

Work Near Water: Verify Protection and Rescue

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 7, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

A person can enter the water during access, a task or a change in footing. Before work, verify the protection against falling in and the arrangements for a prompt, safe response.

Objective: Confirm water-specific protection and usable rescue arrangements before exposure.

Key hazards or failure points

Unprotected edges; slippery transitions; unsuitable flotation; damaged equipment; inaccessible rescue gear; changing current or weather; failed communication; untrained rescue.

Practical controls

- Assess the actual work positions and access where a person could enter water. Establish required fall prevention and drowning protection through the applicable task plan.
- Provide required US Coast Guard-approved life jackets or buoyant work vests where drowning danger exists. Select and fit devices for the task using their instructions; inspect before and after each use.
- Maintain required ring buoys, lines and immediately available lifesaving skiff. Plan trained response, emergency communication and recovery access for the actual water conditions. Swimming ability does not replace protection.

Verify It in the Field

From protected positions, check work edges, access and barriers against the plan. Reassess changes in water, current, weather or nearby activity before the crew approaches.

Check each assigned flotation device's approval, condition, fit and fastening using its instructions. Reject defects affecting strength or buoyancy. Do not enter the water to demonstrate fit or test work gear.

Verify ring-buoy placement and line length against OSHA 1926.106(c). Confirm skiff readiness, assigned response and access under the plan. Check normal communication and exact location information; never make a test emergency call.

Stop and reassess

Hold affected work for missing or defective protection, unavailable rescue equipment, failed communication or changed conditions beyond the plan. If someone enters the water, raise the alarm and summon the planned response. Do not attempt untrained water entry or an improvised rescue.

Ask the crew

1. Where could someone enter the water today?
2. What proves our rescue equipment is ready and reachable?
3. Who raises the alarm and who provides the planned response?

Construction near-water readiness; not boat operation, diving or rescue training.

Sources: OSHA 1926.106 and 1926.50; actual task and rescue plans.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/working-near-water-protection-rescue