

## PARENT INFORMATION PULL-OUT SECTION



# Water Safety

Presented by: Safe Kids Grand Forks and Altru Health System

## Boating Statistics

- Each year there are approximately 4,000-5,000 boating accidents in the United States as reported by the Coast Guard.
- These accidents result in about 600-700 deaths and over 3000 injuries.
- Almost three-fourths of all fatal boating victims drowned and nearly 90% of those were not wearing a life jacket.
- 9 out of 10 drownings occur in inland waters, most within a few feet of safety.

## Who drowns???

- Most involved boats are less than 20 feet in length.
- Most of the victims that drowned owned a PFD (Personal Flotation Device) but were not wearing it.

## Types of Boating Accidents

- **Capsizing** - Capsizing occurs when the boat tips over in the water.
  - To avoid capsizing, do not exceed the boat weight limits, as this will effect stability.
  - If the boat capsizes, stay with the boat and try to get on top of it (get out of the water). It is much easier to spot a boat than a single person floating in the water.
  - If approaching a capsized boat, toss the victim a PFD, slow down your boat and have a spotter keep their eye on the person.
  - Approach the boat into the winds or waves.
- **Falling overboard** - To avoid falling overboard, do not sit on seat backs, the side of the boat or stand up in small boats.
  - When changing positions in smaller boats, keep low and hold on to both sides.
  - If someone falls overboard, reach for the individual then toss them a PFD.
  - Turn off the motor when alongside someone in the water.
- **Collisions** - To avoid collisions, watch out for other boaters and/or objects in the water. Know and obey the rules of the "road".

- Boater fatigue can be caused by glare, motion, noise and vibrations from a day on the water. When driving, slow down and be extra cautious. Fatigue and alcohol also reduce your ability to react.
- **Boating Laws in North Dakota and Minnesota**
  - All boats must have one wearable PFD for each person on board or being towed.
  - Any boat over 16' in length must have a throwable PFD as well.
  - In North Dakota, no person under the age of 12 may operate a motorboat unless the operator is accompanied by a person eighteen years of age or older. Minnesota has more restrictions on operators under age 12. Check their state laws for specifics.
  - In North Dakota, no person of twelve through fifteen years of age may operate a motorboat unless the operator is accompanied by a person eighteen years of age or older or the operator has taken and passed a boating course approved by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.
  - In Minnesota, no person age 12-17 may operate a boat over 25 hp unless they have taken and passed the boating course required by the state or have someone at least age 21 on board and within reach of the controls.

### It takes three to ski...

- In order to ski behind a boat or personal watercraft (jet ski), you must have three people. These include:
  1. The skier
  2. The driver
  3. The spotter

### How Much Do I Weigh in the Water??

- An average weight child weighs 6-7# in the water.
- An average weight adult weighs 9-13# in the water.

### Personal Floatation Devices (PFD's)

There are 5 types of PFD's on the market.

- **Type 1** - is an approved device designed to turn an unconscious person in the water from a face downward position to a vertical or slightly backward position. Designed more for rough waters when rescue may be slow to arrive. They provide 22# of buoyancy.
- **Type 2** - is an approved device designed to turn an unconscious person in the water from a face downward position to a vertical or slightly backward position. Designed more for calm or inland waters where there is a good chance of quick rescue. Type 2 devices provide 15 1/2 # of buoyancy (enough for only one person).
- **Type 3** - is an approved device designed to keep a conscious person in a vertical or slightly backward position. Designed for calm waters. The wearer may need to tilt head back to avoid going face down in the water.



- **Type 4** - is an approved device designed to be thrown to a person in the water and not worn.
- **Type 5** - is an approved device that is designed for special uses or conditions such as boardsailing vests, deck suits, work vests or other special purposes.

### **Correct Fit of a PFD**

- Try on your PFD to see if it fits comfortably snug. It should also be tested in shallow water.
- Your mouth should be well above the water level or else you need a different size/style of PFD or one with more buoyancy.
- The PFD should not ride up on your body when in the water. If it does so, you may need a different size or to fit the straps tighter.
- To test a PFD fit on a child, pick the child up by the shoulders of the PFD. If the PFD fits right, the child's chin and ears should not slip through.
- To work best, PFD's must be worn with all straps, zippers and ties fastened. Tuck in any loose strap ends to avoid getting hung up.

