

Submerged Vehicle Escape

As a lake community, we see a small number of incidences where vehicles have left the road and plummet into water. The best escape from these types of accidents is to plan ahead. Practice steps to take if you were to find your vehicle submerged in water and have the necessary escape tools available and within reach.

Water Facts:

- It only takes 6" to 2' of water to float a vehicle off it's wheels. Heed flash flood warnings and never attempt to cross a flooded road.
- Wearing seatbelts will increase your chances of surviving a crash into the water.
- A vehicle's float time can be anywhere from 30 seconds to 4 minutes.
- Vehicles which have the motor located in the front will immediately assume a nose down position in the water.
- Electric power can short out immediately making electric window switches useless.
- Landing in water depth of less than 14' usually results in the vehicle coming to rest on the bottom on all four wheels.
- Water depths of more than 14' usually results in the vehicle landing on it's roof.

Escape Plan:

- Stay Calm, Assess the Situation.
- Make the decision to escape immediately.
- Open Doors or Windows.
 - If the pressure of water against the doors or structural damage make it impossible to exit the vehicle then you must escape through a window.
 - The door and rear windows are constructed of tempered glass and will easily shatter using a life hammer device or spring loaded window punch.

- Disengage Seatbelt
 - Use a commercial rescue/escape tool with an integrated seat-belt cutter to slice away a seat belt if the release button fails.
- Get Out
 - If there are multiple occupants, hold hands in a human chain and escape from the same route.
 - Children in car seats can be cut loose from the seat belt and removed from the vehicle still secured in the car seat. Some car seats have sufficient buoyancy to float a child to the surface.

Practice Tips:

- Rehearse before the emergency occurs. Also, run practice drills with your entire family seated in their normal positions.
- Use a body reference to identify door latch, window cranks or switch locations. Practice finding the location of these with your eyes closed and by touching your left knee/hip with your left hand then moving it laterally to the door.
- Practice grabbing the rescue escape tool with your eyes shut. This should be done by locating where the tool is attached to the vehicle, then following along the string with your hand until you feel the tool.

Rescue and Escape Tools:

- The best tools are either a hammer type device with an integrated seat belt cutter, or a spring loaded window punch and a separate slicing tool.
- A rescue/escape tool should be placed at each window seat location of the vehicle.
- Attach to the vehicle with a string. Remember that these tools may float once the vehicle is submerged so attach in such a way that a passenger can find where the string is attached to the vehicle then follow along the string to the tool.

**Pamphlet courtesy of the Rolling Oaks Volunteer Fire Department
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