

RIVER SAFETY

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Our rivers are wonderful resources and should be enjoyed but they can be dangerous. Even with all we know the most important thing that we can all use to be safe on the rivers is COMMON SENSE.

Rivers are inherently dangerous places to recreate. The water can be high, swift and cold as mountain snowpack melts, making staying in control and hypothermia real risks. Logs and rocks, both visible and hidden, pose navigation hazards. Rivers are dynamic systems that change constantly.

Be Aware of Hazards

Be cautious anytime you or your family are near rivers and streams. Consider these precautions as spring snow melts and rivers and streams rise.

- **Water Temperature:** Rivers can be extremely cold below the surface. Hypothermia can quickly set in and overwhelm even the strongest of swimmers, causing them to become too weak to escape.
- **Currents:** In as little as six inches, water that may look calm on the surface and slow-moving can have enough force to knock you off your feet and sweep you downstream. Even a slow current can take you where you don't want to go, towards hazards, and leave strong swimmers unable to reach the shore.
- **Water Hazards:** Debris and underwater features such as trees, branches and logs, and even narrow gaps between rocks can trap you under water.

1. Never Swim Alone

Stop and think every time you go! Rivers are always changing, do not assume that because it was safe last summer or last week, that it is safe now!

2. Avoid Alcohol around water

Alcohol use is involved in up to 50% of adolescent and adult deaths associated with water recreation. Alcohol impairs judgement, encourages greater risk taking behavior, reduces coordination, impairs reaction time and reduces the effectiveness of CPR, should someone require it.

3. Wear a lifejacket - nobody plans to drown

In 2013, there were 103 unintentional drowning deaths in Washington; 13 were of children younger than 18 years old. Children or inexperienced swimmers should always wear a Coast Guard approved lifejacket when around water. It may not seem cool but it can save your life.

4. Set limits for your children

When they can go in the water, where they can go, who needs to be there and what they should have with them. Just because they're with a group of friends does not mean they can rescue each other if someone gets into trouble. Young children need to be watched at all times. It can take only 20 to 60 seconds for a child to submerge without warning.

5. Know your limits

If you're not a good swimmer or just learning to swim stay out of currents and do not go in water that's over your head. Knowing how to swim is important for anyone who spends time near or on the water. Make sure your children learn to swim, and upgrade their swimming skills each year.

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Learn lifesaving skills - CPR/First Aid Classes

