



LIFESAVING SOCIETY

The Lifeguarding Experts

For immediate release

LIFESAVING SOCIETY WARNS THAT THE NEXT 4 WEEKS IS WHEN THE GREATEST NUMBER OF DROWNINGS OCCUR

National Drowning Prevention Week, July 19–27, 2014

Toronto, ON – July 15, 2014: It is the middle of summer, and while the Lifesaving Society is pleased to report that drownings are a bit lower this year than last, it's no time to let down your guard about water safety. In fact the next 30 days is the worst time of year for drownings.

This is peak drowning season. Of the drownings reported in 2013, 16 people drowned between July 15 and August 15 and 25 drowned during the same period in 2012. According to the Lifesaving Society's 2014 Ontario Drowning Report which includes statistics from 2002 to 2011, 35% of all drownings occur in July and August.

At the mid-summer mark, the Lifesaving Society reports that 47 people have drowned in Ontario this year and cautions everyone to focus on water safety during this peak drowning season. To date, 2014 drownings include a staggering increase in boating fatalities (+90%) and a significant increase in those who fell into the water (+71%) – 19 people drowned while boating (versus 10 in 2013 to date) and 12 people who were near or on water and fell in (versus 7 in 2013).

This means 66% of people who have drowned this year did not even intend to be in the water.

The Society encourages people of all ages to be prepared for an unexpected entry into the water by wearing a lifejacket when boating and learning how to swim.

“It was a slow start to summer this year with much colder water. Unexpectedly falling into the water is completely different than diving in or choosing to enter the water,” says Barbara Byers, Public Education Director with the Lifesaving Society. “You need to be prepared. The shock of falling into water when the water is cold can cause a person to gasp and inhale water and unless they are a strong swimmer and able to survive that experience, drowning can occur very quickly.”

The Society recommends that all passengers in a boat wear a lifejacket and that all Canadians be able to achieve at least the Swim to Survive standard to ensure they can survive an unexpected fall into deep water.

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Who is at risk?

So far this year, 90% of the 19 who have drowned while boating were male. In terms of lifejacket wearing, 11 were found not wearing a lifejacket while in 8 cases it was not known if a lifejacket was worn. Eleven of the victims were in powered vessels, 5 were in canoes and 3 were in other types of craft.

Of the 12 victims who fell into the water, 83% were male. All were alone.

Highlights from the Lifesaving Society's 2014 Ontario Drowning Report reflecting data from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario with a focus on data from 2002 to 2011:

- The average drowning rate in Ontario has increased by 8% over the past 5 years.
- Boating incidents represent 23% of all fatalities.
- The vast majority (80%) of Ontario drowning victims continue to be men. The highest drowning rates are found among men 15-24 years and those over 55 years of age.
- The major risk factors contributing to boating fatalities are: not wearing a lifejacket (86%); alcohol consumption (38%); boating alone (36%); capsizing (33%); and falling overboard (29%).
- On average, about 25% of people who drown fell into the water from shore.
- 35% of all drownings occur in July and August.

Keeping Children Safe

Children under the age of 5 are also a high priority for the Lifesaving Society. Drowning is the second leading cause of preventable death for children under 10 years, and children under five are particularly at risk. The 2014 Ontario Drowning Report shows that 58% of drowning victims under 5 were alone near water and that 56% drowned while supervision was distracted.

Most people believe that they will be able to recognize a drowning child because they will cry for help or splash and wave their arms. In fact, a child in distress is more likely to slip quietly under the water, unable to call or reach out for help. Drowning can happen quickly and quietly and go unnoticed even when people are nearby. The Society introduced the ON GUARD card to provide a tool to help ensure that parents and caregivers are especially vigilant while supervising youngsters and non-swimmers in or around water.

During National Drowning Prevention Week from July 19–27, the Lifesaving Society has these important water safety messages:

Parents –Use the ON GUARD card, and if you are not within arms' reach, you've gone too far.

Put lifejackets on toddlers and never leave children alone near water. Keep them in sight and within arms' reach. It only takes only a second for the unthinkable to happen. While you turn your back to reach for a snack out of your cooler, your child could be gone forever.

A responsible guardian needs to assume responsibility for continuous and vigilant supervision. Wear the ON GUARD card and pass it to another adult when you have to take your attention away from supervising.

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Everyone – get the training

Everyone should learn to swim and take a lifesaving course such as the Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion.

Choose it. Use it.

Ensure that lifejackets fit properly and are in good working condition. All buckles and zippers should be functioning and intact. Everyone should wear lifejackets while boating and non-swimmers should wear a lifejacket anytime they are in or near the water.

Boomers – recognize your limits

Be realistic about your physical limitations as you age. Know your heart health through regular check-ups and don't "push the envelope" any more on, in or near the water, than you would at home. Take care getting in and out of bathtubs. Install grab-bars designed for weight-bearing to aid entry, exit and movement in your bathtub. Have someone close enough to hear you and respond, should you have a problem.

Learn how to Swim to Survive

All Canadians should be able to achieve *at least* the Swim to Survive standard which defines the minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water: ROLL into deep water – TREAD water for 60 seconds – SWIM 50 metres.

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Ontario drownings between Jan. 1 and July 14, 2014

Preliminary, interim data from media releases, media clippings, news reports and internet searches.

	2013	2014
TOTAL DROWNINGS	57	47
CHILDREN 0-4	3	0
CHILDREN 5-14	2	1
TEENS 15-19	8	4
ADULTS 20-34	12	9
ADULTS 35-49	13	8
ADULTS 50-64	12	7
ADULTS 65+	7	14
AGE UNKNOWN	-	4
MALES	45	40
FEMALES	12	7
PRIVATE POOL	11	7
AQUATIC (swimming/diving/jumping/wading)	17	12
NON-AQUATIC (near or on water and fell in)	7	12
BOATING (boat or other watercraft)	10	19
OTHER TRANSPORTATION (car, aircraft, snowmobile, ATV)	20	4
UNKNOWN	2	0

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About the Lifesaving Society

The Lifesaving Society is a full-service provider of programs, products and services designed to prevent drowning. We save lives and prevent water-related injury through our training programs, Water Smart® public education, drowning prevention research, aquatic safety management and lifesaving sport. Each year, over 1,000,000 Canadians participate in the Society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard and leadership programs. For more information, visit www.lifesavingsociety.com.

About Swim to Survive

The Lifesaving Society's Swim to Survive program trains children in three basic skills: ROLL into deep water; TREAD water for one minute; and SWIM 50 m (statistics show that most people who drown are less than 15 m from shore or safety). It is not meant as a replacement

for standard swimming lessons; however the program is an important first step to being safe around water and could make the difference between life and death when immersion is sudden. Educational resources include a YouTube video in eight languages.

Swim to Survive+ (Plus) targets older children and builds on the skills taught in Swim to Survive. Participants perform the skills while clothed and learn how to assist a friend who may have accidentally fallen into deep water.

About the 2014 Ontario Drowning Report

The Lifesaving Society's 2014 Ontario Drowning Report (available at www.lifesavingsociety.com) analyzes data extracted from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario up to 2011 – the most recent year from which complete information is available. The report includes only preventable (unintentional) deaths – not deaths due to natural causes, suicide or homicide.

The Ontario Drowning Report also presents preliminary interim data for 2012 and 2013 derived from media releases, media clippings, news reports and internet searches.

To schedule an interview, or for more information, please contact:

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