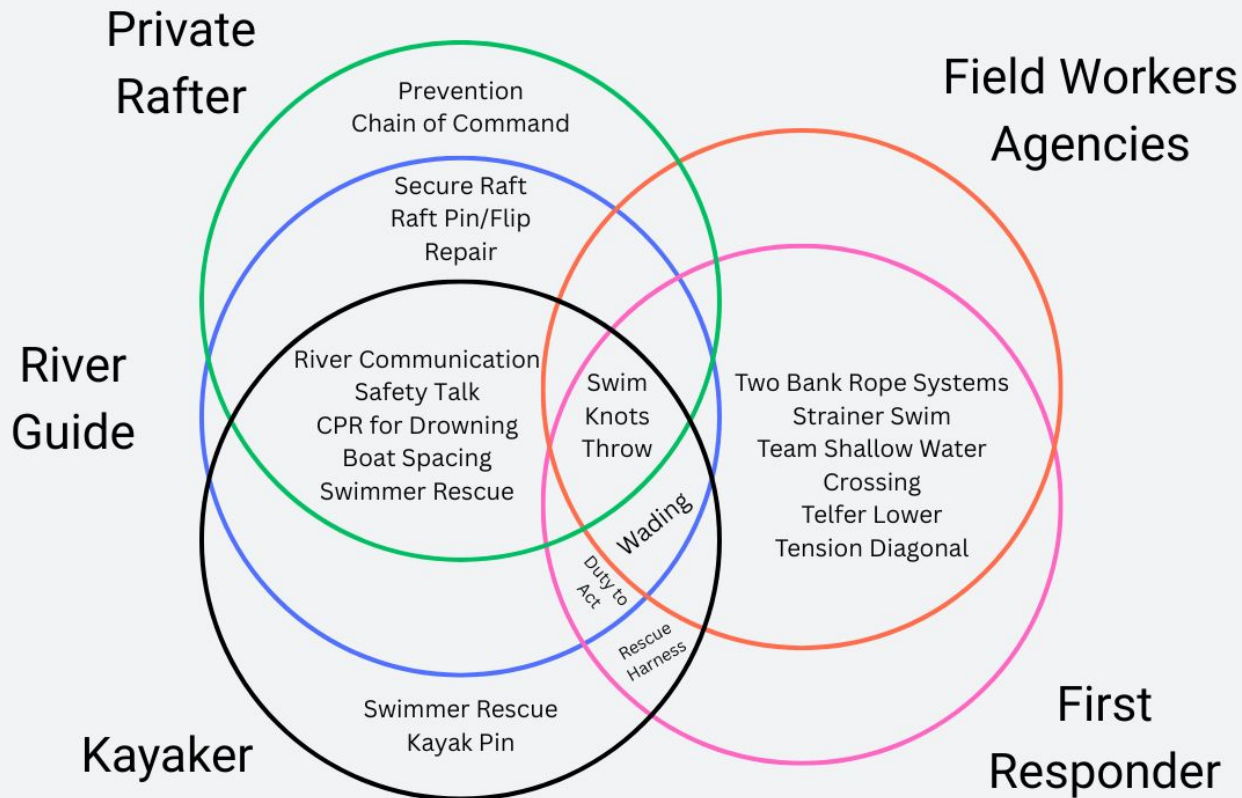
1. Teach ALL required Core Topics and Skills
2. Meet the minimum required in-person hours for ALL courses

# Rescue Training

# Whitewater Rescue

vs

# Swiftwater Rescue



# Whitewater Rescue Courses

	Familiarity	Intro/Basics	Pro Level	Advanced
ACA	Level 3: River Safety and Rescue (1 Day)	Level 4: Swiftwater Rescue Skills (2 Day)	<b>Level 5: Advanced Swiftwater Rescue (2 Day)</b>	
Rescue 3	WRT-Foundation (1 Day)	WRT-Rec (2 Day)	<b>WRT-Pro (3 Day)</b>	WRT-Advanced (4 Day)
Sierra Rescue	River Safety and Rescue (1 Day)	RRC (2 Days)	<b>RRC-Advanced RRC-Professional (2-3 Day)</b>	RRC-Elite (2 Days)
Swiftwater Safety Institute (SSI)	REC-I Swiftwater Rescue (2 Day)	PRO-I Swiftwater Rescue (Online + 2 Day)	<b>PRO-II Swiftwater Rescue (Online + 2 Day)</b>	Rigging For River Rescue (4 Day)

