

Use caution when enjoying end of summer water fun

By Brian Lockhart

With the final weeks of summer now here, many people will be enjoying the final time for water activities in the region.

Whether you are diving in for a swim, cruising along in a boat, or splashing by the water's edge, taking precautions will help ensure your experience goes well.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is issuing some safety tips to help make sure you finish the summer safely.

Parachute Canada, an injury prevention website, reports that drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death in Canada. Many people are injured while doing activities where they never expected to enter the water. This includes unexpectedly falling into water while boating or tripping and falling into a backyard pool.

You should avoid swimming alone. If you get into trouble, there will be no one to assist you.

Children should never swim alone or be left unsupervised when around any body of water. Make sure there is an experienced swimmer in sight and within reach.

It is also recommended that adults swim with a buddy as even the strongest swimmers can run into trouble. Learning to swim is important but water safety means more than knowing the swimming strokes.

Taking a first aid course and learning water rescue and safety skills can assist you to safely help others and know what to do if there is an emergency.

If you are on a boat, you shouldn't drink alcohol. Operating a boat or watercraft takes the same care and attention as driving a car. Consuming alcohol and boating don't mix as it impairs attention, concentration, and judgment.

Being in a boat while impaired is a major contributing factor in drowning while boating.

You should always wear lifejackets or personal flotation devices.

A lifejacket is more buoyant and is designed to turn an unconscious person from face down to face up the water allowing them to breathe.

A PFD is less buoyant and is designed to keep a conscious person afloat in calm conditions.

Taking precautions around the water means less chance of mishap and will allow you to finish the summer safely.