



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

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Take Steps to Prevent Drowning

Canton, NY— The St. Lawrence County Public Health Department is urging residents to take caution when in and around the water this summer. Each year in New York State, hundreds of people drown or are hospitalized for severe injuries that occur while underwater. Drowning is the sixth leading cause of unintentional injury death for people of all ages, and is the second leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 14 years old. Drownings can occur in both large and small amounts of water such as lakes, ponds, rivers, oceans, pools, spas, bathtubs and even drainage ditches.

Drownings have been associated with all kinds of watercraft such as motorboats, rowboats, rafts, paddleboats, sailboats, and kayaks. In a study conducted by the New York State Department of Health, it was found that 90% of people who drowned while boating were not wearing life jackets.

Here are some steps you can take to prevent drownings:

- Never swim alone. Always swim with a buddy and keep an eye on each other. Parents, make sure you're watching your children, even when other adults or a lifeguard is present.
- Don't drink alcohol if you are planning to swim or go boating. Alcohol slows reaction time and affects balance and judgement.
- Use extra caution if you have a medical condition that could cause loss of consciousness while in the water.
- Be aware that in natural bodies of water, swift currents, deep water and/or a sudden drop-off can get you in trouble, even if you are a good swimmer.
- Make pools inaccessible to children, unless there is proper supervision. Pools should have proper fencing (4 feet high) with a self-closing and self-latching gate at least 54 inches from the ground.
- Boaters, make sure everyone on board wears a life vest, and check water and weather conditions prior to going boating,

Recognizing when a person is drowning is important. Many people think that if someone isn't calling for help, that person is not in trouble. Remember, when someone is drowning, he or she is trying to breathe, not speak. It may appear that the person is splashing or waving. Typically, the person thrashes in the water with arms extended, attempting to keep his or her head above water. This happens VERY FAST in as few as 20 seconds or as long as a minute. Any delay can be fatal.

Sometimes being careful just isn't enough, which is why everyone needs to take steps to prevent drownings. For more information please call the Public Health Department at 315-386-2325.

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