# Rescue Instructor Requirements

	ACA	Rescue 3	Sierra Rescue	SSI
First Aid Requirement	Basic First Aid and CPR	WFR, EMT, or higher	WFR, EMT, or higher	WAFA, WFR, EMT, or higher
Experience Requirement		Experience guiding class III or harder, WRT-Pro	Extensive guiding, river running, and teaching experience, RRC-Pro	7 years experience, and instruction experience, PRO-I and Pro-II training
Fitness Requirement	Essential Eligibility Criteria	Fitness test	USCG swim test	Adequate physical shape, USCG swim test



# Rescue Instructor Requirements

	ACA	Rescue 3	Sierra Rescue	SSI
Instructor Path	5 Day IDW and ICE training program	5 Day Instructor Course + 3 day assessment + mentorship	Screening + 5 Day Instructor Course + mentorship	5 Day Instructor Course + mentorship
Continual Training For Instructors	Teach 2 classes every 4 years and instructor update every 4 years.	Teach at least one course per year and attend conference and/or do an instructor skills update	Annual in person instructor update	Teach 2 courses per year, Instructor Development Course (IDC) every 4 years, Annual risk management training

# Guide Training

# Guide Training

- IRF Guide Workshop
- IRF Trip Leader Workshop
- IRF Safety Kayak Workshop
- ACA Raft Guide Certification

## Don't Forget!

- Critical Incident Response Training  
(Recreation Law Group)



# Best Practices vs Industry Standards

# Best Practices

- “Best practices” are not “formal industry standards”

“Ignorance of what your peers are doing to manage risk does not preclude you from potentially being held to those same standards”  
(Beneficial Risks, Steve Smith)

- Industry Standards are operational guidelines developed by industry experts and leaders. Some are law, most are voluntary.

## Beneficial Risks

The Evolution of Risk Management for  
Outdoor and Experiential Education Programs

*Theories, Research, and Lessons Learned Through Experience*

Steve Smith  
Editor



Foreword by Sidney Dekker

# Global Best Practices



# 158 Survey Responses

# 127 Responses Used

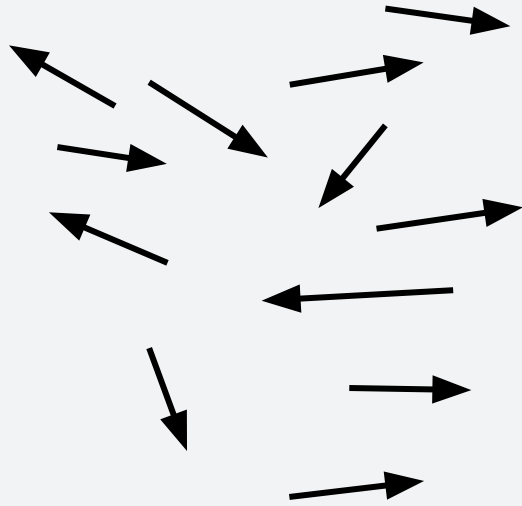
- 2 Government Agency Officials
- 23 Private Boaters
- 18 Rafting Company Owners
- 28 Rafting Operations Managers
- 6 Rescue Instructors that do not Instruct Guides
- 18 Rescue Instructors that do Instruct Guides
- 63 River Guides



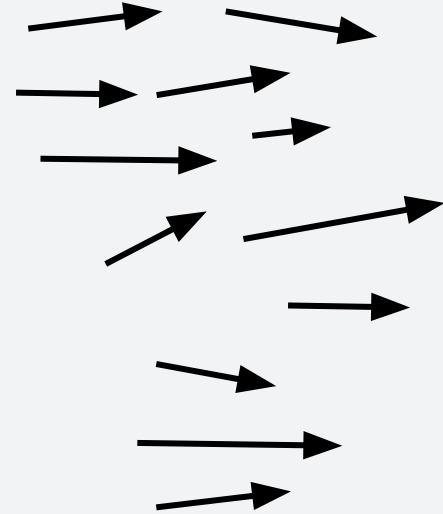
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Most responses were from the U.S. but there were a handful from Europe, South America, and Asia.

