

# risk alert



Listening. | Learning. | Leading.®

## Water activities require supervision, screening

A day at the lake, river or pool can quickly turn from wonderful to tragic if the proper safety precautions are not followed. Over a recent 7-year period, there were 38 drowning accidents involving customers of Church Mutual Insurance Company. What makes this especially sad is all of them were children or young adults.

Upon investigation of the incidents, three main causes quickly came to the forefront:

- Inadequate supervision.
- Failure to pre-screen swimmers to determine their abilities.
- Inadequate or improper safety equipment.

- 58 percent of deaths occurred during sponsored trips
- 47 percent of deaths occurred on lakes, ponds or rivers
- 45 percent of deaths occurred at pools or waterparks

Whether the water activity involves canoeing on a river, wading in a pool or swimming to a raft on a lake, the risk of someone encountering problems while swimming is always present.

## Golden rule: Safety first when around water

Some simple safety precautions and common sense can go a long way in keeping your water activities safe and fun.

- Designate “supervisors” whenever you are attending or hosting an activity that involves water or swimming. The supervisors should be trained in water safety. The recommended ratio of swimmers to supervisors is 5 to 1.
- All swimmers need to be screened by a supervisor for swimming ability the first time out.
- Access to water should be based on swimming ability.
- Pair swimmers off using the “buddy system.” Buddies stay together during the entire swim.
- Never leave children or weak swimmers unsupervised.
- Obtain written permission from the parents/guardians of children.

**If you own a pool or lake/river property, there are some additional steps you should take.**

- All lifeguards need to be certified by the American Red Cross
- Pools and lakes should be clean and clear of hazardous materials.
- Water areas need to be outfitted with adequate life-saving equipment such as rescue tubes, life jackets and first-aid kits.
- Clearly define designated boundary areas, especially if there is a drop-off.
- Don’t allow horseplay at any time.

(Over)

- Clearly post all rules near the water.
- If you operate a pool, regularly inspect drain pipe and overflows to make sure they are operating properly and secured and cannot be removed by swimmers.

For more information on aquatic safety, ask about our Swimmer Safety Program or examine Make Activities Safer For Your Congregation and Youth Safety And Your Congregation booklets from the Protection Series.

**For a complete collection of the Risk Alert series, visit our Web site  
and look in the Safety Resources section.**