

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



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Hennepin County Sheriff's Office **urges citizens to increase water safety measures**

August 16, 2011 (Minneapolis) – The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office is urging people to put safety measures in place when boating and swimming. With warm temperatures this summer, more people have been enjoying water-related recreation – and with that, comes the responsibility to stay safe.

In 2010, there were six drownings in Hennepin County. So far this year, there have been 15 drownings in the county. In July alone, there were 8 drownings in the county – which makes it the most deadly July on record in the past decade for drownings.

Be aware that drowning happens quickly. It is most often a silent event – the victim will not splash or call out for help. “Layers of safety” are recommended to prevent drowning:

- * Parents and caregivers must use ACTIVE supervision when children are in or near the water. In 70% of cases where toddlers drowned, one or both parents were nearby. Being nearby isn't enough – an adult must avoid distractions and focus when they watch kids in water.
- * Active Supervision is ALSO needed even when there are lifeguards on duty.
- * In Hennepin County in recent years, most drownings and near-drownings take place in swimming pools and hot tubs – compared to the number of incidents in natural bodies of water such as lakes and rivers.
- * Teach your kids to swim. Adults must know how to swim too.

- * Inexperienced or non-swimmers may wear lifejackets in swimming pools. Adult supervision is still needed --even when children are wearing lifejackets.
- * Life jackets save lives. 80% of boating deaths could have been prevented if the victims had been wearing life jackets. (U.S. Coast Guard estimate)
- * Do not rely on water wings or other inflatable devices.
- * Learn CPR.
- * Keep safety equipment near pools, such as a shepherd's hook. If attempting a rescue, the person performing the rescue should keep themselves safe. Remember that a person who is struggling in the water may put a rescuer at risk by pulling them down into the water. Hand something to the struggling person so they can reach it and be pulled to safety, if possible.
- * Check drain covers and learn about drain cover safety.
- * Maintain needed fencing, alarms, and barriers around pools.
- * Use safety precautions with kiddie pools and portable pools. (Recent study found that one child drowns every five days in the U.S. in portable pools.)
- * Swim in areas with lifeguards on duty for added safety. However, do not rely on life guards to watch your children.
- * If a child is missing, first search any area of water nearby. Remember that slightly cloudy water in a pool may make it difficult to see a person underwater. Search the water thoroughly.
- * Designate a sober boat operator prior to your day of boating.

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