

Water Smart Public Education Guide

This document was compiled using resources developed by this branch and other branches of the Lifesaving Society of Canada.

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The Lifesaving Society of Canada

Canada's Lifesaving and Lifeguarding Experts: The Lifesaving Society of Canada works to prevent drowning and water related injury through: its training programs, Water Smart® public education, aquatic safety management services, research, consultation, and international activity. Since 1896, the Society has taught millions of Canadians to save lives in aquatic environments.

The Lifesaving Society of Canada is a national volunteer organization and registered charity composed of tens of thousands of individual members and thousands of affiliated swimming pools, waterfronts and schools. Established in England (1891) as The Swimmers' Life Saving Society, we became The Royal Life Saving Society in 1904. Today, we're known to Canadians simply as the Lifesaving Society.

Teaching Canadians to save themselves and others: Through our swimming, first aid, lifesaving, lifeguarding and leadership training programs, Canadians develop personal swimming and survival skills together with water rescue and first aid/CPR knowledge.

Swim for Life®, Junior Lifeguard Club, Canadian Swim Patrol, Bronze Medal Awards and First Aid and CPR programs offer Canadians a challenging progression in swimming, lifesaving and first aid/CPR training.

The National Lifeguard Service Award is the standard for professional lifeguards in Canada. It is the only nationally recognized lifeguard-training program in Canada.

Public Education: Recognizing many people never enroll in swimming or lifesaving programs, the Society developed its Water Smart® campaign to deliver water safety information and lifesaving education to millions of Canadians annually. Messages are targeted to individuals involved in unsupervised activities in, on, or near water. Water Smart® Canadians understand the value of water safety and are better equipped to avoid specific water-related hazards, resulting in fewer water-related incidents and deaths.

Research: The Society conducts research in areas that support and lead to improvements in its program education and public education initiatives. Since 1992, the Society has researched and reported on drownings and unintentional water-related deaths nationally. This information is used to analyze the drowning problem in detail to better understand what needs to be done to reduce the number of drownings in Canada.

Setting Aquatic Safety Standards: The Society establishes aquatic safety standards and consults on aquatic safety issues for the aquatic industry, education, recreation, health and government agencies that oversee aquatic recreation in Canada. Society representatives act as expert witnesses at coroners' inquest and in court cases.

International Activity: The Lifesaving Society is a leader and partner in the delivery of water safety education in Canada and around the world. The Society represents Canada in the International Life Saving Federation and the Royal Life Saving Society. We are a key member of the Americas Region of the International Life Saving Federation (ILS) and are one of five national branch members of the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) Commonwealth. The Lifesaving Society representatives provide leadership on the Board of Directors and in committee meetings and conferences with these organizations. Our international connections mean the Lifesaving Society brings Canadians the best the world has to offer.

Preface

This guide is a valuable tool for planning and organizing Water Smart® activities. The Lifesaving Society's goal is to prevent drowning and water related incidents for all Canadians by providing lifesaving, lifeguarding and leadership education and training along with public education about drowning prevention.

Water Smart® education and events are any occurrence that educates people about how to be safe in, on and around water or ice. Whether you're handing out Within Arms' Reach pamphlets at a community event, making a safe snowmobiling presentation to high school students or simply creating a display, you are educating the public about water safety. This guide is full of ideas and means to provide Water Smart® education in your community.

This Water Smart® Public Education Guide is broken down into different water safety themes, each with different activities for both children and adults. Each of the activities found may be adapted to meet the needs of your facility whether it is a pool or waterfront. Please make sure participants' safety is kept in mind while these activities are taking place. Whether you're a parent, teacher, community leader, lifeguard, instructor or pool programmer, this guide will help you teach others to make smart choices. These activities can be adapted for National Drowning Prevention Week.

The Lifesaving Society encourages your participation in all of the Water Smart® programs. Contact your local branch for any questions and/or concerns in regards to any event. As the experts on water safety, the Lifesaving Society thanks you for being a part of our Water Smart® solution.



Section 1

Overview

The majority of water-related injuries that occur each year in Manitoba are drowning and near-drowning, followed by spinal cord and brain injuries. Water-related injuries usually involve:

- Boating
- Swimming and/or playing near water
- Water and/or Ice sports

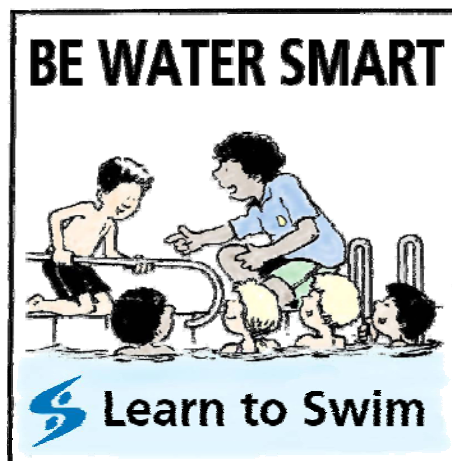
Drowning occurs when suffocation by submersion in a liquid – usually water. This blocks the airway, depriving the person's body of oxygen. Survivors of near drowning may suffer permanent brain damage and lifelong disability.

