

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release – June 4<sup>th</sup> 2022

Shuswap organizations issue reminders for safe boating and water play  
*Water Safety Week is June 4<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>*

June 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Shuswap is a wonderful, watery playground. We want everyone to be safe while they’re out there having fun,” says Erin Vieira, the SWC’s program manager.

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

There are 19 self-serve lifejacket loaner stations around the Shuswap, equipped with child-sized lifejackets that can be borrowed for free on the honour system. The lifejackets are provided by the RCMSAR and several community sponsors, including the SWC. There is a map of the loaner stations available on the SWC’s website, [www.shuswapwater.ca](http://www.shuswapwater.ca).

“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 how to prevent drowning.

“A lot of people don’t realize that drowning happens silently,” 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 parents surveyed believe they can effectively supervise children by simply listening for signs of trouble. 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.

“Listening is not an effective form of supervision when you’re at the beach. Caregivers need to give their undivided attention to young or novice swimmers. Don’t be distracted by your phone or a book,” Vieira urges. She adds that swimming with a friend is much safer than swimming alone.

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, such as 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.

If you do need to call for help when you’re out on the water, Sutherland says you should dial 9-1-1. Marine Channel 16 – although it is monitored on coastal waters – is not monitored 24/7 in the Shuswap. RCMSAR will be dispatched through the 9-1-1- service.

“But equally important to our team, we encourage boaters to practice safe operations and procedures while on the lakes,” says Sutherland.

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#### 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.

Contact: For more information, please contact Erin Vieira c/o the Fraser Basin Council in Kamloops at 250 314-9660 or [evieira@fraserbasin.ca](mailto:evieira@fraserbasin.ca), or Rob Sutherland at [station106@rcmsar.com](mailto:station106@rcmsar.com)