

FRONT



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

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 can trap you underwater.



Undercut Banks

Weak banks can collapse without warning.



Slippery Rocks

Algae-covered rocks are extremely slippery.



Fast Currents

Steady cold can sweep you off your feet and impair breathing.



Waterfalls & Drops

Never go over a waterfall or into unknown water.

BACK

7. ESSENTIAL EMERGENCY GEAR

- Phone & extra battery
- First-aid kit
- Headlamp or flashlight
- Rain jacket / extra layers
- Emergency blanket
- Water & high-energy snacks
- Whistle
- Map of the area
- Knife or multi-tool

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

8. WATER TEMPERATURE & TROUT STRESS

WATER TEMP (°F)	EFFECT ON TROUT
Below 50°	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)	WHAT IT FEELS LIKE	IMPACT ON FISHING & SAFETY
0 – 5	Calm	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
- Clumsiness
- Sturred speech
- 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.



When in doubt, get out.



Trout will still be there tomorrow.

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

Be prepared. Be smart. Be safe.

