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Water Safety Paramount During Extremely Hot Weather

JUNE 29TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Colonel J. Bret Johnson, superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol reminds the general public of the importance of water safety during the extremely hot weather. The heat causes people to gravitate toward all kinds of waterways, public and private. Even those who are weak swimmers, including small children, may enter waterways to get relief, so taking the proper precautions is paramount.

Drownings do not typically occur as dramatized on television. Drownings occur quickly and in many cases, the drowning itself is not actually witnessed. The victim is there one minute and gone the next. Life jackets are an important part of drowning prevention, whether boating or simply swimming from the shoreline or a dock. It is imperative for children to be instilled with the habit of wearing a life jacket whenever they are around the water. State law requires children under seven to wear a life jacket while on a watercraft, but that is only a minimum requirement. Life jackets clearly benefit persons of all ages.

It is common for teens and even adults to overestimate their swimming ability, so even if a person chooses not to wear a life jacket, keeping a life jacket or other adequate flotation within reach is imperative. It is difficult to judge distance on the water, so what appears to be a short swim across a pond, lake, or river may actually be further than you think. The current on rivers may also extend your swim beyond your abilities. Panicking is a key component of drowning. The best way to avoid panic is to be prepared around the water. Once the struggle to stay afloat begins, it may be too late to retrieve a flotation device. Clearly, the best practice is to wear a life jacket.

As we get into what is typically the hottest weather of the year, help ensure you don't become a drowning victim. Make sure you and your loved ones are prepared when they hit the water.

Watercraft operators must consider the effect their actions have on others: Share the waterway and use common sense, good judgment, and courtesy to ensure the safety of all. Life jackets save lives. Wear It!!

Shown in the photo is Camden Stone swimming at Lake Wappapello, 2-year old son of David and Laura Stone of Dexter, Missouri.

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