

•Continued

Huddle

"Common sense" would predict longer survival time with huddling. Studies show that if the huddle is formed so that the sides of the chest of different persons are held close together, a 50% increase in predicted survival time is obtained.



As with HELP this is a difficult procedure to maintain and it is advisable to practise it.

9 Do different types of lifejackets and personal flotation devices (PFDs) offer more or less thermal protection?

Recent tests and studies have shown that flotation devices fall into three categories of thermal (heat) protection:

Poor Thermal Protection

All standard Kapok Lifejackets and most loose fitting foam lifejackets of the vest type offered no significant protection from cold water.

Fair Thermal Protection

Two types of PFDs offered significant thermal protection to the extent of a 50% to 75% increase in predicted survival time. The types were foam vests that possessed good adjustability for close fit to the chest and garment type Flotation Jackets that use buoyancy, and insulating foam between the inner and outer layers of fabric.

Good Thermal Protection

There are two types of PFDs that make a deliberate attempt to maximize thermal protection. These are based on improving the insulation potential of flotation Jackets. One is a full Survival Suit which includes foam in the legs and can be quickly fitted over normal clothing. These suits are designed primarily for military and commercial use, but are easily adaptable for use on pleasure craft especially open boats during the spring and fall.



The other is a convertible Flotation jacket (illustrated) that has "convertible shorts" which help to trap water within insulating foam over the major heat loss region of the body (such as a "shorty" wet suit). These jackets will normally have a hood stowed in the collar.

10 Does alcohol consumption affect survival time?

Contrary to popular belief, alcoholic beverages do not warm a person and under no circumstances should they be given to a hypothermic casualty.

Alcohol dilates the blood vessels and may increase heat loss.

The consumption of alcohol while boating or engaged in water activities is undesirable. At a time of critical decision making, alcohol or anything that interferes with one's ability to think should be avoided. Alcohol is involved in about 1/3 of all boating fatalities.

11 Do people ever die of shock when falling into cold water?

Immersion in cold water (especially if sudden), causes immediate major changes in body function and there are isolated instances of "sudden death" being reported, but these are very uncommon. The cause of this "sudden death" is not clear and a number of different reasons have been suggested. One is a form of cardiac arrest resulting from the increase in heart rate and changes in blood pressure which accompany immersion in cold water. Other possible causes of death are related to hyperventilation (over breathing), which everyone experiences in response to the shock of cold water. It is possible that if one had plunged underwater or was in a rough sea that the hyperventilation could lead to uncontrolled aspiration (inhalation) of water and a form of drowning. Prolonged hyperventilation can lead to unconsciousness and subsequent drowning.

Because panic can magnify any of the above responses, it is important to remain calm and methodical if faced with a cold water emergency. If possible, enter the water gradually, allowing the body to adjust to the changing temperature. Consciously control your breathing as much as possible. The more clothing and insulation your body has, the less will be the initial shock on entry into cold water.

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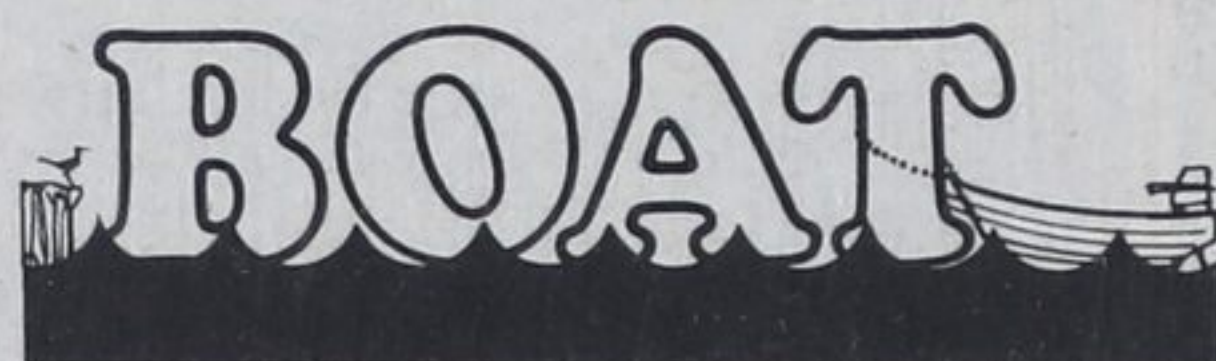
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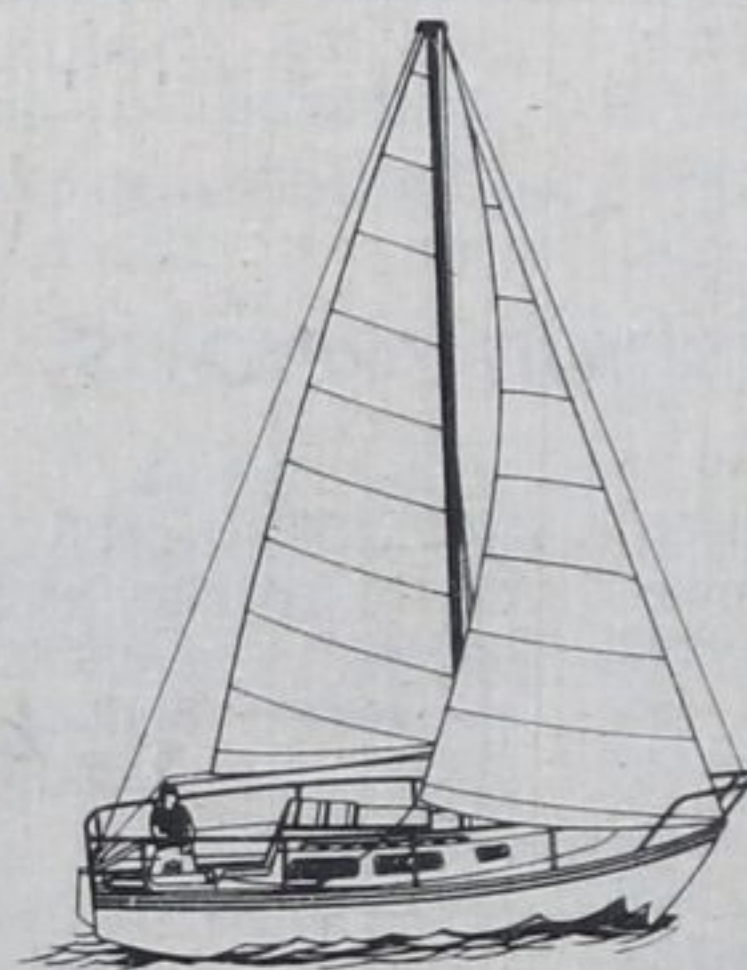
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