# “Alignment not Agreement”



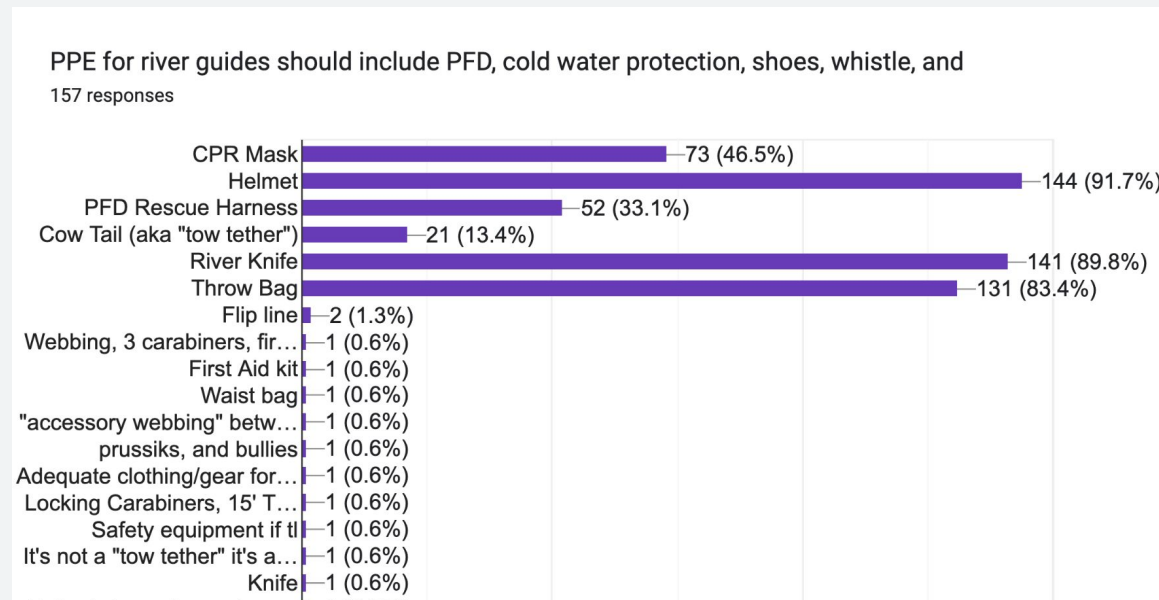
Not Aligned



Aligned

# PPE For River Guides

- PFD
- Cold Water Protection
- Shoes
- Whistle



# My Opinion

## PPE

- PFD
- Cold Water Protection
- Shoes
- Whistle
- Helmet
- River Knife
- CPR Mask

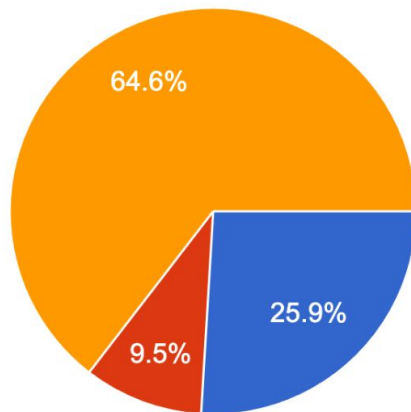
## PRE (Personal Rescue Equipment)

- Throw Bag
- Flipline
- Pulleys, Prusiks, Carabiners
- PFD Rescue Harness

# River Knives

River knives should be

158 responses

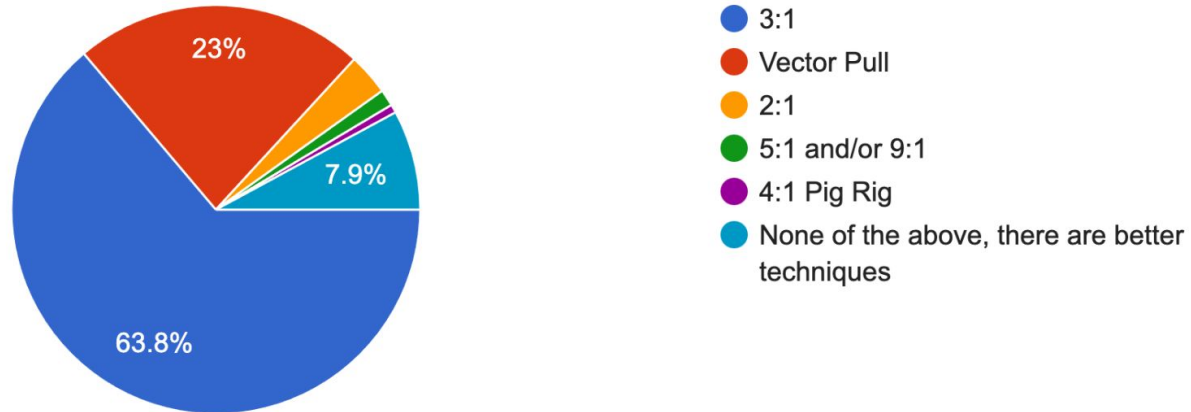


- Externally mounted on a PFD for quick access
- Folding knives inside a PFD pocket
- Personal preference

# Mechanical Advantage

The primary mechanical advantage technique for removing raft pins and wraps is:

152 responses



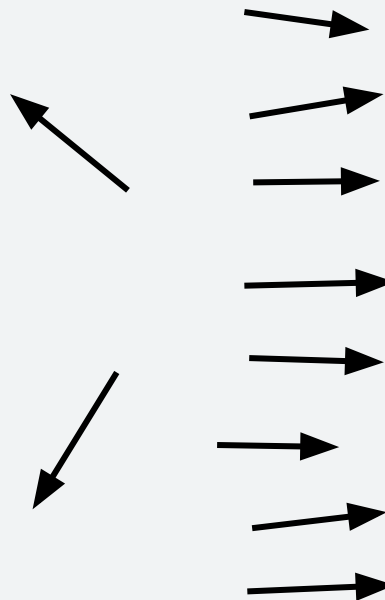


# Vector Pull

## Chose Vector Pull as Primary M.A.

- Guides 22%
- Managers 14%
- Owners 22%
- River Guide Instructors 17%
- Non River Guide Instructors 50%

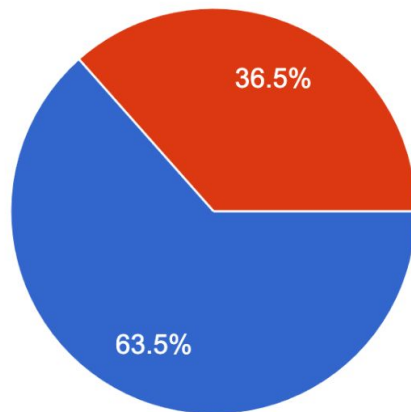
Both single and multi-day guides and instructors chose the vector pull as their primary mechanical advantage technique for boat pins.





