

Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Volume 16, Issue 3

April 2006

CPA Warns Paddlers— It's Still COLD out There!

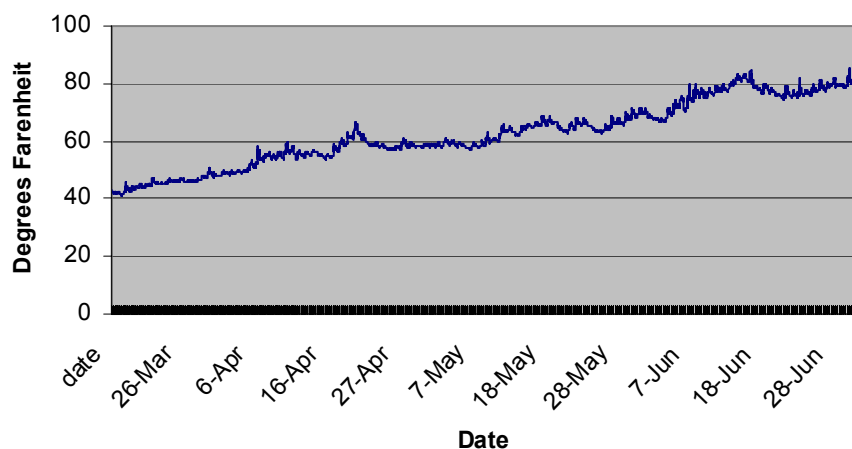
A series of incidents earlier this year prompted several CPA paddlers to (once again) discuss what the club can do to help inform novice and inexperienced paddlers about the dangers of early spring paddling in balmy air, on waters that still chill deeply. After exchanges on the listserve and forums, Lucy Mitchell volunteered to coordinate a group in putting together a brochure that could be handed out at launches and distributed to outdoor stores to make new paddlers aware of the dangers. Among contributors were Chuck Sutherland, long-time paddle safety advocate, Phil Nester, Jack Wengryniuk, Bob Cianfione, Kevin Howe, Peter Woodside, Ciaran Lesikar, Paul Oppenheimer, Joan Spinner, and Ralph Heimlich, who offered to design a brochure. The draft is currently online at <http://troop424.freesevers.com/Safety3fold.pdf> for review and could be used. When the brochure is finalized, it will be printed and posted on the CPA website as a resource.



What Happens in Cold Water?

Water removes heat from the body 25 times faster than cold air. About 50% of that heat loss occurs through the head and neck. Immersion in turbulent water or attempted swimming may double that rate of heat loss. Strong swimmers, without thermal protection, have died before swimming 100 yards in cold water. In water under 40 ° F, victims have died before swimming 100 feet. Immersion in cold water causes a series of traumatic responses that rapidly incapacitate and kill boaters who are not wearing protective clothing.

Surface Water Temperature, Patuxent River



Immersion in cold water causes a powerful gasping reflex. Soon after entering cold water, hands, arms and legs become stiff and devoid of feeling. The victim rapidly loses the ability to swim, climb out of the water into an upright boat, or hold on to either a capsized boat or a life line thrown by a rescuer. Hypothermia (reduced core body temperature) develops more slowly than the immediate effects of cold shock. Survival curves show that an adult dressed in average clothing and a PFD may remain conscious for 30 minutes at 40 ° F and perhaps 1 hour at 50 ° F in calm water. Turbulent water or swimming may cut that survival time in half.

The solution? Dress for the water, not for the air temperature, and always wear your Personal Flotation Device (PFD).