

Working Over Water

About 7 minutes to deliver

Vests, ring buoys every 200 feet, and a boat in the water — the requirements people discover after somebody goes in.

Water gets treated as scenery until somebody goes in. Cold water takes strength out of a person in minutes, work boots and a tool belt pull down, and a current does the rest. 1926.106 is short and every line of it is specific.

WHAT IS REQUIRED

- (a) U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets or buoyant work vests for employees working over or near water where the danger of drowning exists.
- (b) Inspected before and after each use for defects that would alter strength or buoyancy. Defective units are not used.
- (c) Ring buoys with at least 90 feet of line, readily available for rescue, spaced no more than 200 feet apart.
- (d) At least one lifesaving skiff immediately available wherever employees work over or next to water.

A skiff in a yard twenty minutes away is not immediately available. Neither is a ring buoy locked in a container.

WHAT THE VEST HAS TO BE

- Coast Guard approved, and marked as such. A generic flotation aid is not.
- The right size and fastened. An unfastened vest comes off on impact with the water, and it is the impact that knocks the wind out of you.
- Worn, not carried. Nobody puts one on after they fall.

AROUND THE EDGE

- Guardrails or fall protection still apply. Water below does not replace an edge protection requirement — it adds a drowning hazard to a fall hazard.
- Watch the walking surface. Docks, barges, pontoons and bridge decks get wet, and wet steel plate is close to frictionless.
- Know the current, the tide and the temperature. Cold water is survivable for far less time than people assume, and it is worst in spring when the air feels fine.

IF SOMEBODY GOES IN

Throw, do not go. Ring buoy first, then the skiff, then a rope. Somebody who enters the water to rescue a workmate becomes the second casualty far more often than the first is saved. Call 911 and keep eyes on the person continuously — losing sight of a head in water is the thing that turns this into a recovery.

ASK THE CREW

- Where is the skiff, and could it be in the water in under two minutes?
- Are the ring buoys within 200 feet of each other and actually reachable?
- Is everyone working near the edge wearing a vest, fastened?

29 CFR 1926.106 · 29 CFR 1926.104

This is a toolbox talk, not a course. It is general awareness on one topic — not site-specific, not a hazard assessment, and not a substitute for assessment of your workplace by a competent person, your written programs, or manufacturers' instructions. It does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. Regulations change; verify against the current standard. Whoever delivers it is responsible for deciding it is suitable and sufficient for the work. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional medical care or certified emergency-response training, and it confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. Migna Safety Solutions · training.mignasafety.com

v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafety.com/toolbox-talks/working-over-water>

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Working Over Water

About 7 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.106 · 29 CFR 1926.104

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

Form supplied by Migna Safety Solutions · v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafety.com/toolbox-talks/working-over-water>

Keep this sheet with your training records. This form is supplied blank by Migna Safety Solutions — we did not deliver this session, were not present, and make no representation about what was said or who attended. A toolbox talk is general awareness on one topic and does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. The employer remains responsible for site-specific hazard assessment and for the training its workers are required to have. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, and confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. training.mignasafety.com