# Strainer Swimming Technique

If you find yourself floating towards a tree (or other strainer) your best course of action is to  
156 responses



- Consider if you have the ability to swim away from it and if you don't think you can then get on your stomach and swim towards it in a way that may allow to get over it
- Swim in a direction that will minimize the chance of hitting the strainer



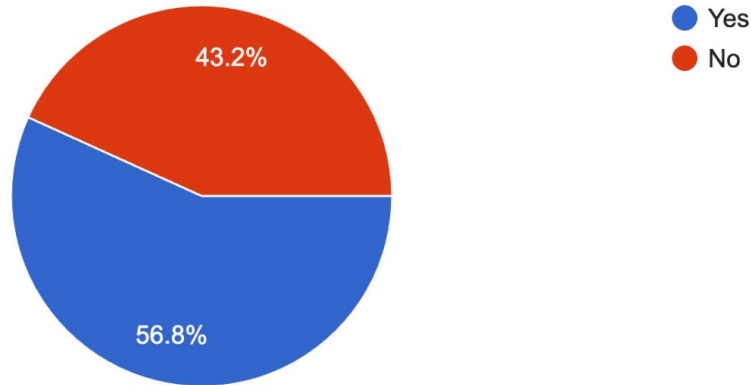




# Strainers in Safety Talks

When mentioning strainers in a commercial safety talk it is a good idea to inform passengers that swimming towards and potentially over a strainer is...ion if they don't think they can swim away from it?

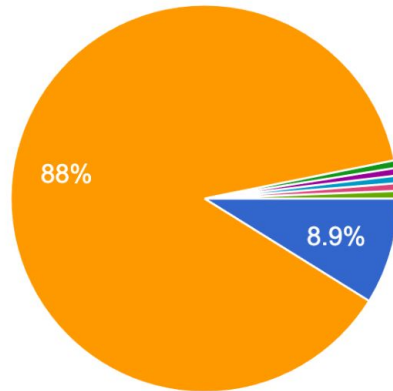
155 responses



# Swimming Technique

When swimming, river guides should

158 responses

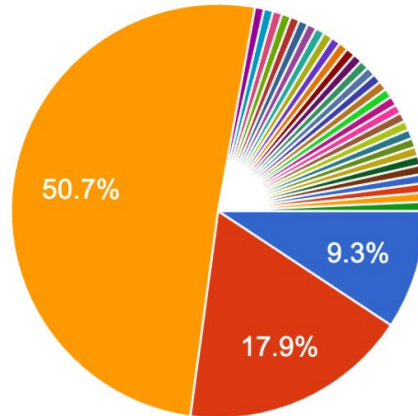


- Always swim aggressively
- Always swim defensively
- Use a combination of aggressive and defensive swimming
- Assess the situation and decide which is the most effective swim
- Swim aggressively when train is with you
- This question is so vague, it should not be asked
- In general swim aggressively, in #4, 5 was the most common
- When you're in a shallow, half mile long river



# PFD Carabiners

Carabiners on the outside of your PFD are  
140 responses



- Critical for quick rescues
- Nice to have for when you need a car...
- A bit weird - just put them in your pock...
- I'm not sure why I need carabiners wit...
- Somewhat dangerous
- Not a bit weird. But in pockets to mini...
- cumbersome, on the lapel can lead to...
- DANGEROUS!

