

REFLECTIONS — ON THE RIVER — RIVER SAFETY QUICK REFERENCE CARD

Be Prepared. Stay Aware. Fish Another Day.



1. BEFORE YOU GO

- ☒ Check weather & radar
- ☒ Check river flows
- ☒ Tell someone your plans
- ☒ Pack emergency gear
- ☒ Know your route out
- ☒ Plan for cell service gaps



A few minutes of preparation can prevent a lifetime of regret.

2. LEAVE THE WATER IMMEDIATELY IF...



You hear thunder or see lightning



Water rises or turns muddy



Strong winds develop



Smoke or fire conditions worsen



You feel unsafe



DANGER SIGNS

Leave the river immediately if you notice:



Thunder or lightning



Rapidly rising or muddy water



Strong, gusty winds



Heavy smoke or wildfire nearby



Intense rain upstream



FLASH FLOOD WARNING SIGNS

Watch for these upstream:



Heavy rain in the distance



Sudden rise in water level



Rumbling or unusual sounds



Water turns brown or carries debris



Strong odor of silt or vegetation

If you see one, be ready to run.
If you see two, get to high ground!

3. LIGHTNING SAFETY



30-30 RULE



If the time between lightning and thunder is 30 seconds or less, seek shelter immediately.



Stay sheltered until 30 minutes after the last thunder.

SAFE SHELTER



Fully enclosed vehicle



Substantial building

AVOID



Water



Isolated trees



Ridge tops



Picnic shelters



Tents



Rock overhangs



Metal fences or poles

4. IF YOU'RE CAUGHT IN THE OPEN



Leave the water immediately.



Move toward lower ground.



Stay away from isolated trees, fences, and metal objects.



Spread your group 20-30 feet apart.



Avoid stream channels, gullies, and areas that may flash flood.



Do not lie flat on the ground.



Continue toward safe shelter as soon as possible.

5. IF SOMEONE IS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING



Call 911 immediately.



Begin CPR if needed.



Use an AED if available.



Victims are safe to touch.

6. RIVER HAZARDS TO WATCH FOR



Sweepers & Strainers

Downed trees and branches can trap you underwater.



Undercut Banks

Weak banks can collapse without warning.



Slippery Rocks

Algae-covered rocks are extremely slippery.



Fast Currents

Strong current can sweep you off your feet quickly.



Cold Water Shock

Sudden cold immersion can cause panic and impair breathing.



Waterfalls & Drops

Never go over a waterfall or into unknown water.

7. ESSENTIAL EMERGENCY GEAR



Phone & extra battery



Water & high-energy snacks



First-aid kit



Whistle



Headlamp or flashlight



Map of the area



Rain jacket / extra layers



Knife or multi-tool



Emergency blanket

Pack it in. Pack it out. Be self-reliant.

8. WATER TEMPERATURE & TROUT STRESS

WATER TEMP (°F)

Below 50°

EFFECT ON TROUT

Excellent

50° - 60°

Good

61° - 67°

Stressful
(use water release)

68° and above

STOP FISHING

Warm water puts trout under extreme stress.
When in doubt, don't fish.

9. WIND: KNOW THE IMPACT

WIND SPEED (MPH)

0 - 5

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

Calm

IMPACT ON FISHING & SAFETY

Great conditions

6 - 10

Light breeze

Minor wind effect

11 - 15

Moderate breeze

Choppy water; tougher casting

16 - 20

Fresh breeze

Whitecaps possible; be cautious

21 - 30

Strong wind

Difficult wading & boating

31+

Very strong

Dangerous conditions; avoid the river



HEAT & SUN EXPOSURE

- Drink water often.
- Wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
- Take breaks in the shade.
- Know signs of heat illness.

SIGNS OF HEAT ILLNESS



Headache



Dizziness



Nausea



Confusion

Cool down, hydrate, and rest.
Seek medical help if symptoms worsen.



11. COLD WATER & HYPOTHERMIA

Cold water can incapacitate you quickly.

WARNING SIGNS

- Shivering
- Slurred speech
- Clumsiness
- Confusion / drowsiness

WHAT TO DO

- Get out of the water.
- Remove wet clothing.
- Warm with dry layers and shelter.
- Warm sweet drinks and food.
- Seek help if severe.



12. WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS



Bears: Make noise, travel in groups, never approach.



Moose: Give space and do not get between a cow and calf.



Snakes: Watch where you step and place your hands.



Mountain Lions: Rare, but if seen, face it, make yourself look large, back away slowly—do not run.

13. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS



Call 911 - Emergency

CSP Dispatch (Colorado)
877-265-6648



VHF Channel 16 - Marine
Emergency

No cell service? Use a whistle, mirror, or satellite device if available.

14. QUICK DECISION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Is there thunder, lightning, or dark storm clouds?
- ☐ Is the water rising or discolored?
- ☐ Are winds getting stronger?
- ☐ Am I far from shelter?
- ☐ Do I have a safe way out?

If any answer is YES, it's time to leave.

15. LEAVE NOW CHECKLIST

- ☐ Pack up quickly
 - ☐ Move to high ground
 - ☐ Get to safe shelter
 - ☐ Call or text to check in
 - ☐ Reassess before returning
- When in doubt, get out.

16. RIVER WISDOM

"The prudent see danger and take refuge."
— Proverbs 27:12

Good anglers know where the fish are. Wise anglers know when to leave.



IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- ★ Respect the river. It is powerful.
- ★ Conditions can change quickly.
- ★ Your safety always comes first.

Be prepared. Be smart. Be safe.

