



**For immediate release
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DCR URGES WATER SAFETY AS SPRING AND SUMMER LURE BATHERS

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is urging the public to act safely this spring and summer as the lure of refreshing open water brings bathers, boaters, and waders onto DCR's lakes, ponds, and ocean beaches.

Two drowning deaths have been reported already during the recent days of exceptionally warm weather this spring. While air temperatures may feel like summer, water that was covered in ice a few weeks ago is still very cold. Jumping into such cold water can cause an involuntary airway spasm that prevents the victim from breathing, even if they can get above the surface of the water.

Early spring swimming is especially dangerous for this reason. Avoid diving, jumping, or any quick immersion into these cold waters.

To prevent any further tragedies, DCR is releasing the following facts and safety tips for anyone venturing near the water.

Water safety facts:

- Drowning is the one of the leading causes of accidental death in the country.
- Drowning victims usually drown within 30 feet of safety
- Each year, about 200 children drown and several thousand others are treated in hospitals for submersion accidents that often leave children with permanent brain damage or respiratory health problems. Children have a natural curiosity and attraction to water, and it only takes a few minutes for a child to wander away.
- Water conducts body heat away up to 26 times faster than does air of the same temperature.
- Once your body temperature drops below 95 degrees (only a few degrees below 98.6, which is normal), shivering often begins. At 93 degrees, loss of manual dexterity and muscle rigidity begin to develop. At about 86 degrees, a person becomes unconsciousness. At 83 degrees, cardiac arrest generally occurs.

Simple safety tips:

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

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- Never swim alone.
- Swim only where lifeguards are present, whenever possible.
- Never over estimate your swimming abilities.
- Never drink alcohol while swimming.
- Never swim in cold water or cold weather. It takes only minutes for hypothermia to occur. This is especially important in spring, when the air is warm but cold water can still affect breathing and other body functions.

For more information on water safety, visit these websites:

US Army Corps of Engineers: <http://watersafety.usace.army.mil/safetytips.htm>

Nemours Foundation: <http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/water.html>

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.