



# National Water Safety Program

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## Safety Tips

*Know Before You Go!*

### Boaters! Before Getting Underway:

**Know your boat and know the rules of the road. Take a safe boating course.**

- Check your boat for all required safety equipment.
- Consider the size of your boat, the number of passengers and the amount of extra equipment that will be on-board. **DON'T OVERLOAD THE BOAT!**
- If you will be in a power boat, check your electrical system and fuel system for gas fumes.
- Follow manufacturer's suggested procedures **BEFORE** starting up the engine.
- Wear your life jacket – don't just carry one on board.
- Leave your alcohol behind. Work to increase your safety, not increase your risks!
- Check the weather forecast.
- File a float plan with a member of your family or friend.

### Swimmers!

Since most drowning victims had no intention of being in water and since most people drown within 10-30 feet of safety, it is important that you and your family learn to swim.

Please remember:

Never rely on toys such as inner tubes and water wings to stay afloat.

- Don't take chances, by over estimating your swimming skills.
- Swim only in designated swimming areas.
- Never swim alone.

The four major causes of drownings are:

- ✓ Not wearing a life jacket;
- ✓ Abuse of alcohol;
- ✓ Lack of sufficient swimming skills;
- ✓ Hypothermia

***Wear your  
life jacket!***



Drowning Fatalities: Each year, approximately 6,000 people drown in the United States. Drowning is the **SECOND** leading cause of accidental deaths for persons 15-44 years of age.

What is really surprising is that two-thirds of the people who drown never had an intention of being in the

water!

## Divers!

Never dive into lakes and rivers...the results can be tragic. Every year, diving accidents result in more than 8,000 people suffering paralyzing spinal cord injuries and another 5,000 dying before they reach the hospital. All too often, hidden dangers lurk beneath the surface of the water, including rock outcrops or shallow water.

## Watch Small Children!

Each year about 200 children drown and several thousand others are treated in hospitals for submersion accidents, accidents which leave children with permanent brain damage and respiratory health problems.

Remember, it only takes a few seconds for a small child to wander away. Children have a natural curiosity and attraction to water.

## Alcohol- The Fun Killer.

It's a fact, alcohol and water do not mix! Unfortunately, many people ignore this and each year about 3,000 of them are wrong...dead wrong! More than half of all the people that drown had consumed alcohol prior to their accident.

Being intoxicated is not necessary for alcohol to be a threat to your safety. Just one beer will impair your balance, vision, judgement and reaction time, thus making you a potential danger to yourself and others.

Research shows that four hours of boating, exposure to noise, vibration, sun, glare and wind produces fatigue that makes you act as if you were legally intoxicated. If you combine alcohol consumption with this boating fatigue condition, it intensifies the effects and increases your accident risk.

So remember, don't include alcohol in your outing, if you planning to have fun in, on, or near the water.

## Cold Water Survival!

Your life may depend on a better understanding of cold water. Many suspected drowning victims actually die from cold exposure or hypothermia.

Hypothermia is a condition in which the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. Violent shivering develops which may give way to confusion and a loss of body movement.

If you fall in the water, in any season, hypothermia may occur. Many of our nation's open waters are mountain fed, and water temperatures even in late summer can run low enough to bring on this condition under certain conditions. It's important to remember:

- Don't discard clothing. Clothing layers provide some warmth that may actually assist you in fighting hypothermia. This includes shoes and hats.
- Wear your life jacket! This helps hold heat into the core areas of your body, and enables you to easily put yourself into the HELP position. **HELP** (Heat Escape Lessening Posture) by drawing limbs into your body; keep armpits and groin areas protected from unnecessary exposure – a lot of heat can be lost from those areas, as well as the head.

## Other tips:

- Dress warmly with wool clothing
  - Wear rain gear and stay dry
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