▲ 1/5 ▼

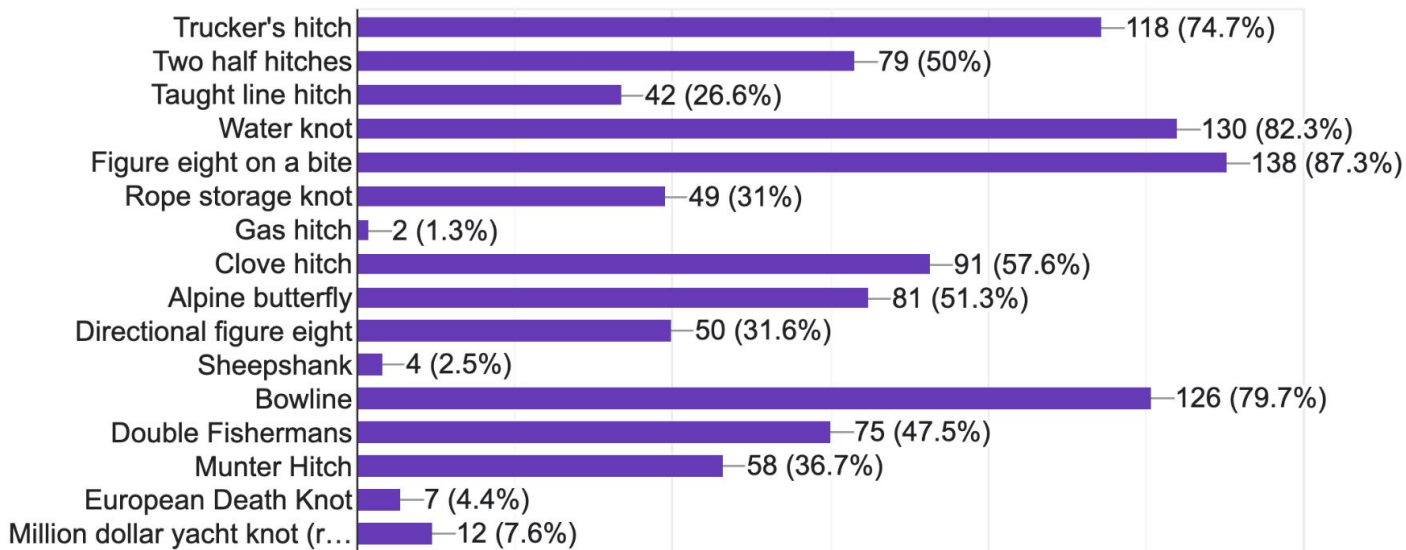
# Knots for River Guides

“The swiftwater courses that I hear about or observe sometimes make me sad, just because of the way that participants FEEL when they leave the course--**overwhelmed by knots**, mechanical systems and professional rescue techniques.”

# Knots for River Guides

The minimum knots and hitches a raft guide should know are

158 responses



# Knots for River Guides

## Basic Knots

- Taught Line Hitch on a Bight
- Round Turn Two Half Hitches
- Rope Storage Knot
- Trucker's Hitch
- Bowline

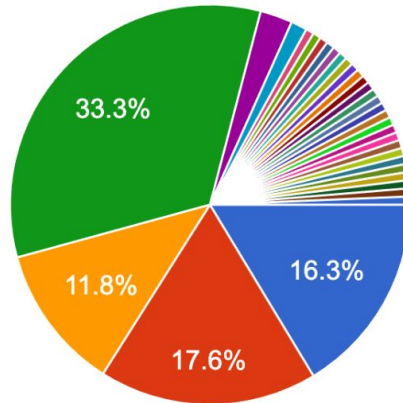
## Rescue Knots

- Water Knot
- Figure Eight on a Bight
- Prusik Hitch
- Alpine Butterfly

# Tying a Raft to Shore

The preferred knot for tying a raft to a tree or rock is:

153 responses



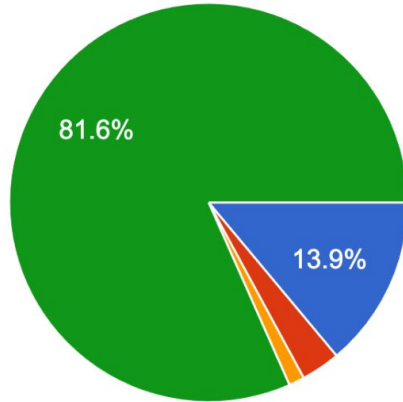
- Round turn, two half hitches (Million d...
- Two half hitches on a bight
- Taught line hitch on a bight
- Bowline
- Truckers hitch
- 
- Bowline is adjustment isn't needed, ta...
- Clove hitch

▲ 1/4 ▼

# CPR for Drowning

CPR for drowning victims should be taught

158 responses



- In CPR classes
- In WFR classes
- In Rescue classes
- Ideally all 3 but since normal CPR courses don't cover it and WFR courses cover it briefly this should be in in depth topic of whitewater rescue courses



# CPR AND DROWNING

**Time:** 30-60 minutes

**Material:** CPR Manakin, CPR Masks, Pocket BVM, AED Trainer

## Potential Learning Objectives

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1. Understand that drowning is a brain problem and that getting oxygen to the patient is the priority
2. Practice with CPR Masks and BVM
3. Understand when to evacuate

## Introduction - Overview

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Drowning is defined as a process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in a liquid medium.

