

# Fly Fishing Safety by Steve Hofmann

(The information for this article was taken from various websites, **The Fly Fisherman** magazine, and personnel experience.)

## Fly Fishing Safety – Topical areas

1. Skin Protection
2. Prevent Drowning
3. Casting – Watch your casting area – Don't get hooked or hook someone else.
4. Avoid Bad Weather
5. Use the Buddy System
6. Use wading safety tips
7. Know CPR

## Skin Protection

Fly fishermen see a lot of sun. Slather sunscreen before going out on the water and cover skin with sun-protective clothing. There **lots** of products on the market – Just make sure it is a least SPF 15 and apply it correctly before you go out. Visit a dermatologist every six months. Skin protection products include: Wide brimmed hat, gloves arm and shirt coverings.



One my long time friends and guide here in the White Mountains had a good sized chunk of his nose removed recently because of skin cancer!!!

## Prevent Drowning

### **Lakes:**

In boats, pontoon or otherwise, even while on calm lakes, wear a PFD at all times. There are many PFD options to choose from, find one that suits you. Use the buddy system. Or at least let you wife or 'significant other' know where you are and when you expect to return.

### **Rivers:**

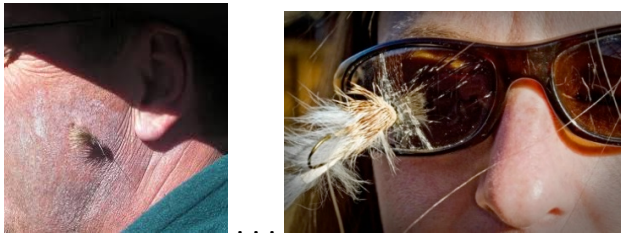
- Use a good solid Wading stick and flotation device. Attach stick to your belt via a lanyard.

- Use good Wading Boots/with good cleats. Note: some Drift boat guides only allow felt boots.
- Buddy system Us
- It is important to wear your waders correctly. i.e. belt tight around the waist.



## Fly Casting – Watch your casting area

- Always check your back-cast area for other fisherman or hikers. It Doesn't matter if your in a pontoon boat, creek or a river.
- Recent example at Silver Creek AZ: I was fishing about half up the creek and thought I was paying attention to the trail behind me. The next thing I know I have a “tug” on my foreword cast. There were NO trees around that I knew. I had hooked a passerby's hat. NO harm was done, just a snagged hat. But I had lost concentration on the back-cast because the fishing was heating up.
- If you do get hooked use the proper hook removal procedure. That's one big advantage of barbless hooks . . . . i.e. removing them.



## Avoid Bad weather

Never fish when the weather turns bad. Avoid fly fishing in a thunderstorm or when lighting is present. Fly rods are made out of materials that are very good conducts of electricity.

Every year it is reported that a fly fisherman dies on the San Juan River in NM because of getting hit by lightning while fishing. I've had two near misses. Once on the San Juan River near Pagosa springs and once on a hike to a lake near Big Sky Idaho.



If caught in a lightning storm:

- lay the rod down on the ground
- get as low as you can, if you can find a hollow then crouch in it
- if it's a bad electrical storm then lay down in the lowest point you can find

## Use the Buddy system

Always go out with at least one partner. The older your get, the more the rule applies.

Let your wife or significant other where you are going and the time of expected return.

## Wading Safety Tips – always use a solid wading staff like the one shown below.



## In addition:

- Know your wading limits.
- Plan your route through a river.
- Keep your body sideways to the current.
- Don't wade if you don't need to.
- Lean into the current.
- Leave your tackle in an emergency.
- Be prepared for an emergency situation.
- Shuffle your feet.

## Learn CPR

It could save your best buddy's life. One WMFFC member saved a life several years ago on the San Juan river in NM by applying CPR until help could arrive..



## WMFFC Case Histories

- San Juan River – Club Member - probably saved a live by knowing CPR.

- Green River – example of not wearing PFD and NOT obeying rules of river.
- Stuck in the mud at Christmas tree lake – fishing with buddies probably saved a life.
- Sunrise lake event – An elderly person fell out of his boat - Club member came to their to rescue.
- Steve Hofmann Scare - Shoshone River – fishing a big river and almost fell out of the drift boat without PFD.
- Lee's Ferry – 2 examples of Buddy system working