

MEDIA RELEASE

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Shuswap Watershed Council reminds residents about the danger of silent drowning

Summer has arrived, and the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) wants everyone to stay safe while they're enjoying the lake this summer.

"A lot of people don't realize that drowning is silent," explains Erin Vieira, program manager for the SWC. "The reality is that a swimmer in distress can't call out for help because they are putting all their energy into staying afloat."

Silent drowning occurs when a person is unable to call for help, leading to a dangerous situation where the drowning victim may go unnoticed by people nearby. Yet, according to a poll done by the Canadian Red Cross, half of the people surveyed believe they can effectively supervise swimmers by simply listening for signs of trouble.

Listening is not an effective form of supervision for swimmers. The Canadian Red Cross has identified five warning signs to watch for while supervising children and young swimmers:

1. Silence. A drowning victim will put all their energy into trying to breathe and stay above water. They don't have the capacity to yell for help, and they won't be able to respond to the question "Are you okay?"
2. Head position. The head will be tilted back and low in the water, and the mouth at water level.
3. Arm position. The arms will be extended to the side, pressing down for support.
4. Body position. The body will be nearly vertical in the water column.
5. Direction. Often, a drowning victim will be facing the nearest point of safety such as a person, boat or land.

Instead of simply listening for trouble, parents and caregivers should designate one person who is responsible for supervising children and novice swimmers in and around water. That person should not take their eyes off the swimmers and not be distracted by their phone or a book.

Drowning is preventable. A few safety precautions are highly effective against it. Whether you're enjoying the beach or on the water this summer: wear a lifejacket or PFD for boating and paddling; watch – don't just listen – for signs of trouble; swim with a friend; and never boat under the influence of drugs and alcohol. If you need a lifejacket for a child for an outing or for the day, you can borrow one from a *Kids*



Don't Float loaner kiosk; there are 20 kiosks around the Shuswap, placed by the Royal Canadian Marine Search & Rescue Station 106 Shuswap. Make every outing to the water a return outing!

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About: The Shuswap Watershed Council is a watershed-based partnership that works on water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap.

Contact: For more information, please contact Erin Vieira c/o the Fraser Basin Council in Kamloops at 250 314-9660 and visit www.shuswapwater.ca.