

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older

#60 SWIMMING SAFETY



Photograph Courtesy of Shasta County
4-H Program

Information available from the Centers for Disease Control and prevention indicate 86 youth between the ages of 5 and 24 drowned in California during 2005. Other data from the U.S. Consumers Product Safety Commission indicate in 2005 more that 28,000 youth aged five to 18 were treated in hospitals nationwide for injuries that happened while swimming at pools. The types of injuries included fractures, lacerations, contusions, and sprains. Many of these drownings and injuries could have been prevented if several simple precautions had been followed.

Swimming Safety

- At least one certified lifeguard shall be at any 4-H activity that involves swimming and additional lifeguards shall be present, in the ratio of one for every 25 4-H swimming participants, at any 4-H managed swimming venues such as those at 4-H camps and private pool or beach. Lifeguards at public pools and beaches are provided at sufficient ratios.
- It is recommended that two supervising adults be present for up to 10 youth swimmers with an additional supervising adult present for every five additional youth swimmers.
- Children must be continually watched by an adult when they are in or near pools, spas, or natural bodies of water. The adult must concentrate on watching the children and not be distracted by other activities such as reading or talking on a cell phone.
- Children that are not able to swim shall wear a personal flotation device when nearby a pool, spa, or natural body of water.
- Inexperienced swimmers should stay in shallow water where they can stand with their chest and head above water.
- Obey all lifeguard instructions and posted signs.
- Never swim alone in a natural body of water. Swim with a partner or as part of a group.
- In natural bodies of water, avoid areas of swift currents and rapids, rip tides, deep water, sudden drop-offs, large waves, and obstructions such as rocks, tree limbs, aquatic plants, docks, platforms, piers, jetties, pilings, dams, spillways, and intake and outlet structures.
- A good safety practice is to enter the water feet first. Only dive in areas posted for diving.
- Do not swim near diving boards and slides or in areas of commercial vessel, motorboat, sailing, rowing, wind surfing, and/or jet-ski traffic.
- Always check for obstructions before diving into water and wait for other swimmers to move out of the way before jumping into the water.
- Swim within your capabilities and endurance. If you become cold or tired, return to shore or leave the pool.
- In natural bodies of water, avoid wildlife such as jellyfish, sea urchins, sharks, eels, sting rays, and other potentially hazardous marine animals.
- Wear footwear to protect your feet when wading along rocky shores or examining tidal pools.
- Keep glass or other breakable items from nearby the pool or spa.
- Never run or horseplay while poolside.
- Exit water if a thunder or lightning storm approaches.
- Never use electrically powered equipment or tools in close proximity to water.
- If you are injured while swimming, notify your project leader, parent, or guardian. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.
- If you notice that a member of your swimming group is missing, immediately notify the lifeguard, your project leader, parent, or guardian.