It only takes a small amount of water for a child to drown. Children drown in swimming pools, bathtubs, toilets, hot tubs, lakes, drainage ditches, buckets, and puddles. For every child that drowns in Canada many more are treated in emergency rooms for near drowning injuries which may result in irreversible brain damage. It only takes seconds for a child to drown – it may be the time it took to turn away and answer the phone or to check on another child.

Drowning is preventable and education is the key to preventing and reducing the number of water-related injuries.

Here are a few simple Water Smart® rules to follow:

1. Supervise children. If you're not Within Arms' Reach you have gone too far.
2. Always wear a PFD or Lifejacket when boating or when in, on or around water.
3. Play and swim in supervised areas.
4. Always swim with a buddy. Do not swim alone.
5. Be Water Smart®.
6. Learn lifesaving & first aid skills.
7. Feet first-first time. Know where it is safe to dive.
8. Don't go overboard. *Alcohol and boating don't mix.*
9. Make every trip a round trip. Drive responsibly.
10. Learn to swim.



National Drowning Prevention Week

National Drowning Prevention Week (NDPW) aims to promote awareness of the Society's public advocacy role - to reinforce the identity of the Lifesaving Society as experts in the field of drowning prevention, to promote the Society's objectives of decreasing the number of drownings/year and increase the number people who are Water Smart®.

NDPW is an annual event held by the Lifesaving Society. It is traditionally run during the third week in July. This event was chosen due to statistics revealing this week holds the highest number of drowning occurrences. NDPW increases awareness all across Canada and shows the need for drowning prevention.

This week provides an opportunity to profile various water safety tips that will help reduce fatalities and incidents. Drowning is still the third highest cause of accidental deaths for Canadians under 60 years of age. Most of these cases are preventable.

The majority of people who drown had no intention of going into the water. Immersions are sudden and unexpected, often silent and within easy reach of safety. Statistics show over half of all drownings occur during the summer months and more than 60% of drownings occur when the victim was engaged in recreational activities.

According to a recent study sponsored by the Lifesaving Society, almost all Canadians (98%) agree swimming is a life skill every child should learn, and 92% believe swimming instruction should be provided through schools. Yet due to cost and access issues, a surprising 60% of Canadian children do not take swimming lessons. In addition, 48% of Canadians admit they have had an experience around water that caused them to fear for someone's safety. With almost 50% of Canadians admitting they have experienced or witnessed a near accident, it is critically important to ensure that Canadians, and especially children, have the swimming skills they need to survive an unexpected fall into water.



Fact Sheet

Drowning

- Drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional deaths for Canadians under 60 years of age
- Over 80% of drowning victims are men
- 55% of all victims are between the ages 18-49
- At the time of drowning, more than 60% of victims were engaged in recreational activities
- Of these activities, the most common were swimming (23%), fishing (18%), and power-boating (18%)
- Over half of all drownings in Canada occur during the summer period (May to August)
- Alcohol is involved with 37% of boating fatalities

Lifeguards in Canada

- The Lifesaving Society is the sole certifier of lifeguards in Canada and in 2006 more than 263,000 Canadians were trained in National Lifesaving Society programs.
- Lifeguard supervision plays an important role in preventing drownings in Canada. Fewer than 2% of all drownings occur under lifeguard supervision. This number decreases when lifeguard is NLS trained.
- When a drowning did occur, there was a rescue attempted in 80% of the cases by a lifeguard, and/or a bystander.

Swim to Survive®

Lifesaving Society Position on the Swim to Survive® Standard

A basic swimming ability is a fundamental requirement in any meaningful attempt to eliminate drowning in Canada. All Canadians deserve the chance to learn these swim survival skills. These basic swim survival skills have been proven worthy of (and have received) public and government support.

Every child has the right to learn how to swim, as swimming is a life skill. It's no different then fire safety or street-proofing. The majority of Canadians support children learning to swim through school safety programs. The Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive® Program is designed to provide the minimum survival skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. This could be the difference between life and death when immersion is sudden and/or unexpected.

There is always a need for swimming instruction. Swim skills are not innate; they are acquired and particularly difficult to self-teach.

Due to high participation in swimming as recreational activities amongst school-aged children between 5 and 12 years of age, swimming is the second most popular activity in Canada after bicycling. Among those over 18 years of age, swimming is the third most popular activity after walking and gardening/yard work. In Canada drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths after motor vehicle crashes for people 55 years of age and under. The majority of people who drown had no intention of entering the water.

What is Swim to Survive®?

Swim to Survive® provides simple, basic swim survival training. It does not replace traditional swimming lessons. Rather, it provides the essential self-rescue skills to enable a person to survive an unexpected fall into deep water.

Swim to Survive® focuses on achieving a single skill sequence (roll into deep water, tread water for one minute and swim 50 meters). Any method that allows the learner to get to safety is acceptable – there is no “one right” solution. As two thirds of all drownings take place within 15 meters of safety, we want to teach people to ‘go the distance’ – dog paddle or swim on their backs. No specific technique or style is required; participants just need the confidence to stay relaxed in the water.

Swim to Survive® is easy to learn and can be taught in as little as three hours. Any parent, teacher or swim instructor can teach Swim to Survive®.

Canadian Swim to Survive® Standard:

= **ROLL** into deep water + **TREAD** water (1min) + **SWIM** 50m

Essential Skill & Rationale	Task
<p>Orient yourself at the surface after an unexpected entry. During a fall into the water, the person is usually disorientated by the rolling or tumbling entry. He/she must be able to get their head above the surface and avoid breathing water.</p>	<p>Roll into deep water Min. safe depth for teaching is 2.5m/8ft4in</p>
<p>Support yourself at the surface. Most Canadian waters are cold enough to trigger cold shock as a result of immersion in the water. The person’s initial response to cold shock is uncontrolled gasping. If the person is underwater during the cold shock response, they will breathe water and probably drown. The ability to tread water allows the victim to protect their airway while waiting to regain a conscious control of their breathing. Treading water also allows the ability to look around and decide how to get to a point of safety.</p>	<p>Tread water for 1 minute</p>
<p>Swim to safety. The Lifesaving Society’s research shows most drownings occur only 3 to 15 meters away from a point of safety such as a pool edge, dock or the shore. The person must be able to swim to safety while retaining the ability to control their breathing. Because the person’s ability may be impaired by cold or clothing, the Society uses a 50 meter distance as a testing standard.</p>	<p>Swim 50 meters</p>

Any method that allows the learner to achieve the standard is acceptable – there is no “right” solution.



Displays – Bulletin Board Do's and Don'ts

It's not the bulletin board's fault so much information gets posted.

When utilized properly, bulletin boards can be a powerful tool to increase attendance at an event and build awareness on how to be safe. Although there are no set rules on how to create a display, here are a few tips to keep in mind.

Try to:

- Keep the design simple, clean and crisp
- Use catchy titles. Think newspaper headlines.
- To make it easier to read, use a combination of upper and lower case and different font sizes: 144-188pt (titles) and 36-72pt (text).
- Create flow, people generally read left to right, top to bottom
- Be organized
- Make illustrations simple
- Use colour sparingly to draw your audience's attention
- Keep text brief. Provide handouts for more information
- Provide space. Packing information too closely together tires the eye and the mind.

Helpful hints:

- To set up a level line, tie a string between two push pins at a certain distance above the bottom of the display board
- Display parts can be put up with push pins
- Use colour
- Prepare for weather if attending an outdoor setting

Resources and Information for your Water Smart® Events:

- Canadian Lifesaving Manual
- BOAT™ Study Guide
- Minimum Ice Thickness Card
- Within Arms' Reach brochure and video
- Ice the Winter Killer
- Lifesaving First Aid and Aquatic Emergency Care Manual
- Canadian First Aid Manual
- Drowning Reports/Lifesaving Reports – available on www.lifesaving.org
- Member Services CD – images to use when promoting Water Smart®
- Lifesaving Society Web Sites (see page 73)
- Lifesaving Society Branch Offices (see page 73)

Event Planning: Organize!

Plan out every aspect of your event and your participants will come back for more.

Getting Started: Where to begin

Determine the audience and customize the event to their needs. Some examples of events are: NDPW, Within Arms' Reach, and Ice Safety.

Set the date well in advance (up to 2 months for media coverage or if you publish a quarterly calendar of events). The more time allowed for planning an event will help reduce stress by preventing last minute run-around. When setting the date, consider whether your event might conflict with any other events.

Consider what activities could be done to support the theme and do so within your budget.

The Committee: Who is in charge and of what?

Surround yourself with a support team and recruit a committee for the event. You will want to designate an event coordinator to oversee the planning, organization and implementation of the whole event. Depending on who's available or the complexity of the event, you may want to have a number of team leaders to ensure everything is properly prepared.

Planning: A critical path for success

Next, it is time to identify all steps and goals required for the event and how each will be achieved. When planning look at all angles, brainstorm everything you can think of to make this event run smoothly. You will want to look at contingency plans to offset any potential problems.

The set up will differ depending on whether the event is indoor or outdoor. Some major areas to consider and plan for include: size of space or building, setup (tables and chairs, tents, portable toilets, parking, signage), cleanup, emergency plans and transportation. Sometimes small, but important duties are overlooked in the hustle and bustle of planning an event.

Examples of events could include:

- ◆ Ice Safety Awareness – in the fall
- ◆ Within Arms' Reach events – any time
- ◆ Boating and PFD events – spring time
- ◆ Drowning prevention – late June and National Drowning Prevention Week
- ◆ Lifeguard Appreciation Day – any time