

# River Studies and Leadership Certificate (RSLC)

## River Safety Core Course

This provides elements of instruction necessary to fulfill the RSLC River Safety requirement, intended to provide a guide Advisors can use as the basis for approving instruction if not available directly through their institution.

*Examples of resources that meet or exceed this practicum requirement*

- *ACA L3 River Safety and Rescue (and above, L4, L5)*
- *Rescue 3 International Swiftwater Rescue Technician (and above, SRT Advanced)*
- *Sierra Rescue International River Rescue Course (and above, RRC Pro)*

### **Learning Objectives**

Develop good judgment and criteria for safety and basic safety-related skills appropriate in moving water.

### **General Objectives**

- Develop a sense of how river accidents happen
- Provide training in basic hands-on skills necessary to anticipate and prepare for a safety threat and respond to an on-water safety incident.
- Develop a sense of confidence and the skills necessary to
  - Quickly assess a rescue situation
  - Choose the lowest risk option for executing a rescue
  - Establish a stable environment while awaiting emergency personnel

### **Behavioral Objectives**

- Gain a working knowledge of self-rescue techniques and their application in river conditions likely to be encountered during their course of study.
- Gain a working knowledge of basic rope throw rescue.
- Develop skills to access a victim by swimming, wading, reaching, or throwing.
- Be prepared to support or lead a response to a river accident.
- Understand options for rescuing an accident victim from the water.
- Understand the roles in a river rescue and when the rescue must be turned over to another agency.
- Understand when outside medical care is needed and how to start and plan an evacuation.

### **Course Components - Advised**

The following should be included to provide a reliable understanding of rescue philosophy, training standards, and review of gear necessary in a river environment.

Another resource that covers this material, from the American Canoe Association:

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.americancanoe.org/resource/resmgr/sei-courses/l3\\_rsr\\_skills.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.americancanoe.org/resource/resmgr/sei-courses/l3_rsr_skills.pdf)

River features and hazards

- Downstream and upstream V's, chutes
- Eddies, eddy lines
- Waves, wave holes
- Holes, hydraulics
- Ledges and horizon lines
- Rocks, pillows
- Dams, flow diversion structures, and pipelines
- Undercut rocks, ice

#### Personal equipment

- Helmet
- PFD
- Footwear
- Craft & Paddle
- Thermal Protection
- Food
- Craft specific PPE (i.e. SUP leashes)

#### Safety equipment

- Tubular webbing
- Locking carabiners
- Throw rope
- First Aid Kit
- Accessories: knife, whistle
- Prussic, pulleys (optional), cell phone

#### River safety and rescue strategy

- Rescue philosophy and training standards
- Pre-trip planning and group paddling
- Hazard recognition and prevention
- Scene survey and assessment. STOP
- Rescue strategy - LEADER. LAST

#### Whitewater swimming techniques

- Defensive, aggressive, barrel roll, high water survival
- Contact rescues: approaching victims from the water

#### Throw bag techniques and practice

- Coil throws
- Conditional rescue / throw bags
- Belay methods: when how and where to use
- Dynamic movement
- Quick and thoughtful deployment

Wading / shallow water crossing

- Wading alone and in combination with swimming
- Wading with others: line abreast, line astern, tripod
- Wading in groups and transporting patients

Foot entrapment

- Quick and safe access options
- Stabilization and snag lines
- Realistic scenario practice

Strainer drill and recognition

- Strainers: types, typical locations
- Simulate feet first entrapment
- Aggressive forward swimming over a strainer

Practice scenarios combining all options

## **Course Components – Optional**

### **Body and equipment entrapment**

- Access options
- Consideration of various craft
- Waders, boots, and wader self-rescue
- Stabilization lines, simple cinches, and lassos
- Options from one and two banks

### **Rope rescue techniques**

- Identify good anchors (on land, multipoint anchors on boats)
- Types of ropes
- Carabiners - types
- Knots and hitches (basics - Figure 8, butterfly, prussic, water knot)
- Forces of angles/vector pull
- Mechanical advantage

Tethered rescues and rescue PFDs

- “Self” rescue vest
- Safe use and operation
- Application for downstream safety and other

### **Awareness of advanced rescue techniques**

- Pinned boats and wraps
- Flips and recovery
- Zip-lines
- Two-point lowers

Homework scenarios: individuals and small group assignments - Scenarios stressing effective pre-planning, safe downriver movement, and developing good decision-making and judgment.

## **Pre-Requirements and Required Gear**

### **Course Prerequisites**

Students taking this course should be competent swimmers.

### **Required Equipment**

Personal river gear – Access to the following (may depend on water conditions)

- PFD: Type III or Type V
- Closed-toe river shoes with thermal protection or hard-soled wetsuit booties
- Whitewater helmet

### **Optional Equipment**

- Whistle
- River knife
- 2-3 locking carabiners
- Throw bag
- Personal rescue gear that you already carry (to practice with)
- Drysuit, full wetsuit, or farmer john with a dry top (weather, temperature-dependent)

### **Student Requirements**

In addition to the equipment listed above, students should be prepared for the elements with adequate dry, warm clothing, food, and beverages emphasizing sugars and carbohydrates. Students should have a pen, pencil, and a notebook for further notes.

Participation in all of the activities and a co-signed participation check-off sheet can confirm completion: a competency need not be required. If a student feels uncomfortable about participating in any activity and simply wishes to observe, the instructor should be advised. Knowing your own limits is essential to being a safe river user and is highly respected by our instructors.