### **Special Considerations for PFD's**

- Always wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD around open water or when participating in a water sport.
- All children under age 10 must by law (North Dakota and Minnesota) wear their PFD when in the motorcraft or being towed.
- You must select your PFD based on your weight. Also consider how much clothing you have on and if you are carrying heavy objects in your pockets.
- Make sure that your PFD does not have any rips or tears as this will allow water to enter the floatation material and become waterlogged.
- Make sure all buckles, clasps, etc are functioning properly so the PFD is held in place securely.
- You must wear your PFD for it to work; keep it on at all times.
- Do not place heavy objects on your PFD during storage or use it as a kneeling pad. PFD's lose buoyancy when crushed.
- Consider affixing a whistle to your PFD to signal for help if needed.

### **Caution by the Propellers**

- The greatest cause of propeller accidents is operator inattention or carelessness.
- When swimmers are in the water, make sure the engine is off so the propeller is not rotating.
- Never start a boat when there are swimmers in back of the boat. Be sure that the propeller area is clear before engaging in gear.

### **Hypothermia**

- Hypothermia is a condition in which a body loses heat faster than it can produce it. Hypothermia results from exposure to wind, cold and wetness.
- A person entering cold water often times gasps for air due to a cold water shock reflex. This may cause them to inhale water into the lungs.
- When a person become hypothermic, normal body function is not attainable. Activities that you may be able to perform regularly are not as easy or you may not be able to do at all (i.e. swimming, treading water).
- PFD's assist with preventing hypothermia as your body is allowed to float without using up excess energy. They also protect part of your body from the cold water.

## Rescuing a Person From Shore

- **Reach** - First, try to reach the person. Use your hand or anything else that can be held onto, such as a jacket, a belt, a stick, a rope, an oar, or a fishing rod.
- **Throw** - If you are not able to reach the person, throw them something that will float. A life ring with a rope attached would allow you to pull the person to safety. If a life ring or PFD is not available, throw objects that would float such as a plastic bottle, beach toy, inflated tire, ball, picnic cooler or even a piece of wood.
- **Row** - If the person is too far away, then you will have to row to the person to assist. Use a log, air mattress, surfboard, a small boat or raft or anything else that you can row or paddle with your hands. Help the person climb aboard or have them hold onto the float while you paddle back to shore.
- **Go** - The last option is to go. You should not go into the water to save someone unless you have special training in lifesaving. Remember, even strong swimmers can drown trying to help others in the water. If you are not trained in lifesaving, GO FOR HELP.

## Additional Recommended Equipment

- |                  |  |                   |
|------------------|--|-------------------|
| • Radio          | • Visual Distress Signals              | • Heavy Line      |
| • Anchor         | • First Aid Kit                        | • Flashlight      |
| • Searchlight    | • Fire Extinguisher (Marine Type USCG) | • Whistle or horn |
| • Food and Water | • Sunglasses                           | • Suntan Lotion   |
| • Extra Clothing | • Alternate propulsion (paddles)       | • Am/FM radio     |
| • Ring buoy      | • Spare batteries                      | • Compass         |
| • Cell phone     |  |                   |

\*\* Be sure to tell someone on shore where you are going and when you plan to return.

## Safety Tips

- Make sure that you swim in designated swim areas.
- Don't let children dive into open water where the depth is unknown.
- Water rings and inner tubes are not substitutes for life jackets.
- Any child can get into trouble in the water, even with a life jacket. Provide active adult supervision at all times.
- Equip boats with the appropriate safety and rescue equipment (e.g. fire extinguisher, throwable PFD, first aide kit, flashlight, radio).
- Be aware that different areas of the country have varying water conditions that can be dangerous (undertow, rip currents, etc.). Learn of these and how to avoid dangerous situations.



This information is provided courtesy of Safe Kids Grand Forks. For more information on water safety, contact Safe Kids Grand Forks at 701-780-1489 or e-mail [safekids@altru.org](mailto:safekids@altru.org). Thank you to the US Corps of Engineers for helping to provide this water and boating safety information.