



A 4 year old girl was attracted to a large irrigation canal near her home that had just been filled. A Scout saw her fall in. He ran over lay on the bank and grabbed her just 4 feet from where the water was swept into a debris laden culvert.

Reaching Rescues

Reaching rescues are safe, simple, and effective. They can be used for all types of victims. More than half of all drownings happen within 20 feet of safety. That's because the poor swimmer often gets into trouble as soon as he enters water over his head. That is likely to be close to the edge of a pool or near a dock. If you're on shore and spot someone in trouble next to the edge, lie down, extend a hand or leg, and pull the victim to the side. Nothing could be simpler, but it will save a life as surely as anything else and often more quickly and safely.

Note that when a conscious victim grabs your hand, he often will stop his own efforts to remain afloat. The sudden extra weight can topple the unprepared rescuer into the water. That is the reason for lying down or otherwise bracing yourself. Don't stand with your feet on the edge and bend over.

If the victim is beyond reach of your arm or leg, use any available object to extend your reach. That could be a pole, paddle, shirt, or towel. Again, stay low and well-braced.

A distressed swimmer probably will reach for whatever you extend, but an actively drowning person will not. For both types of victims, make sure your rescue aid comes into direct contact with their hands and arms. Flip your towel over a victim's shoulder. Sweep a pole under his arm from the side rather than poking it at him straight on. In this and all rescues for an active victim, tell the victim clearly what you are doing and what you wish him to do.

An unconscious victim cannot grasp any device. You can still use a reaching rescue if you can reach far enough with your own hand to grab him. You can also use a special device, called a shepherd's crook, that may be available at hotel or other pools without lifeguards. The shepherd's crook is a pole with a large loop on one end. The loop is used to snag an unconscious victim below the shoulders and draw him to shore. Do not use this technique if you suspect that the person is unconscious because he dove into shallow water and injured his spine.

The simplest reaching rescues are done without entering the water. In other cases, you can extend your reach far enough only by going partway toward the victim. In deep water, firmly grab a rigid object, such as the edge of a dock or a pool ladder. In shallow water, you might walk directly to a small child who can't touch

bottom or to an unconscious person who hit his head. Always be extremely careful about wading in shallow water toward someone of your own size who is struggling to stay up. He probably has stepped off a ledge into deep water. Extend a pole or oar to such a person only if you have a firm footing on the bottom. You also can shove a float to him or form a human chain with several rescuers as shown in the illustration.

