



STATE OF MARYLAND

# DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Stay Safe in the Water This Summer

*Marylanders are reminded that caution is best when swimming, boating*

BALTIMORE, MD (June 18, 2007) – With the temperatures rising and students and their families starting summer vacations, the Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and Natural Resources (DNR) remind Marylanders that being attentive is key to safe water recreation activities.

“Drowning and near-drowning occurrences happen every summer season in Maryland,” said DHMH Secretary John M. Colmers. “Common sense action actions prevent tragedies.”

Many drowning incidents involve children and occur due to a brief lapse in supervision. Studies have found that more than half of parents surveyed were overconfident in their children’s ability in and around water. It is important to remember that children can drown silently and quickly. In fact, a child can lose consciousness in two minutes after submersion, with irreversible brain damage occurring within four to six minutes.

“It only takes a few moments to prepare your family and your vessel for a safe day on the water,” said Natural Resources Police Superintendent Col. George F. Johnson. “Parents who wear life jackets are not only setting an important example for their kids, they are laying the foundation for a lifetime of safe boating.”

DHMH and DNR, in collaboration with the Partnership for a Safer Maryland and the Maryland Youth Camp Safety Advisory Council, developed the following list of safety rules to help to make this season injury free.

### Swimming Tips

- Supervise children within visual and auditory contact AT ALL TIMES – in fact, it is best to be in the water with the children you are supervising.
- Avoid behaviors that can limit attentiveness such as, reading, talking on the phone and consuming alcohol;

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## ***Water Safety Tips, page two***

- Realize that lifeguards are not babysitters and cannot replace active adult supervision;
- Make sure you and your children can swim – but remember, knowing how to swim DOES NOT make people drown-proof;
- Never dive into rivers, lakes, ponds, or the ocean -- always jump FEET FIRST to avoid hitting your head on a shallow bottom;
- Be aware of water conditions and pay attention to any posted warnings -- even lakes and rivers can have undertow;
- Be aware of local weather conditions -- strong winds and thunderstorms with lightning strikes are dangerous;
- Always swim with a buddy; and
- Learn CPR.

## **Boating Tips**

- Life jackets are for everyone and should be worn during all boating activities;
- Blow-up water wings, toys, rafts, and air mattresses should never be used as life jackets or life preservers;
- Know and obey navigation rules, operate at a safe speed and maintain a proper lookout;
- Stay in control of your vessel and respect the rights of others enjoying the waterways;
- Ensure that your boat is never overloaded; and
- Remain sober and alert – the use of alcohol contributes to accidents on the water.

A full list of regulations regarding boating on Maryland's waterways can be found at [www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/safety/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/boating/safety/).

In 2005, 77 Marylanders died from drowning while another 211 suffered near-drowning injuries severe enough to require a trip to the hospital emergency department or an in-patient stay. The majority of these fatalities and injuries occurred during the summer months.

More water safety information can be found by logging on to the following Web sites:

- National Safety Council ([www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)),
- American Academy of Pediatrics ([www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)),
- Safe Kids USA ([www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)),
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention Injury Center ([www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc)),
- National MCH Center for Child Death Review ([www.childdeathreview.org/causesD.htm](http://www.childdeathreview.org/causesD.htm))

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