

FACT SHEET: Swimming and Boating Safety

Drowning more common during summer months; prevention is key

Office of Injury Prevention • Connecticut Department of Public Health • (8 6 0) 5 0 9 – 8 2 5 1 - J u n e 2 0 1 5

Swimming and boating can provide hours of summer fun and healthy physical activity, but can also carry significant risk for injury and death when safety precautions are ignored. Families should be aware of the risks and take steps to reduce them.

In 2013, 4,056 people of all ages drowned in the United States.¹ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about one in five people who die from drowning are children 14 years and younger and for every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Between 2008 and 2012, 176 Connecticut residents drowned. Drowning is more common during warm weather months – when people typically enjoy water-related activities.

Whether you are with children or adults, DPH recommends these precautions while swimming or near water:

- Supervise children with vigilance: Remember that children can drown in just a few inches of water in sources such as wading pools or buckets.
- Never swim alone.
- Swim only in designated swimming areas.
- Choose swimming sites that employ trained and certified lifeguards whenever possible.
- Avoid alcohol use before and during aquatic activities, or when supervising children in or near water.
- Teach children over the age of four to swim, but remember that constant supervision is still key.

If you have a swimming pool, these additional precautions are recommended:

- Install a fence or wall completely around the pool: Barriers should be at least four feet high and have no hand or footholds that could help a child climb over.
- Gates should be self-closing and self-latching, with the latch out of a child's reach.
- Pool alarms may provide additional layers of protection.
- For above ground pools, steps and ladders should be secured and locked or removed when not in use.
- Keep a phone and rescue equipment poolside.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

KEY POINTS:

- **Never swim alone**
- **Swim only in designated swimming areas**
- **Keep a phone and rescue equipment at poolside**
- **Alcohol and boating do not mix**



Boaters are asked to:

- Learn to swim: The best thing anyone participating in any boating activity can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim.
- Remember that alcohol and boating don't mix. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination. For the same reasons it is dangerous to operate an automobile while under the influence of alcohol, people should not operate a boat while drinking alcohol.
- Use Coast Guard-approved life jackets for yourself and your passengers when boating and fishing.
- Develop a float plan: Anytime you go out in a boat, give a responsible person details about where you will be and how long you will be gone. If the boat is delayed due to an emergency, becomes lost or encounters other problems, you want help to be able to reach you.
- Find a boating course in your area – these courses teach navigation rules, emergency procedures and the effects of wind, water conditions, and weather. Go to www.ct.gov/deep for boating safety certificate requirements, course locations and other boating safety regulations.
- Watch the weather: All boats should have on-board NOAA-capable radio to monitor local weather conditions. Constantly check those conditions, and stop boating as soon as you see or hear about a storm.
- Keep boats out of designated swimming areas.



For more information about water safety and drowning prevention, visit the following websites:

- United States Consumer Product Safety Commission: <http://www.cpsc.gov/>
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection: <http://www.ct.gov/deep>
- United States Coast Guard Boating Safety: <http://www.uscgboating.org>
- SAFE KIDS Worldwide: <http://www.usa.safekids.org/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/index.html>
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

ⁱ CDC: WISQARS- Fatal Injury Reports, National and Regional, 1999 – 2013