

There are many variables in determining this answer. This is the formula I know:

Base time period is body will rise off the bottom in 4 1/2 days.

Add 24 hours for every 2 deg F below 50-water temp.

Subtract 8 hours for every 5 deg over 55-deg water temp.

Add 2 days if he was thin build, under weight or under 7 years old

Subtract 12 hours for every 25 lbs overweight

Reduce this time by 15% if they ate within the last 3 hours and 20% if there was beer involved.

90 deg F 24 hrs

80 deg F 48 hrs

70 deg F 72 hrs

60 deg F 4-7 days

50 deg F uncertain

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Once a body submerges, a number of additional factors will affect how much time passes before resurfacing. A primary influence is water temperature. At warmer temperatures, decomposition of the body and fermentation of stomach contents will form gases which will eventually refloat the body. (This process will also continue to produce detectable scent for the dog, distinguishable by the dog as cadaver scent). As water temperatures drop, the decay process slows, and at 38o F it stops and there is preservation by refrigeration. The following chart gives approximate times for a body to refloat, taking only water temperature into account:

Water Temp. (F) Time

70..... 1 day

60..... 2-3 days

50..... 3-4 days

40..... 6+ days

38..... Will not resurface until temp. increases

Other factors that may influence this process include water depth (at 200 feet it is unlikely for a body to refloat due to the increased pressure on the body. Shallower depths may act to slow the rise of the body.), underwater structures that may snag the body, thermal layering of lakes that occurs during the summer, as well as other conditions. The success of above water visual searching will be affected by these processes, as well as visual clarity of the water. Search dogs can be of great benefit when the body is not likely to be found immediately using visual search methods.

In searches involving large bodies of water or large, swift moving rivers, dogs can be used to eliminate large segments of the search area. Just as in missing person searches, if you can determine where the victim is not, you have positive information to use in revising search strategy. This is particularly useful when combining the use of dogs and divers. Anytime divers are placed in the water for body search, the safety vs. risk factor is a critical decision for the incident commander to make. Using dogs to aid in the placement of divers can reduce the need for dives into risky terrain, reduce dive time, and speed recovery; thereby increasing safety