### Key Points

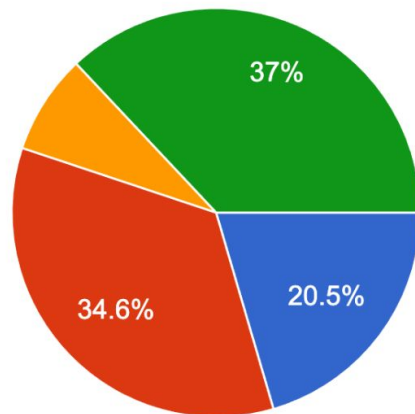
- The brain can only go 3-5 minutes without oxygen before permanent brain damage is likely. Most people will die after 10 minutes without oxygen. Lungs are injured from taking on water but they usually heal well.
- If the patient inhales water the lungs will produce foam that will keep coming making it necessary to ventilate through the foam. A CPR mask is necessary to do this and a Bag Valve Mask (BVM) is ideal.
- Evacuate anyone who was unconscious, produces foam through the airway, has trouble



# AEDs

## AEDs

127 responses

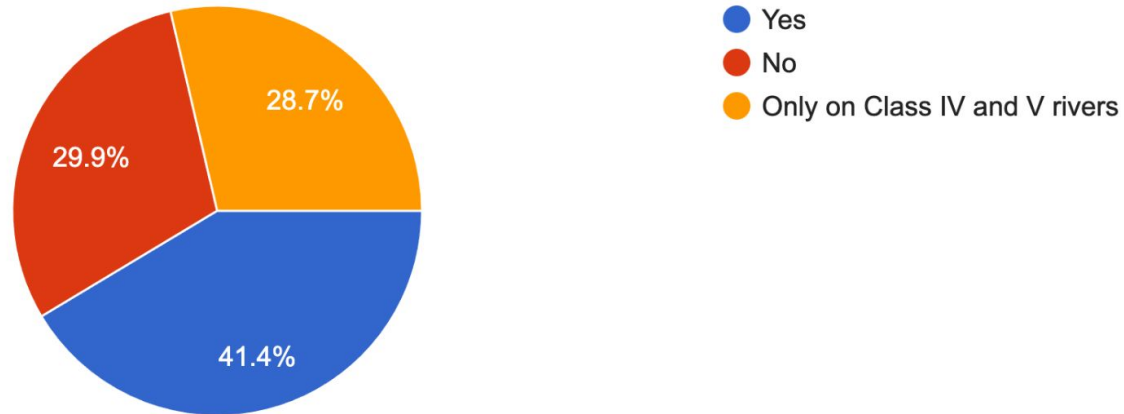


- Aren't necessary on rafting trips
- Should be mandatory on rafting trips
- Are only for multi-day rafting trips
- I'm AED curious

# Waist Belt Throw Bags

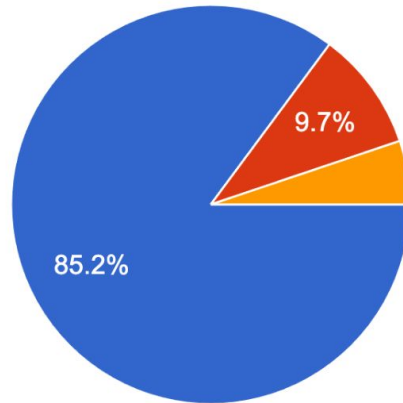
Should waist belt throw bags be standard equipment for river guides?

