

# Safety Protocol

## for JCWC Volunteer Surveyors



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Safety is our highest priority at JCWC. As a volunteer surveyor in the Johnson Creek Watershed, **always** follow these rules for your own and others' safety:

1. **Trust your instinct.** If a site or a situation doesn't seem safe, act on your intuition.
2. **Be prepared.** Know the location and phone number of the nearest urgent care facility.
3. **Have a buddy.** Always survey with at least one other adult. (Two adults must be present.)
4. **It's ok to quit.** Call off the survey if you feel unsafe for **any** reason, for example:
  - Weather – hot or cold temperature, high precipitation, etc.
  - Stream conditions – poor visibility, swift water, deep water, slippery bottom, etc.
  - Bank conditions – steep, slippery, unable to climb out of stream, blackberry, etc.
  - Person-to-person interactions – negative interactions with residents, campers, etc.
  - Animals – off-leash dogs, etc.
  - Injury, illness, or fatigue.
5. **Permission is essential.** Only survey reaches for which JCWC has obtained permission. Even if permission was obtained, call off the survey if you feel that you are unwelcome.
6. **Banks are best.** Whenever possible and safe, walk on the banks instead of the stream. Walk cautiously, looking out for tripping hazards. (Bank walking also protects stream wildlife!)
7. **Be geared up.** When entering the stream (even briefly), use the following equipment:
  - Chest waders
  - Life vest worn under waders
  - Walking pole (1 or 2)
  - Polarized sunglasses
8. **Stay shallow.** Don't enter the creek when it's above waist level for either partner. If the water is moving rapidly, don't enter the creek when it is above knee level for either partner. Test with your walking pole before getting in the water, and test frequently as you proceed.
9. **Stay warm.** If you begin shivering and can't stop, get out of the water and warm up.
10. **Walk carefully.** When in the creek, walk slowly, face upstream for balance and visibility, use your pole to test the ground in front of you, and watch out for hazards such as rocks, holes, trash, and sharp objects (including glass and needles).

11. **Steer clear of needles.** Never touch a hypodermic needle you spot in or near the creek. Contact JCWC instead and let us know the location of the needle.
12. **Alert us.** If you call off your survey or notice any potential hazards in the creek, contact JCWC immediately so we can inform other volunteers.

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## What to do if you fall

Falling in waders can be very dangerous, even in shallow water. If your waders begin to fill, **act quickly**:

1. **Slip off the shoulder straps.**
2. Face downstream and use your feet to slow down your movement.
3. Move or swim to the bank and stand up.

If you are out of danger but are very wet, determine whether you can stay warm and safe enough to continue. If not, get out and change into dry clothing.

Always shower as soon as possible after significant contact with creek water.

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## What to do if you get injured

It's up to you to decide whether an injury is serious enough to call off the survey. Err on the side of caution—small injuries can worsen! We care more about you than about the survey.

A few notes:

1. **Keep cuts dry.** Keep all cuts out of the water and clean them as soon as possible.
2. **Get help.** If an injury is serious, contact the nearest urgent-care facility.
3. **Contact us** as soon as you can.