

Roger Williams University faculty, staff, and students may need to use waders and associated wading equipment to access specific water-based work areas and conduct specific water-based tasks. These tasks may take place on-campus or at off-campus locations. These tasks may be related to classroom instruction, maintenance, or research. These procedures provide requirements and guidance on safe wader usage.



- Check for injuries: Once the wader user is out of the water, assess their injuries. If there are any life-threatening injuries, such as bleeding or difficulty breathing, prioritize those first.
- Provide first aid: If the wader user has any injuries that require first aid, administer it as quickly and effectively as possible. If you are not trained in first aid, wait for emergency services to arrive.
- Keep the wader user warm: If the water is cold, the wader may be at risk of hypothermia. Cover them with blankets or warm clothing to help them retain body heat.
- Monitor their condition: Keep a close eye on the wader condition and be prepared to administer CPR or other lifesaving measures if necessary.
- In the event of a slip/fall in the water where the wader user loses footing:
  - Do not attempt to swim.
  - Immediately tuck your knees up to your chest (this traps air into the waders) and roll onto your back.
  - Either tread water or float in an upright position.
  - You should be able to use a backsculling action to return to shore.
  - If being carried by the current, face downstream (feet first).
  - Immediately check for injuries, dry off, and change clothes once you have exited the water

All wader users must complete the following safety training requirements:

- Have a current Shop and Studio Safety Agreement on file
- Have current completions for all relevant general safety training for the work area, as listed on the [RWU Laboratory, Shop, and Studio Safety Training Requirements Links](#) for the current academic year
- Have current completion for the Wader Safety Training on the [RWU Laboratory, Shop, and Studio Safety Training Requirements Links](#) for the current academic year
- Have completed a documented hands-on wader safety training session with an approved faculty member, technician, or monitor for the current academic year
  
- The shop/studio safety technician (RWU employee not a student monitor) is responsible for maintaining the following records and providing a second set of copies to EHS on a monthly basis:
  - Any student and staff training records
  - Any wader replacement/repair/maintenance/visual inspection records
  
- Wader boots/foot gear must be made of completely non-porous material with no felt soles or similar sole material

- Rhode Island **prohibits** the use of wader boots/foot gear with external felt soles or any other natural or synthetic material capable of absorbing liquid in all freshwater areas
- The shop/studio safety technician (RWU employee not a student monitor) is responsible for visually inspecting the waders on a routine basis and scheduling maintenance and repairs, including replacement as needed
- Rinse all wading gear in fresh water after each use and hang or lay flat to dry
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for maintenance and repair
- Use only qualified personnel to perform maintenance on the waders (either RWU or an outside vendor)

Faculty/staff and supervisors who are planning wading work must check their work area conditions for water/sediment safety before beginning the proposed work (long-term conditions), and before each work shift (temporary conditions).

- Some areas of New England are former industrial, commercial, or agriculture sites, and the **water body sediment** in these areas can contain pollutants such as heavy metals, pesticides/herbicides, solvents, etc.
  - Disturbing these water body sediments can release the trapped pollutants and the pollutants can collect on your body or wading gear and cause an exposure either (1) during wading, or (2) when wearing the wading equipment again, if it was not decontaminated properly.
  - **Supervisors/Faculty: Please coordinate with RWU Environmental Health and Safety if you are going to be working at an offsite location that has the potential for industrial/commercial/agricultural pollution in the sediment.** Sites with a known/potential for residual pollution are called brownfields. **Not all potentially contaminated areas are listed in these resources, but these resources provide guidance known information:**
    - RIDEM Brownfields Overview: <https://dem.ri.gov/environmental-protection-bureau/land-revitalization-and-sustainable-materials-management/state-0>
    - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Overview: <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/r1>
- Some New England **water bodies (surface waters)** are impaired (contain certain pollutants above a certain level). Some of these pollutants can include bacteria (fecal coliform, Enterococci (*E. coli*)) and heavy metals. Many of these water bodies have a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report listing the impaired water body, the pollutant(s), and the steps being taken to reduce the pollutant levels.
  - These pollutants can collect on your body or wading gear and cause an exposure either (1) during wading, or (2) when wearing the wading equipment again, if it was not decontaminated properly.

- **Supervisors/Faculty: Please coordinate with RWU Environmental Health and Safety if you are going to be working at a location that has a TMDL in place.**
  - RIDEM TMDL List: <https://dem.ri.gov/environmental-protection-bureau/water-resources/research-monitoring/restoration-studies-tmdl-documents>
  - EPA Impaired Waters and TMDLs in New England (EPA Region 1): <https://www.epa.gov/tmdl/impaired-waters-and-tmdls-new-england-region-1>
  
- Some water bodies can have **temporary bacterial or other pollutant conditions** that could be harmful for waders and/or contaminate your wading gear. Check for and avoid wading in areas with:
  - **Active cyanobacteria (Blue-Green Algae) blooms**
    - Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) Cyanobacteria website and advisory list: <https://dem.ri.gov/environmental-protection-bureau/water-resources/research-monitoring/cyanobacteria-documents>