157 responses



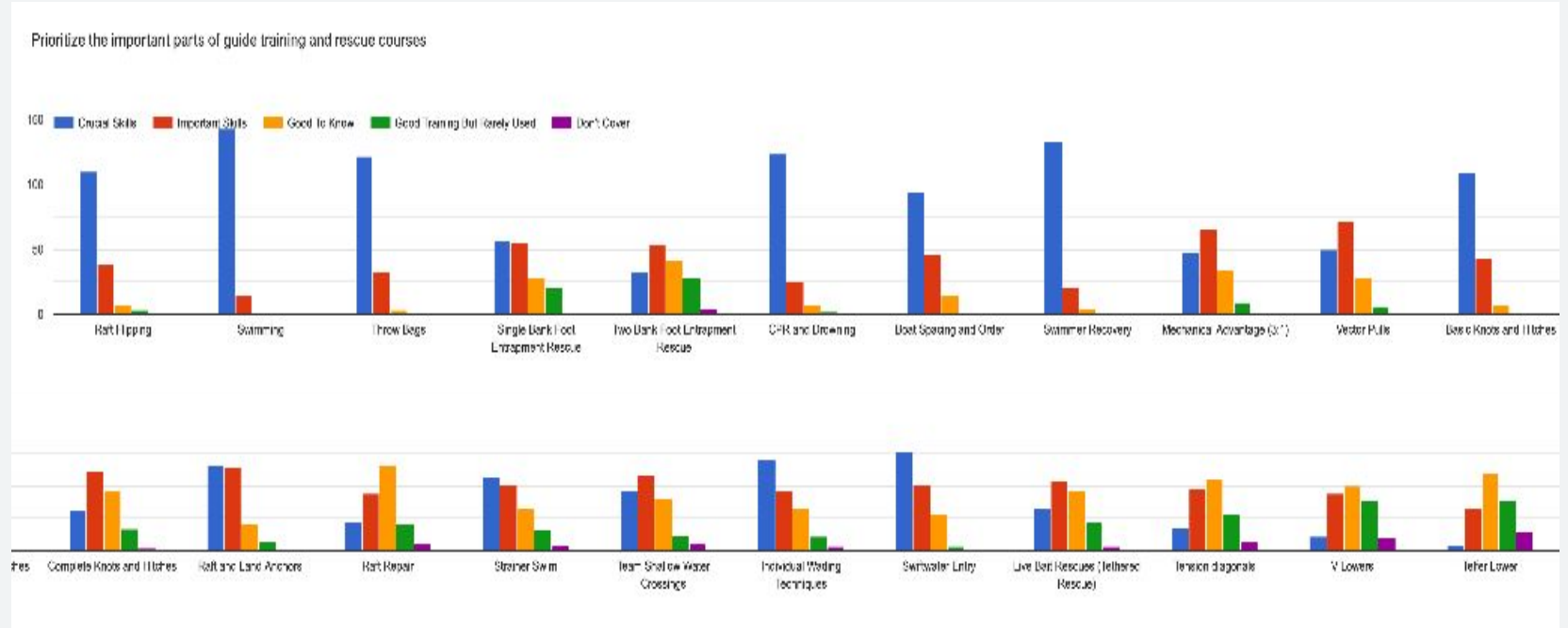
# One Whistle

One whistle blast means  
155 responses



- Attention, eyes on me
- Swimmer
- Something dangerous is happening

# Prioritizing Guide Training and Rescue Courses



# Prioritizing Whitewater Rescue Topics

## High Priority

- Whitewater Swimming
- Swimmer Recovery
- CPR and Drowning
- Throw Bags
- Raft Flipping
- Basic Knots and Hitches
- Boat Spacing and Order

## Low Priority

- Single Bank Foot Entrapment
- Swiftwater Entry
- Wading Techniques
- Raft and Land Anchors
- Mechanical Advantage
- Strainer Swim
- Team Shallow Water Crossing
- Tethered Rescue
- Complete Knots
- Tension Diagonal, V Lower, Telfer Lower

# Objectives

1. Have a better understanding of third party training courses
2. Discuss best practices vs. industry standards
3. Share some best practices

# Questions? Discussion?



Slide Deck  
CPR Lesson  
Beneficial Risks Book  
Survey Results