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MEDIA RELEASE

June 8th 2021

Shuswap organizations issue reminders for safe boating and water play

Water Safety Week is June 5th - 12th

June 5th marks the start of the Annual Water Safety Week in Canada, and the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) and Royal Canadian Marine Search And Rescue Station 106 Shuswap (RCMSAR) are reminding everyone on the lakes and rivers to play safe and be prepared for every outing on the water.

“The number one tip is to wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device every time you go out on the water,” says Erin Vieira, the SWC’s program manager. “We sometimes think we’re immune to accidents, but we’re not. When an accident happens, your lifejacket buys you time to be rescued.”

There are 15 lifejacket loaner stations around the Shuswap, equipped with child-sized lifejackets that can be borrowed for free on a first-come, first-served honour system. The lifejackets are provided by the RCMSAR and several community sponsors, including the SWC. An additional three loaner stations are being built later this year, bringing to the total to 18.

“Kids don’t float, but lifejackets do,” adds Rob Sutherland, Station Leader for RCMSAR Station 106 Shuswap. “We want all children to be safe while boating or swimming in the lakes, and if a child needs a lifejacket they’re there to borrow. All we ask is they be returned for another child to use.”

Just as important as lifejackets is having a sober captain, Vieira adds. Boating under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs is illegal. Vieira points out that data from the Canadian Red Cross indicates that alcohol is a factor in 41% of boating-related fatalities.

The SWC also wants everyone to be informed about drowning prevention. “A lot of people don’t realize that drowning is silent,” explains Vieira. “A swimmer in distress can’t call out for help, they are putting all their energy into staying afloat.”

According to a poll done by the Canadian Red Cross in 2013, half of the people surveyed believe they can effectively supervise children by simply listening for signs of trouble. Since drowning is silent, listening is not an effective form of supervision. Research by the Red Cross indicates that the absence of effective adult supervision is a factor in 75% of fatalities by drowning for children under the age of 10.



“Caregivers need to give their undivided attention to young or novice swimmers. Don’t be distracted by your phone or a book. And, swimming with a buddy is always a better idea than swimming alone,” Vieira urges.

This time of year, high water and the possibility of floating and partially submerged debris brings a unique set of hazards to the lakes. Logs and other floating hazards are most common near the mouths of rivers, and where the arms of Shuswap Lake converge, like at Cinnemousun Narrows. Boaters need to keep a watchful eye open for them.

“Our Station and community volunteers are dedicated to saving lives on the water when our services are needed. If you’re on the water and you need help, we encourage you to call sooner than later,” says Sutherland. “But equally important to our team, we encourage boaters to practice safe operations and procedures while on the lakes.”

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[Image provided]. There are 15 lifejacket loaner stations for children around the Shuswap, like this one at Magna Bay Wharf Road Park in the North Shuswap, and an additional three more loaner stations are being constructed later this year. The lifejackets can be borrowed for free on the honour system.

About:

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

RCMSAR Station 106 (Shuswap) is a volunteer marine search and rescue group based on Shuswap and Mara Lakes.

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