

# Water Safety Guidelines for Volunteers

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<b>Supervision in a Group Setting</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Water Safety Starts in the House</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>More About Life Jackets</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Water Safety at Ponds, Lakes, Creeks and Streams</b>	<b>4</b>
Being water competent in natural water requires additional knowledge and skills that are different than those in the pool.	4
Whenever you are near a lake, river, stream or other natural water environment, be aware of local hazards. Watch and prepare for:	4
<b>How To Do Your Part: Get Connected</b>	<b>4</b>

Enforce fundamental safety rules at all times when in or near water, including:

- Ensuring that the layers of protection in place to prevent unsupervised access to water are in proper working order and not disabled, such as not propping open any doors or gates or disabling alarms.
- Teaching children not to go near the water without you; the area is off-limits without adult supervision.
- Providing active supervision for children at all times.
- Having young children or inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets around water, but not relying on life jackets alone.
- Entering the water feet-first unless in an area clearly marked for diving which has no obstructions.
- Not allowing competitive underwater games, such as underwater breath-holding contests or seeing who can swim the farthest without coming up for air.
- Being aware of and responding to weather conditions, such as exiting the water and taking cover during thunder and lightning.
- Avoiding entrapment injuries, by ensuring that everyone:
  - Stays away from pool drains, suction fittings, pipes and other openings.
  - Ties back long hair and never wears loose clothing or jewelry in a pool.

## Supervision in a Group Setting

**In a group setting, tragedies often occur because people assume someone else is supervising the children in the water. Along with close and active supervision by parents or caregivers, designate a water watcher whose job it is to supervise the water during any activity.**

- An appropriate water watcher:
  - Is at least 16 years of age (adults preferred).
  - Has the skills, knowledge, and ability to recognize and rescue someone in distress or can immediately alert someone nearby who does.
  - Knows CPR or can immediately alert someone nearby who does.
  - Has a working phone to be able to dial 9-1-1.
  - Has a floating and/or reaching object that can be used in a rescue.
  - Is alert and not under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Ensure that the water watcher is clearly identifiable to all, such as wearing a lanyard with a water watcher card or a brightly colored hat. As water watchers rotate, the identifier stays with the water watcher. At TSP waterwatcher wear a neon yellow hat.
- Water Watcher cards are available from the DOO in the TSP office for volunteers who have taken the Water Safety Course.

## Water Safety Starts in the House

**After pools, bathtubs are the second leading location where young children drown. However, buckets, bath seats, wells, cisterns, septic tanks, decorative ponds and toilets are also potential drowning sources for infants and toddlers.**

- Make sure a responsible person provides constant, full time supervision to young children in the bath.
- Before putting your child in the water, gather everything you will need, such as towels and shampoo, so you don't step away, even for a moment.
- Place locks on toilet seat covers and on bathroom doors out of a child's reach.
- Empty unattended buckets containing even a small amount of liquid immediately after use, including buckets outside that can collect rainwater. Toddlers are top

heavy and can easily fall headfirst into buckets and drown. After using a bucket, always empty and store it inside or where young children cannot reach it.

- Drain all water from portable and inflatable kiddie pools, and flip them over so they cannot collect rainwater.
- If there are bodies of water, fountains or other water features on or near your property or in the community, teach children that these areas are off-limits unless they are accompanied by an adult.

## More About Life Jackets

**The Red Cross recommends that children, inexperienced swimmers and all boaters wear U.S. Coast Guard approved-life jackets (also referred to as personal flotation devices or PFDs).**

- Life jackets should never replace constant, in-water, active adult supervision.
- When children are learning to swim, they should experience what they can do in the water by themselves versus what they can do BECAUSE they are wearing a life jacket.
- Children should:
  - Experience being in the water - with hands-on adult supervision - without a life jacket or any sort of flotation, such as a foam noodle.
  - Learn fundamental water safety and swimming skills, such as getting in a position to float, turning over, and moving to the wall to safety.
- U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets should be worn:
  - When in or around natural water environments, such as lakes and rivers.
  - When it is play time - especially if the child is relying on a flotation device for safety.
  - If you are supervising multiple children or inexperienced swimmers.

## Water Safety at Ponds, Lakes, Creeks and Streams

Being water competent in natural water requires additional knowledge and skills that are different than those in the pool.

- More skills are required for natural water environments because of cold water and air temperatures, currents, waves and other conditions- and these conditions can change due to weather.
- Always enter unknown or shallow water feet first. Never enter from a height such as a bridge or boat.
- Watch out for currents, waves and underwater obstructions – they're not just found in the ocean.

Whenever you are near a lake, river, stream or other natural water environment, be aware of local hazards. Watch and prepare for:

- Unexpected changes in air or water temperature.
- Thunder and lightning.
- Fast-moving currents, waves and rapids, even in shallow water.
- Hazards, such as dams, underwater obstacles, or rocks and debris.
- Vegetation, animals and fish.
- Drop-offs that can unexpectedly change water depth.
- Other people's activities in the same waters, such as boating, surfing or fishing.

## How To Do Your Part: Get Connected

- Download the Red Cross Swim app. It's loaded with water safety information including how to prevent and respond to emergencies in different aquatic environments.
  - The kid's section has water safety video segments with follow up quizzes to test their knowledge.

## The Still Place

- A swim lesson tracker helps you follow your children's progress through Red Cross swim lessons and options to share their progress on social media.
- To download the Red Cross Swim app, go to the Apple Store or Google Play and search Red Cross Swim App.