



Surviving Vehicle Submersion in 60 Seconds Fact Sheet

Would you know what to do if your vehicle began to sink in water? Did you know that if you don't get out in the first 60 seconds that it may be too late? Vehicle submersions claim the lives of far too many people who could have survived if they had just known what to do and in what order to do it.

QUICK FACTS

- **1 minute** is all the time you have to safely exit a sinking vehicle
- Almost **2 out of 3 U.S. flash flood deaths occurred in vehicles** from 1995 to 2010 (Dr. Greg Forbes, former severe weather expert at The Weather Channel)
- An **annual average of 384 traffic fatalities involved accidental drowning** as one of the causes of death (FARS 2004-2007)

Vehicle submersion fatalities occur in two ways - when a vehicle crashes into water or when a vehicle is swept away by flood waters. Vehicle submersion injuries and deaths can be found in at least 4 separate databases causing the true magnitude of vehicle submersion incidents to be largely underestimated. The 4 databases include;

- Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS)
- Not in Traffic Surveillance (NTS)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- Kids and Car Safety (KACS)

REMEMBER "SWOC" TO ESCAPE A SINKING VEHICLE

S – SEAT BELTS off

W – WINDOW open

O – OUT immediately

C – CHILDREN first

DO NOT panic.

DO NOT touch your cell phone.

DO NOT open the door, this will cause water to rush into the car.

DO NOT wait for the vehicle to fully submerged, it is a widespread myth that you will be able to escape once it is fully submerged, but this is NOT true. If you wait, your car becomes a coffin.

SAFETY TIPS & FAMILY SUBMERSION DRILL

Talk to your family about exactly what to do if your vehicle ends up in a body of water and review the topic regularly. Remember, if your vehicle begins to submerge in water, you have 1 minute to escape before the water pressure against the windows becomes too great.

Doing regular “submersion drills” with your family can help them be prepared when a real emergency takes place. Here is what we suggest;

- 1 – Pull over the car unexpectedly in a safe location off of traffic ways
- 2 – Announce that the vehicle has gone into water
- 3 – Remove seat belts and move to designated window for exiting
- 4 – Window down (roll down or pretend to break with resqme™ tool in case electrical system is no longer working in vehicle)
- 5 – Pretend to crawl out the window (*please do not allow children to crawl out of the window as they may fall and become injured*)

NEVER drive through water! It only takes a few inches of water to sweep a vehicle off the road. Automobile accidents can also result in the vehicle leaving the road and entering a body of water.

[Watch a self-rescue from a submerged vehicle](#)

ALWAYS keep at least one resqme™ window breaker/seat belt cutter tool in your vehicle in an easy to reach location securely fastened using a zip tie or on your keys if you have a keyed ignition. ([order tools here](#)) We recommend zip tying a tool within reach of each passenger seat so each passenger can get themselves out if necessary. Attach a Submersion Instruction Key Tag with your resqme™ tool so you can refer to it in an emergency.



[Learn how to use a resqme™ emergency safety tool](#)

IMPORTANT WARNING: Window-breaking tools do NOT work on laminated glass, they only work on tempered glass*.

Each window in your vehicle should have a sticker indicating what type of glass. In emergency situations, you may not be able to recall. Even if your car has laminated glass* on the front passenger windows, it is likely that it has tempered glass on the back seat passenger windows. Be prepared. Know what windows have tempered glass in your vehicle and mark them with a special sticker. More resources below.

[AAA's list of vehicles that have laminated glass windows on doors.](#)

[Why knowing the type of car windows you have could save your life](#)

For more information on how to keep your family safe visit www.KidsAndCars.org.

***Laminated glass** will crack but remain together due to the plastic layer that **is** baked **between** the two pieces of **glass**. **Tempered glass** breaks into smaller pieces so you can get out of a vehicle. Most windshields of vehicles have laminated glass because in case there is a crash it helps keep occupants in the vehicle making a crash much more survivable. In general, most vehicles have tempered glass in side door windows especially in the rear doors. *But, some makes and models do have laminated glass in the front driver's and passenger door windows, back windows and the roof.*