



Safety Alert

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California State Parks Warns of Drowning Risks Before Fourth of July Holiday Weekend

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – With the long holiday weekend upon us, California State Parks is alerting water enthusiasts to take life-saving precautions for themselves and their loved ones. Drowning is the fifth leading cause of accidental death in the United States. About 10 people die from unintentional drowning every day, but it can easily be prevented by educating children and adults about water safety and lifesaving techniques.

Here are 10 precautions water enthusiasts can take to prevent a drowning this summer:

- 1. Wear a Life Jacket and Know How to Choose One:** Make sure your life jacket is U.S. Coast Guard-approved and properly-fitted.
 - Always wear a [life jacket](#) when in or near the water, even if you are a strong swimmer. A life jacket can help you survive in cold water.
 - Adult-sized life jackets will not work for children. Make sure children wear properly fitted, child-sized life jackets.
 - Air-filled and foam toys are NOT safety devices. Water wings, tubes and noodles are not a substitute for life jackets and are not designed to keep swimmers safe.
- 2. Use Life Jacket Loaner Stations:** The Division of Boating and Waterways partners with public and private entities to make life jackets available to the public on a loan basis. Some stations have life jacket use requirements, so please contact participating locations for specifics. [View Loaner Stations](#)
- 3. Know about Water Safety:** Many waterways do not have lifeguards, so swimmers are responsible for their own safety.
 - Know the meaning of and obey warnings posted at park units. These may vary from one unit to another.
 - Do not enter swift, cold water. These conditions can create treacherous conditions for everyone, including experienced swimmers and rescue personnel.



The average body temperature is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. The average pool temperature is 84 to 86 degrees. Some of California's rivers are currently running at 50 degrees or colder.

- [Don't panic if you fall into the water.](#) If you are not wearing a life jacket, swim as hard as you can and get out of the water as quickly as possible. If you are wearing a life jacket, flip onto your back, float downstream with your feet in front of you to use them as shock absorbers for debris or rocks. Then look for a slow current and get out of the water.
 - Watch for dangerous waves and signs of rip currents. Some examples include water that is discolored and choppy, foamy or filled with debris and moving in a channel away from shore. If caught in a rip current, swim parallel to shore. Once free of the current, swim diagonally toward shore.
4. **Actively Supervise Children When In or Around Water:** Designate a responsible adult to watch young children while swimming or playing near the water. Be close enough to reach a child at all times. Adults should not be involved in any distracting activity, like checking their smart phones, even if lifeguards are present.
 5. **Use the Buddy System:** Always swim with a buddy. Same rule applies for human-powered watercraft activities (e.g. kayaking, stand up paddle boarding). Let a friend or family member know the details of your plans prior to departure and always obtain current weather and sea conditions before entering the water. Select swimming sites that have lifeguards whenever possible.
 6. **Know How to Respond to an Emergency:** If you notice someone is missing, always check the water first. If you see a person drowning, reach for them from land or throw them a flotation device. If you enter the water, they may panic and latch onto you, dragging you down with them. Always call 911 and contact life-saving personnel, if possible. If you need to rescue someone, put on a life jacket first before jumping in the water. Learning CPR could save a loved one's life. In the time it takes for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills could be the difference between life and death.
 7. **Learn How to Swim:** Formal swimming lessons can protect young children from drowning, but are not a replacement for constant adult supervision around the water.
 8. **Avoid Alcohol:** Never drink alcohol when supervising children. Operating a recreational vessel under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs is dangerous. Alcohol is also dangerous for passengers. Intoxication can lead to slips, falls overboard and other dangerous accidents. In California, it is against the law to operate a boat or water ski with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 percent or more. A person with a BAC less than 0.08 percent may be arrested if conditions are deemed unsafe. Boating under the influence (BUI) convictions, which include water skiers and wake boarders, can result in up to six months in jail and/or fines of up to \$1,000. Two convictions within seven years could add a jail term of up to one year. Boaters caught operating under the influence may also have their voyage terminated and their vessel impounded.



9. **Know the Risks of Delayed Drowning:** Drowning can happen even after someone is rescued from the water. Delayed or dry drowning occurs when the airway closes up due to spasms caused by the presence of water. Dry drowning usually happens within 24 hours of a water rescue and can also be the result of liquid in the lungs. Symptoms include coughing, chest pain, trouble breathing, fatigue and changes in behavior such as irritability or a drop in energy levels. If you see these symptoms, call 911 or seek medical help immediately.

10. **Check the Weather:** Check both your destination's and your route's weather conditions before you leave. Make sure your equipment is appropriate for the weather expected.

For more safety tips, please visit the California State Park's website at www.parks.ca.gov/safetytips.

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California State Parks

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