



## DISCUSSION TOPIC: RECREATIONAL WATER SAFETY

With hot weather now in the forecast, Emergency Management BC urge residents and visitors to take extra care in and around rivers and lakes.

Many lakes across the Interior of B.C. are flooding, including Okanagan Lake and Osoyoos Lake. Boaters are asked to keep their wakes low to reduce shoreline and property damage, watch for floating debris, and keep some safety measures in mind while on the water. Regional districts may have regulations in place for lakes; boaters are advised to check first before heading out.

Here are some tips for boaters to ensure their safety and minimize damage:

- Wake height should be no more than 30 centimetres.
- Large and heavier boats create damaging waves, even at low speeds, so extra caution is needed when cruising the lake. Keep in the centre, whenever possible.
- Small and light boats should remain 300 metres from the shoreline, whenever possible, or travel in the centre of the lake when approaching shorelines. Travel under 10 kilometres per hour within 300 metres of the shoreline.
- When operating at no-wake speed, trim the drive or outboard to allow the boat to proceed with smallest wake possible.
- Watch for debris and submerged logs.

The most recent data available shows accidental drowning deaths tend to spike each summer, with the numbers beginning to increase in May and continuing to rise through August. A report for 2016 drowning fatalities shows a total of 47 accidental drownings, with more than one-third of those deaths occurring in the southern Interior region of B.C.

Here are some water-safety best practices to consider:

- All recreational boaters, including paddlers, should wear a properly fitted personal flotation device (PFD). Children, non-swimmers and weak swimmers should wear a PFD anytime they are in or near the water.
- Visitors to B.C. should understand the possible dangers in or near B.C.'s lakes and rivers. These include sudden drop-offs into deep water; unexpected, underwater obstacles; and unstable or slippery rock edges above cliffs and waterfalls. Waters in B.C. are also frequently much colder than in other countries or provinces. If you are hosting, someone from out of town, be sure to warn them of these potential hazards.
- Avoid consuming alcohol when swimming, boating or performing any water-based activity. Impairment greatly increases the chances of an accidental drowning.
- Be aware of the water conditions where you are planning your activities. Check the weather forecast before heading out, and also do a visual inspection of the area. Do not head down a river without being aware of the water conditions further downstream. If there are warning signs posted, obey them.

# TOOLBOX TALK



- Never dive into unknown waters. Unexpectedly shallow water, or hidden obstacles underwater, can easily prove fatal. Diving from cliffs or from other great heights is exceptionally risky.
- Never swim alone. Always have a buddy and keep an eye out for each other.
- Visit the Canadian Red Cross or the Lifesaving Society websites for water safety tips.

## Learn More:

PreparedBC is British Columbia's one-stop shop for disaster readiness information. For tips on how to prepare an emergency plan and what to include in an emergency kit,

visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC](http://www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC)

Flood prevention tips: <http://ow.ly/E2JV30bttgr>

Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.ca/>

River Forecast Centre: <http://bcrcfc.env.gov.bc.ca/>

For updated information on flood-affected areas, and tips to help plan your weekend, please visit: [www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca)