



**American  
Red Cross**

# Water Safety Today

**Course Length:** 2 hours (approximately)

## Key Terms

**Accident:** A usually preventable, unexpected and undesirable event that may or may not cause an injury.

**Breathing emergency:** A situation in which someone is having trouble breathing or has stopped breathing altogether.

**Emergency:** A sudden, urgent, usually unforeseen occurrence or occasion requiring immediate action.

**Emergency action plan:** Detailed plans for how everyone should respond in an emergency.

**Emergency medical services (EMS) system:** A network of community resources and medical personnel that provides emergency medical care to people who are injured or suddenly fall ill.

**Emergency number:** A telephone number, usually 9-1-1, to call for help in an emergency.

**First aid:** The immediate care provided to someone who is injured or suddenly ill until more advanced care can be obtained.

**Hydraulic:** A strong force created by water flowing downward over an object then reversing its flow. The reverse flow of the water can trap and hold a person underwater.

**Injury:** Damage that occurs to the body, such as a cut, bruise or broken bone.

**Life jacket:** A safety vest or jacket capable of keeping a person floating while in the water; also known as a personal flotation device (PFD).

**Life threatening:** Any injury or illness that can result in a person's death.

**Longshore current:** A current that moves parallel to the shore.

**Rip current:** Currents that move water away from shore and out to sea beyond the breaking waves.

**Unsupervised pool:** A pool or water attraction without a person in charge to provide for the safety of others.

**Victim:** An injured or suddenly ill person who needs immediate care; a drowning or nonfatal submersion (near-drowning) person.

## Objectives

After completing this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Describe risks associated with an aquatic environment or activities, such as drowning or head, neck and spine injuries.
- Describe how to prevent, recognize and respond to emergencies in, on and around water.
- Describe the links in the Circle of Drowning Prevention and the Chain of Drowning Survival.
- Recognize the importance of water safety training.
- Describe appropriate safety practices and rules that should be in place and enforced at home pools.
- Explain steps to take to remain safe in water environments, including oceans, lakes, rivers and waterparks.

- Demonstrate how to perform reaching, throwing or wading assists.
- Describe steps for preventing overexposure to the sun.
- Describe how to prevent recreational water illnesses (RWIs).

## Materials, Equipment and Supplies

- American Red Cross identification
- Name tags or name tents
- Easel pad and markers, chalkboard and chalk or white board and markers
- Water safety equipment (including one or more of the following):
  - Reaching pole
  - Ring buoy
  - Throw bag
- Various types of U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets (optional)
- Hula-Hoops or tape to create silhouettes of several people on the floor
- Blanket or mat
- Handouts (one for each participant):
  - Circle of Drowning Prevention
  - Home Pool Safety Checklist
  - Currents and Dams
  - Rules for Safe Diving
  - Life Jackets
  - Create a Float Plan
  - Chain of Drowning Survival
  - Emergency Contact Information Sheet
  - Swimmer in Distress
- Sample “water watcher” tag (available at <http://www.poolsafely.gov/wp-content/uploads/waterwatcher.pdf>)

## Lesson Outline

Part	Topic	Length
Part 1	Introduction	5 minutes
	Course Overview	5 minutes
	The Importance of Water Safety Education	5 minutes
	General Water Safety Tips	10 minutes
	Safety at Pools	10 minutes
	Other Aquatic Environments	15 minutes
	Water Activities and Safety	10 minutes
	<b>Approximate Time, Part 1</b>	<b>1 hour</b>
Part 2	Preparing for an Emergency	10 minutes
	Helping Others	15 minutes
	Reach or Throw, Don't Go	20 minutes
	Calling for Help	5 minutes

Part	Topic	Length
	General Health Tips for Outdoor Water Activities	7 minutes
	Wrap-Up	3 minutes
	<b>Approximate Time, Part 2</b>	<b>1 hour</b>
	<b>Approximate Time for Total Presentation</b>	<b>2 hours</b>

**Leader's Note:** All times are approximate. This presentation can be broken into two 1-hour sessions, if desired. If it is presented in a single session, a 10-minute break can be added. Please note that this will add time to the overall length of the presentation.

## PART 1

**Leader's Note:** Prior to the presentation, prepare three easel pad sheets:

- Sheet 1: Sketch a home pool setting. Be sure that your drawing depicts the safety tips provided in the participant handout, Home Pool Safety Checklist.
- Sheet 2: Write the following words in bold as a template for an invitation. Leave adequate space to allow you to fill in the blanks during the presentation.

**You are invited to attend:**

**Who:**

**When:**

**Where:**

**Sunscreen will be available but feel free to bring your own.**

- Sheet 3: Write the following information as if it were on the back side of an invitation.

**Special Request**

- **Please review our pool rules with your children before they arrive:**
  - **Swimming is permitted only when a designated adult with a “water watcher” tag or a lifeguard is supervising the pool.**
  - **Please walk on the deck around the pool.**
  - **Diving is not permitted in shallow water.**

## Topic: Introduction

Time: 5 minutes

### Activity

- Welcome participants and ask them to take a moment to make a name tag (or name tent).
- Tell participants that they are going to learn some important water safety tips that will help them avoid accidents and emergencies.
- Tell participants that they will also learn some emergency action steps and rescue skills that will help them respond to emergencies.
- Review facility information, policies and procedures, including emergency procedures, location of restrooms and water fountains and smoking restrictions.
- Distribute brochures, newsletters or course catalogs that list Red Cross courses offered locally, if available.

## Topic: **Course Overview**

Time: 5 minutes

### **Key Points and Discussion**

- The purpose of this course is to teach you how to prevent, recognize and respond to emergencies in, on and around water.
- This course does not cover all emergency situations. If you want to learn other lifesaving skills, such as first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED), you are encouraged to get further Red Cross training.
- To enroll in a Red Cross first aid, CPR and AED class, go to [redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass).

**Leader's Note:** *The following discussion serves as an icebreaker and helps assess participants' prior knowledge of aquatic environments and how to prevent, recognize and respond to aquatic emergencies. Allow time for participants' responses and a short discussion of the topics.*

- What do you think of when you hear the following?
  - Emergency action steps
  - Diving safety
  - Water hazards
  - Heat- and cold-related emergencies
  - Reaching assist
  - Throwing assist
- What are some of the attractions and dangers you associate with water activities?

**Leader's Note:** *Allow time for responses and write participant responses on the easel pad, chalkboard or white board.*

## Topic: **The Importance of Water Safety Education**

Time: 5 minutes

### **Key Points and Discussion**

- From weekends at the beach, rides on the family boat and pool parties to just “having the neighborhood kids over to use the pool,” recreational swimming and water activities are tremendously popular and enrich our lives.
- Although these activities add great value to our lives, water can potentially be a source of danger.
- Commodore Longfellow, the founder of Red Cross water safety education, once said, “Water can be a good friend or a deadly enemy.”

## **Drowning**

### **Key Points**

- In the United States, drowning ranks second (behind motor vehicle crashes) as a cause of death from unintentional injury in children ages 1 through 14.
- Children between the ages of 1 and 4 years have the highest rate for drowning. Most of these incidents occur in home swimming pools.
- A large number of drowning accidents involving older children, teens and young adults take place in natural bodies of water.

- The percentage of drowning incidents in natural bodies of water increases with age, with more than half of all the victims in these incidents being 15 years of age and older.
- Even when a drowning incident does not result in death, it can result in significant long-term disability.

## Head, Neck and Spinal Injuries

### Key Points

- Some water activities also involve the risk for head, neck or spinal injury.
- When the injury damages the spinal cord, severe disability is likely, including permanent paralysis.
- Most injuries to the head, neck and spine occur in shallow water. Many involve the use of alcohol or other drugs.
- Head, neck and spinal injuries can also result from a headfirst entry into the surf at a beach, off a pier, from a cliff into a water-filled quarry or from falling while surfing or boogie-boarding.

## Topic: General Water Safety Tips

Time: 10 minutes

### Key Points and Discussion

- Staying safe in, on and around the water is no accident—it takes knowledge and forethought.
- One of the most important things to do to stay safe in, on and around water is to learn to swim by enrolling in Red Cross Parent and Child Aquatics, Preschool Aquatics, Learn-to-Swim or Adult Swim courses for individuals of different ages and abilities.
- Enroll family members in lessons throughout multiple seasons to ensure that they can swim well and handle themselves in most aquatic situations.
- To enroll in Red Cross swim lessons, contact your local Red Cross or visit [redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass), or contact a swimming pool in your area and ask for Red Cross training.
- Another thing you can do to stay safe while enjoying water activities is to participate in water safety courses, such as this one, that help prepare you to handle an aquatic emergency.
- There are many tips for water safety that you may already know. In addition to learning to swim, what are some general water safety tips you can think of?

**Answer:** Responses will vary. Prompt participants to include the following:

- Swim only in areas supervised by a lifeguard.
  - Never swim alone.
  - Read and obey all rules and posted signs.
  - Only swim in designated areas.
  - Do not mix alcohol with boating, swimming or diving.
  - Always wear a life jacket when boating.
- It is important to apply general water safety practices whenever you and your family are in, on or around water.
  - Have young children or inexperienced swimmers take extra precautions, such as wearing a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket, when around the water.
  - Designate a responsible individual as the person to watch over children whenever they are in, on or around any body of water, even if a lifeguard is present.
  - Watch out for the “dangerous too’s”:
    - Too tired
    - Too cold
    - Too far from safety

- Too much sun
- Too much strenuous activity
- Set specific swimming rules for each individual in a family or a group based on swimming ability (for example, inexperienced swimmers should stay in water less than chest deep and should have an adult in the water with them within arm's reach at all times).
- The more informed people are, the more aware they will be of hazards as well as safe practices. Make sure swimmers know about the water environment and any potential hazards, such as:
  - Deep and shallow areas.
  - Currents.
  - Obstructions.
  - The locations of entry and exit points.
- Identify potential water hazards within the community and make certain that children stay away from them.
- Use a feetfirst entry when entering the water.
- Enter headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving and has no obstructions.
- Do not mix alcohol with boating, swimming or diving. Alcohol:
  - Impairs judgment, balance and coordination.
  - Impacts the ability to operate watercraft safely.
  - Affects swimming and diving skills.
  - Reduces the body's ability to stay warm.
- Take a boating safety course before operating any watercraft.
- Be especially cautious near moving water, cold water and ice.
- Be prepared. Aquatic emergencies happen quickly and suddenly. Whenever possible have a telephone or mobile phone nearby.

**Leader's Note:** Show participants a copy of American Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety. Explain that this manual can help them prepare for a variety of aquatic activities or environments. Tell participants that they can purchase a copy of this manual at [Shopstaywell.com](http://Shopstaywell.com).

## Layers of Protection

### Key Points

- Homeowners with pools or hot tubs need to take a multi-tiered approach to securing the pool area and minimizing the likelihood that a child will gain unsupervised entry:
  - Enclose the pool area on all four sides using an appropriate barrier system and then make sure the barrier remains secure. Always make sure gates are latched and keep items away from the barrier (such as lawn furniture) that a child could use to climb up and over into the pool area.
  - Install pool alarms. These alarms use sensors to detect motion in the water. Underwater pool alarms generally perform better and can be used in conjunction with pool covers. Use remote alarm receivers so that the alarm can be heard inside the house or in other places away from the pool area.
- Layers of protection are essential to help prevent drowning. The American Red Cross has established the Circle of Drowning Prevention to help people to remember 5 important points:
  - Provide close and constant supervision to children who are in or near the water.
  - Fence pools and spas with adequate barriers to prevent unsupervised access.
  - Learn swimming and water safety survival skills.
  - Have children, inexperienced swimmers and boaters wear U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets.
  - Swim in lifeguarded areas.

**Leader's Note:** Distribute a copy of the handout, *Circle of Drowning Prevention*, to each participant.

## Watching Children Around Water

### Key Points and Discussion

- Anyone watching children who are in, on or around water must understand that drowning happens quickly and suddenly.
- What are some tips for watching children around water?

**Answer:** Responses will vary. Prompt participants to include the following:

- Know each child's swimming ability and set specific rules for each child based on swimming ability.
  - Maintain constant supervision, keeping an eye on the children at all times.
  - Stay within an arm's reach of any weak or inexperienced swimmer who is in the water.
  - Do not allow children to swim outdoors during inclement weather conditions, especially prior to and during storms with lightning and high winds.
  - Empty kiddie pools immediately after use.
- Here are some additional tips for watching children around water:
    - Provide vigilant supervision whenever children are around any source of water (such as pools, rivers, lakes, bathtubs, toilets and even buckets of water) no matter how well the child can swim and no matter how shallow the water. This is also true if you are in boat, on a dock or just near the shore.
    - Do not rely on water wings, swim rings, inflatable toys and other items designed for water recreation. These items are not designed or tested for safety and cannot be used as a substitute for adult supervision and a U.S. Coast Guard—approved life jacket. These devices can suddenly shift position, lose air or slip out from underneath, leaving the child in a dangerous situation.
    - Caution children never to hyperventilate (breathe rapidly and deeply) before or during any swimming activity. Do not allow competitive, repetitive or prolonged underwater swimming or breath-holding. When a person hyperventilates and then swims underwater, the oxygen level in the blood can drop to a point that is so low the person passes out underwater. When the person finally does take a breath instinctively, water rushes in and the drowning process begins.
    - If there are small children in the home, use safety locks on toilets and keep bathroom doors closed and toilet lids down.
    - Empty cleaning buckets immediately after use.
    - When visiting another home, check the site for potential water hazards and always supervise children.

## Topic: **Safety at Pools**

Time: 10 minutes

## Home Pools, Hot Tubs and Spas

### Key Points and Discussion

- While home pools, hot tubs and spas create beautiful environments that offer years of fun and activity for families, they can also be a significant threat to children in the home or in the community.
- Most drowning incidents involving children between the ages of 1 and 4 years take place in home swimming pools. Many of these incidents happen very suddenly—about 5 minutes or less after the child goes missing—and while the parents are at home.
- Drowning incidents at home pools are a problem in every state, but in warm weather states where pools are more common, the problem is very serious. In Arizona, California and Florida, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death in and around the home for children under the age of 5.
- What types of information and skills do you think you need to know if you own a home pool?



**Answer:** Responses should include the following:

- What emergency equipment is necessary
- How to secure the pool area
- How to care for the pool
- What to do in an emergency, including:
  - How to call for emergency help
  - First aid and CPR skills
  - Rescue skills
- Raise your hand if you and all the members of your family know how to swim.
  - If you own a home pool, everyone in the family should know how to swim.
- If you have been trained in CPR, raise your hand.
- Swim lessons and training in first aid and CPR are important for everyone, and are especially important if you own a home pool.
- Make sure you enforce fundamental safety rules at all times at your home pool, including:
  - Teaching your children not to go near the water without you.
  - Making sure children know the pool area is off-limits without adult supervision.
  - Providing supervision for children at all times.
  - Posting the rules for your pool and enforcing them without exception.
- You should consult the Association of Pool and Spa Professionals (APSP) as well as state law and local building codes for pool dimension guidelines to help you establish rules for your pool to ensure safe diving activities. For example:
  - Prohibit all dives into shallow water.
  - Post depth markers and “No Diving” signs as appropriate.
  - Allow dives only off the end of the diving board.
  - Do not allow more than one bounce on the end of the diving board. A person could miss the edge or slip off the diving board.
  - Do not allow running on the diving board or attempts to dive a long way through the air. The water might not be deep enough at the point of entry.
- Now we are going to take a tour of a good example of a home pool and discuss the safety measures that are in place.

## Activity

- Show Sheet 1 on the easel pad—the sketch of a home pool area.
- Guide participants through the pool area, pointing out the safety measures that are in place:
  - The pool is completely enclosed with a fence that has a self-closing, self-latching gate.
  - The fence has vertical bars so that it is not easy to climb.
  - All doors or gates leading to the pool have secure locks, including patios, outside access gates and garage door entries.
  - “No Diving” areas are clearly marked.
  - Pool chemicals are stored in a secure area and locked for safety.
  - Pool tiles and deck areas are free of sharp areas or broken tiles.
  - Pool ladders, slides and diving boards are in good condition and free of loose bolts.



- Pool covers are completely removed prior to pool use and completely secured when in place.
- Toys are in good condition and free of broken or sharp edges.
- Toys are stored and kept away from and out of the pool when not in use.
- Furniture or toys are not left near a fence that would enable a child to climb over the fence.
- An emergency action plan is present to address potential pool emergencies.
- First aid and CPR instructions are posted.
- Emergency telephone number for emergency medical services (EMS) is posted by the telephone. A telephone or a fully charged cordless or mobile phone is kept poolside.
- Basic lifesaving equipment is located near the pool, and family members know how to use it. A reaching pole, rope and life jackets and a well-stocked first aid kit are available.

**Leader's Note:** *Distribute a copy of handout, Home Pool Safety Checklist, to each participant. Encourage participants to take the checklist home and use it to check their pools.*

- Many states have pool fence laws. Check with the local authorities to find out specific owner responsibilities. One more item to check is your homeowner's insurance policy. As a home pool owner, make sure your homeowner's insurance policy covers the pool.

**Leader's Note:** *Refer participants back to the handout, Circle of Drowning Prevention. Remind them that layers of protection are required when home pools, hot tubs and spas are present.*

## Hot Tub and Spa Safety

### Key Points

- Spas and hot tubs necessitate some special safety considerations. Although hot water is relaxing and soothing and can improve circulation, it can also lead to problems if not enjoyed responsibly.
- Research has shown that high water temperatures can lead to drowsiness or even loss of consciousness, which can lead to drowning. To safely enjoy a hot tub:
  - Never use a hot tub when drinking alcohol or using other drugs.
  - Never use a hot tub when you are alone.
  - Do not increase the water temperature beyond 104°F (40°C).
  - Limit your time in the hot tub to no more than 15 minutes.
  - Do not use a hot tub if you are pregnant, take medications or have a chronic medical condition (such as high or low blood pressure, heart disease, epilepsy or diabetes) unless you have cleared this activity with your health care provider.
  - Do not allow children younger than 5 years to use a hot tub. Children have difficulty adjusting to the extreme water temperature and are at risk for overheating.
- The high water temperature in a hot tub provides a good environment for bacterial and parasite growth. If you own a hot tub, be sure to chemically treat and test the water regularly.
- Shower before entering the hot tub, because substances on the skin (such as dirt, lotion and perspiration) "use up" the chemicals used to treat the water, lowering their levels and increasing the risk for microbial growth in the hot tub.
- When not in use, securely cover the hot tub to prevent anyone from falling in.
- Post the telephone number for emergency medical services (EMS) by your telephone. Keep a cordless telephone or mobile phone near the hot tub.

## Pool and Hot Tub Entrapment Hazards

### Key Points

- Drain entrapment can occur when a pool or hot tub drain is uncovered, or the drain cover is broken or not secured properly.
- Suction pulls hair, clothing, jewelry, or a body part into or against the pool drain, leading to entrapment. The suction may be so strong that the person cannot pull away.
- Drowning can occur if the person's head is underwater and he or she is not able to break free of the drain.
- Beginning in 2008, all public pools and hot tubs were required by law to have anti-entrapment drain covers installed.
- All pool owners should make sure that their pool is free of drain entrapment or entanglement hazards by installing anti-entrapment drain covers. In addition, pool and hot tub owners need to:
  - Remind people using the pool or hot tub to stay away from the drains.
  - Consider installing safety release systems, which offer protection from dangerous drain suction.
  - Consider installing an automatic shut-off system for added protection.
  - Clearly identify the location of the electrical cut-off switch for the pump, know where the pump switch is and know how to turn it off.
  - Check with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Association of Pool and Spa Professionals, the National Swimming Pool Foundation or local authorities to find out more about safe pool and hot tub drainage systems.

## Pool Parties

### Key Points

- Homeowners with pools often choose to host pool parties.
- Home pool owners must take certain steps to make the event as safe as possible.
- It is always important to emphasize safety when hosting others at your home if you own a pool, but it is especially important when your guests include children.

### Activity

- Tell participants that you will now complete a fictitious invitation to a home pool party for a boy and his friends to celebrate his seventh birthday.

**Leader's Note:** Show Sheet 2 on the easel pad (fill-in-the-blank invitation). As you fill in the blanks, discuss the importance of the information you are providing to parents of the partygoers.

### **You are invited to attend: Johnny's 7th Birthday Pool Party!**

- Tell participants that it is important to make sure parents and caretakers of all invited guests are aware that the party is a pool party.

### **Who: Sally (Mrs. Smith, you are welcome to accompany Sally.)**

- Tell participants that they should consider extending the offer to parents to accompany their children because some parents might be uncomfortable sending their children to a pool party due to supervision and safety concerns.

### **When: Saturday, the 6th, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; swimming from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

- Tell participants that, if it is possible, they should have a lifeguard on duty.

### **Where: 1234 Any Street; Any Town, USA**

**Sunscreen will be available, but feel free to bring your own.**

**Leader's Note:** Show Sheet 3 on the easel pad and read it to participants:

### **Special Request**

**Please review our pool rules with your children before they arrive:**

- **Swimming is permitted only when a designated adult with a “water watcher” tag or a lifeguard is supervising the pool.**
- **Please walk on the deck around the pool.**
- **Diving is not permitted in shallow water.**
- Tell participants to consider writing some pool rules on the invitation. The children's parents can help set the safety stage by discussing the rules with their children even before they arrive at the party.

## **Pool Rules**

### **Key Points and Discussion**

- Home pool owners should have rules for their pool and should post them by the pool. Be sure that your guests are aware of and follow the rules.
- Be sure to reinforce the rules to all the guests prior to the swimming portion of the party.
- What are some safety rules you would establish during a pool party?

**Answer:** Responses should include the following:

- Prohibiting all dives into shallow water
- Walking—no running on the deck
- Not permitting glass in the pool area
- Requiring weak or inexperienced swimmers to wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket
- Some additional safety tips to follow whenever hosting guests at your home pool include the following:
  - Do not serve alcoholic beverages to guests who are or will be participating in or helping to supervise water activities.
  - Maintain cleanliness of the water. Water should be chemically treated and tested regularly.
  - Check with your homeowner's insurance company to determine the limits of your coverage. You may need additional coverage for the event. Make sure that parents or caretakers of all invited guests are aware that the party is a pool party.

## **Providing Appropriate Supervision**

### **Key Points**

- Proper supervision is important whenever people are in, on or around the water and is a critical element of a safe pool party.
- One option is to hire a lifeguard. Contact your local parks and recreation department or local swimming pools to get names of Red Cross–trained lifeguards who are willing to lifeguard at private parties.
- It is your responsibility to interview and hire individuals and provide all appropriate rescue equipment.
- If you choose not to hire a lifeguard, identify or appoint responsible adults to supervise the pool when it is in use. These individuals or water watchers must understand and accept responsibility for monitoring the pool and should be trained in first aid, CPR and water safety.
- Make sure you review your emergency action plan with the lifeguard and water watchers. (We will cover emergency action plans later in this course.)
- If the swimming portion of the party goes for more than an hour, set rest breaks. This allows guests the opportunity to rest and warm up, as well as provides a break for the lifeguard or water watcher supervising children in the water.

- A lifeguard or water watcher should be at the pool, even during nonswimming hours of the party. This helps to ensure that nobody enters the water unexpectedly.

### Activity

- Pass the sample “water watcher” tag around so participants can look at it.
- Explain that each person who has agreed to supervise the pool can wear a tag like this during their appointed time as a visible symbol of the responsibilities they have accepted, and so that they can easily be identified by others.

## Unsupervised Pools

### Key Points and Discussion

- Unsupervised pools may include hotel, motel, condominium, apartment complex and homeowner’s association pools.
- Can you think of any safety tips you should follow when swimming or visiting an unsupervised pool?

**Answer:** Prompt participants to include the following:

- Read and obey all posted pool rules.
- Supervise your children at all times. Remember, your children are your responsibility.
- Check for the availability of safety equipment, such as a reaching pole and ring buoy, and make sure it is in good condition.
- Make sure the pool is properly marked with depth indicators.
- Here are some additional safety tips for swimming at an unsupervised pool:
  - Do not swim in a pool that is overly crowded or with swimmers who are not following the rules.
  - Do not bring any glass or breakable objects onto the pool deck.
  - Check the pool area for obvious hazards (slippery decks, debris on the pool bottom, malfunctioning equipment, drop-offs, cracks in the deck).
  - Check to see that fences are in good repair and that gates are self-closing and self-latching.
  - Do not prop gates open or leave furniture near the pool fence that would allow children to easily climb the fence.
  - Check the water conditions. The water should be clear and clean without debris. You should be able to see the drain or the bottom of the pool at the deepest point. If you cannot see the drain or bottom, do not enter the water.

## Topic: Other Aquatic Environments

Time: 15 minutes

### Discussion

- What other types of aquatic facilities besides pools and hot tubs do you use? What aquatic activities do you enjoy?

**Answer:** Responses may include the following:

- Waterparks
- Lakes and rivers
- Oceans
- Diving

- Boating
- Waterskiing

- Now we are going to talk about safety in various water environments.

## Waterparks

### Key Points

- Make sure a responsible individual maintains constant supervision of children when you go to a waterpark.
- Check to make sure the area is well supervised by lifeguards before you or others in your group enter the water.
- Young children or inexperienced swimmers should wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket whenever they are in, on or around water. Some waterparks may prohibit the use of life jackets on some attractions, such as speed slides.
- Stay with a buddy: never swim alone.
- Read all posted signs. Follow the rules and directions given by lifeguards.
- Ask questions if you are not sure about a correct procedure.
- Note that specific procedures and water depth may vary from attraction to attraction.
- Be aware that some attractions have moving water, such as wave pools, and require swimming skills to be safe.
- Before starting down a water slide, get in the correct position: face-up and feetfirst.
- Do not let children hold onto others or be held by others when using water slides.
- Remember to dress yourself and your children appropriately. In some cases, this may mean wearing water shoes.
- Make sure you take efforts to protect yourself and your children from the sun.

## Lakes and Rivers

### Key Points and Discussion

- What are some precautions you should take in lake and river environments?

**Answer:** Prompt participants to include the following:

- Swim in a supervised area.
- Be aware of and avoid possible hazards such as murky water, currents, unexpected drop-offs and underwater objects.
- Enter the water feetfirst.
- Enter headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving.
- Water that appears calm on the surface may have a current below the surface. Do not underestimate the power of a current.
- Because the water is moving, anyone caught in a current may have a difficult time getting to shore or may be carried downstream.
- What would you do if you were caught in a current and were being swept away?

**Answer:** If you are caught in a current and are being swept away, roll over onto your back and go downstream feetfirst to avoid hitting your head. When out of the strongest part of the current, swim straight toward shore.

- A hydraulic is a strong force created by water flowing downward over an object then reversing its flow. The reverse flow of the water can trap and hold a person under the water.

- If you are caught in a hydraulic, do not fight it. Swim to the bottom and then swim out with the current to reach the surface.
- Avoid all activities above and below a dam.

**Leader's Note:** Distribute a copy of handout, *Currents and Dams*, to each participant.

## Ocean Safety

### Key Points and Discussion

- What are some precautions you should take in ocean environments?

**Answer:** Prompt participants to include the following:

- Stay within the designated swimming area and within the visibility of a lifeguard.
  - Watch out for possible hazards, such as waves, rip currents, longshore currents and other water conditions.
  - Check the surf conditions before you enter the water. Look to see if a warning flag is up or check with a lifeguard for water conditions, beach conditions or any potential hazards, especially rip currents.
  - Stay away from piers, pilings and jetties when in the water.
  - Keep a lookout for aquatic life. Water plants and animals may be dangerous. Before going into any ocean, find out what local marine life may be dangerous, how to avoid it and how to care for any injuries.
  - Never dive headfirst into breaking waves. Many swimmers have suffered head, neck and back injuries while diving into waves, not realizing that the water depth was too shallow for a dive.
- Does anybody know what a rip current is?

**Answer:** Rip currents are currents that move water away from shore and out to sea beyond the breaking waves.

- According to the National Weather Service (NWS), common indicators of a rip current include:
  - A channel of churning, choppy water.
  - An area having a noticeable difference in water color.
  - A line of foam, seaweed or debris moving steadily away from shore.
  - A break in the incoming wave pattern.
- It can be difficult for most people to recognize the presence of a rip current, and many of the common indicators of a rip current can be hard to identify. Never assume that if you do not see any of the common rip current indicators, that no rip currents are present.
- Be aware that rip currents may still be present even if none of these indicators are observed.
- Where are rip currents found?

**Answer:** Dangerous rip currents can be found along any shore where waves break, including the Great Lakes.

- The United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) estimates that each year more than 100 people die because of rip currents on our nation's beaches. Rip currents account for more than 80 percent of rescues performed by surf beach lifeguards.
- If you are caught in a rip current, stay calm.
- Do not fight the current. Remember, rip currents can be quite strong. Fighting the current can lead to exhaustion.
- Try to swim out of the rip current in a direction parallel to shore. When you are out of the current, head back to shore and away from the current at an angle.
- If you are unable to swim out of the current, what else can you do?

**Answer:** Responses should include the following:

- Float on your back
- Tread water
- Wave your arms and call for help
- Remember that rip currents slow down just past the line of breaking waves. If you float or tread water, you can swim to shore once you are out of the current.
- What should you do if you see someone who is caught in a rip current?

**Answer:** Responses should include the following:

- Call the lifeguard.
- If no lifeguard is available, call 9-1-1.
- If possible, throw the person something that floats, such as a life jacket or a beach ball.
- Talk to the person and tell him or her how to escape.
- Do not enter the water to help a person who is in trouble unless you are trained to do so. Many people die when attempting to help someone caught in a rip current or otherwise in trouble in the water.

## Diving Safety

### Key Points and Discussion

- A headfirst entry into shallow water is the leading cause of head, neck and back injuries in the water.
- There are many tips for diving safety that you may already know. It is important to think of these tips and apply them whenever you are diving into water.
- In addition to learning how to dive safely from a qualified instructor, what are other recommended guidelines that you should follow?

**Answer:** Prompt participants to include the following:

- Obey “No Diving” signs. They are there for safety.
- Never dive into cloudy or murky water.
- Be sure of water depth and ensure that the water is free from obstructions.
- The first time in the water, ease in or walk in; do not jump or dive.
- Always check first for objects under the surface, such as logs, stumps, boulders and pilings.
- Never dive into an above-ground pool or the shallow end of any in-ground pool.
- Check the shape of the pool bottom to be sure the diving area is large enough and deep enough for the intended dive.
- The presence of a diving board does not necessarily mean it is safe to dive. Pools at homes, motels and hotels might not have a safe diving envelope.

**Leader’s Note:** Distribute a copy of the handout, *Rules for Safe Diving*, to each participant.

## Topic: Water Activities and Safety

Time: 10 minutes

### Key Points and Discussion

- There are many types of outdoor water activities, such as waterskiing, tubing, rafting, personal watercraft (such as Jet Skis), windsurfing, snorkeling and surfing.
- What specific tips should you follow when participating in these types of water activities?



**Answer:** Prompt participants to include the following:

- Wear a life jacket. Check the label to make sure you and others are wearing U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets.
- Anytime you participate in water activities, give a responsible person details about where you will be and how long you will be gone. This is important because if you become delayed because of an emergency, become lost or encounter other problems, you want help to be able to reach you.
- Know your local laws and regulations and follow them for your safety and the safety of others. Some states have special laws governing the use of personal watercraft—such as Jet Skis—which address operation, registration and licensing requirements, education, environmental restrictions, required safety equipment and minimum ages.
- Wear a wet suit in cold water to help prevent hypothermia.

## Life Jackets

### Key Points and Discussion

- Anyone who cannot swim well should wear or have a life jacket, also known as a personal flotation device (PFD), if they are going to be in, on or around the water.
- Even good swimmers should wear a life jacket when boating or waterskiing or if there is any chance of falling or being thrown into the water.
- Although you should always wear your life jacket, it is even more important when the water is cold.
- The U.S. Coast Guard has arranged PFDs into five types.

**Leader’s Note:** Distribute a copy of the handout, *Life Jackets*, to each participant. Show participants examples of U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets if you have them on hand.

- What should you look for when choosing a life jacket?

**Answer:** Responses should include the following:

- Make sure it is the right type for the right activity.
  - Make sure it is approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.
  - Make sure it fits the intended user. Check the stamp on the life jacket for weight limits.
  - Make sure it is in good condition. Check buckles and straps for proper function. Discard any life jacket with torn fabric or straps that have pulled loose.
  - Practice swimming with it. Make sure that you have a companion with you when you practice.
- Inflatable toys, water wings and other items designed for water recreation are not substitutes for U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets or life vests.
    - Those with little or no swimming skills may fall off the inflatable, which may lead to a drowning situation.
    - Additionally, the materials used for these devices deteriorate in sun and rough pool surfaces, leading to deflation and leaks.

## Boating Safety

### Key Points and Discussion

- Boating can be a safe and enjoyable pastime, but it is important to know the dangers. Each year hundreds of people die and thousands more are injured in boating accidents.
- Do not become one of these statistics—follow the basic rules of boating safety.
- Always wear a life jacket. Most boating fatalities occur from drowning.
- Take a boating safety course. Training in boating safety is not just for those with large boats. Many boating accidents involve small open motorboats and personal watercraft. Many states have mandatory boating education programs.

- Do not drink alcohol and do not ride in a boat operated by someone who has been drinking alcohol. Alcohol is a leading contributor to recreational boating accidents. Alcohol affects balance and judgment, makes it harder to swim and stay warm, slows reflexes and impairs vision. Boating and alcohol never mix.
- Pay attention to weather forecasts and understand local water conditions and hazards.
- Make a float plan. Before leaving the shore, leave the details of your boating trip, such as where you will be and how long you will be gone, with a responsible person on land who will take action if you fail to return or check in on time.
- Why do you think it is necessary to complete a float plan and give it to another person?

**Answer:** *If you are delayed because of an emergency, become lost or encounter other problems with the boat, you want help to be able to reach you.*

**Leader's Note:** *Distribute a copy of the handout, Create a Float Plan, to each participant. Encourage participants to use this for each boat outing.*

- Find a boating course in your area (such as the Red Cross, U.S. Power Squadron or the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or a state boating authority). Boating courses teach about navigation rules, emergency procedures and the effects of wind, water conditions and weather. For more information about boating and boating safety, visit the United Safe Boating Institute website at [www.usbi.org](http://www.usbi.org).
- Have your boat inspected regularly by your local boating safety authority.
- It is also important to have a reliable way to communicate with the shore and other boats in case of an emergency.
  - At the very least, carry a mobile phone. However, a mobile phone can place calls only to shore.
  - If possible, all boat owners should install and use marine VHF radios, which allow them to communicate with other boats and marine rescue personnel.
  - If possible, select a marine radio equipped with digital selective calling (DSC). In an emergency, DSC-equipped radios can automatically send a distress alert to U.S. Coast Guard stations and other vessels with DSC-equipped radios by just pressing a button.

**Leader's Note:** *If this presentation is taught in two 1-hour sessions, it is suggested that you break here.*

## PART 2

**Leader's Note:** *Prior to the presentation, prepare an open area that allows demonstrations of reaching and wading assists and demonstration and practice of a throwing assist.*

- For reaching and wading assists, place a mat or blanket on the ground.
- For the throwing assist:
  - Set up targets of three "distressed swimmers." You may use tape or Hula-Hoops to mark the silhouettes of the victims.
  - Set the targets at a distance that is about 20 feet away from where you will line up the participants.

## Topic: Preparing for an Emergency

Time: 10 minutes

### Chain of Drowning Survival

#### Activity

- Distribute the handout, Chain of Drowning Survival, to each participant.
- Facilitate a discussion about each link in the chain.

# Emergency Action Plan

## Key Points and Discussion:

- What is an emergency action plan?

**Answer:** *An emergency action plan is a detailed plan that describes how everyone should act in an emergency.*

- You should have a plan if there is a body of water around or near your home, such as a pool, pond or canal.

## Activity

- Ask participants to provide different types of aquatic environments that might be located near their homes.
- Select one of the environments they have called out.
- Ask participants,
  - “What are some types of emergencies that could occur in this environment?”
  - “What types of equipment should be available in this environment?”
  - “Who should be included on an emergency contact list?”
  - “Where should the emergency contact list be located?”
- Create an emergency action plan by writing down the responses on a sheet of easel paper, a chalkboard or white board.
- Tell participants that the basic elements of an emergency action plan include:
  - An emergency signal.
  - Safety equipment.
  - Emergency procedures.
- Tell participants that everyone should know and understand the emergency signal.
- It is also important that the emergency procedures are carefully planned and in residential settings, family and friends should be taught these procedures.
- Ask participants, “What should the emergency procedures outline?”
- Write down or have one of the participants write down responses on a sheet of easel paper, a chalkboard or white board.

**Leader’s Note:** *Allow time for a short discussion. Make sure the following bullet points are covered:*

- *Steps a responder should take to remove the victim from danger, without putting the responder in danger.*
- *Who will call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number as well as how and where the call will be made. Take into account how a mobile phone can access emergency numbers.*
- *How EMS personnel are directed to the specific scene of the emergency. For example, someone should be appointed to meet EMS personnel at the street.*
- *Who should be contacted, such as the victim’s physician and immediate family members.*

## Key Points and Discussion

- What important information should be on an emergency contact form?

**Answer:** *Phone numbers for poison control, police and fire departments and other emergency numbers.*

**Leader’s Note:** *Distribute a copy of the handout, Emergency Contact Information Sheet, to each participant.*

- It is your responsibility to complete this form after this course and post one sheet by each telephone in your home.
- You may also find it helpful to carry one with you at all times.
- Remember to update this sheet as often as needed to ensure accurate information.

## Topic: **Helping Others**

Time: 15 minutes

### Key Points

- Even with the best precautions, water emergencies occur.
- You may encounter a situation in which either you or someone else may need help.
- By learning rescue techniques, you can help yourself and others in an emergency, but always remember that your safety comes first.
- If you cannot easily help the person, call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.

## The EMS System

### Key Points and Discussion:

- What is the EMS system?

**Answer:** *The EMS system is a network of community resources and medical personnel that provides emergency medical care to people who are injured or suddenly fall ill.*

- The system begins when you or another citizen sees an emergency occurring and takes action. When you call 9-1-1 or the emergency number in your community, the dispatcher or call taker takes your information and summons trained professionals to the scene.
- Who are some of the trained professionals that may arrive during an emergency?

**Answer:** *Responses should include the following:*

- *Police*
- *Firefighters*
- *First responders*
- *Emergency medical technicians (EMTs)*
- *Paramedics*

- These professionals take over the care of the victim, including transporting the person to a hospital or other facility for the best medical care.
- Your role in this system is to recognize the emergency, decide to act and call EMS personnel for help.

## Recognizing an Emergency

### Key Points and Discussion

- An emergency can happen to anyone in, on or around the water, regardless of how good a swimmer the person is or what he or she is doing at the time.
- The key to recognizing an emergency is staying alert and knowing the signals that indicate an emergency is happening. Use all your senses whenever you are observing others in, on or around the water. Watch for anything that seems unusual.
- What are some examples of using your senses to help you recognize an emergency?

**Answer:** Responses should include the following:

- You may see that a swimmer is acting oddly, or you may hear a scream or sudden splash.
- You may smell an unusual odor, such as a strong chlorine odor, that could indicate a problem.
- Being able to recognize a person who is having trouble in the water may help save that person's life.
- Most drowning people cannot or do not call for help. They spend their energy just trying to keep their heads above water. They might slip under water quickly and never resurface.
- Two kinds of water emergencies to look for are a swimmer in distress and a drowning person.

**Leader's Note:** Distribute a copy of the handout, *Swimmer in Distress*, to each participant. Allow participants 2 or 3 minutes to review the chart.

- I am going to imitate the behaviors of someone who is experiencing a water emergency. Based on the behaviors I am exhibiting, what type of victim am I?

**Leader's Note:** One-by-one, imitate the behaviors of a swimmer in distress, an active drowning victim and a passive drowning victim. Imitate the behavior of each victim until the participants can identify which victim you are portraying. As the participants identify which victim you are portraying, ask them to explain the behaviors of that type of victim.

## Deciding to Act

### Key Points

- Once you recognize that there is an emergency, you need to decide to act—and how to act.
- Often people are slow to act in an emergency because they are not sure exactly what to do or they think someone else will act instead. If no one decides to act, then no one will take action. By deciding to act, you may save a person's life.
- At a public swimming pool, there may even be lifeguards on duty who have not yet recognized the emergency. If this is the case, get the lifeguards' attention so they can respond.
- Once you decide to act, make sure the scene is safe and you will not endanger yourself.
- Look for any other victims. Look for bystanders who can help you provide first aid or call for help.
- If the victim is in the water, your first goal is to stay safe yourself.
- Once you ensure your safety, your next goal is to help get the person out of the water.
- Attempt to rescue by reaching or throwing an object that floats to the person.

## Topic: Reach or Throw, Don't Go

Time: 20 minutes

## Reaching Assist

### Activity

- Tell participants that if a victim is close enough, a reaching assist can be used to help the person out of the water. You can use a reaching pole, a kickboard, a life jacket or any object that can extend your reach. Show participants each of these objects.
- Explain that if there is no equipment available to perform a reaching assist, an arm or leg can be reached out to the person.
- Ask for a volunteer to sit or stand on the mat or blanket you have placed and pretend to be the "victim."
- Demonstrate a reaching assist with equipment and a reaching assist without equipment. As you demonstrate the skills, say each skill component aloud.

Skill	Skill Component
Reaching Assist with Equipment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brace yourself on the pool deck, pier surface or shoreline.</li> <li>2. Extend the object to the victim.</li> <li>3. When the victim grasps the object, slowly and carefully pull him or her to safety. Keep your body low and lean back to avoid being pulled into the water.</li> </ol>
Reaching Assist without Equipment from the Deck	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brace yourself on the pool deck, pier surface or shoreline.</li> <li>2. Reach with your arm and grasp the victim.</li> <li>3. Pull the victim to safety.</li> </ol>
Reaching Assist without Equipment from a Position in the Water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hold onto a pool ladder, overflow trough (gutter), piling or another secure object with one hand.</li> <li>2. Extend your free hand or one of your legs to the victim. Do not let go of the secure object or swim out into the water.</li> <li>3. Pull the victim to safety.</li> </ol>

- Tell participants that they will now practice a reaching assist with equipment on land.
- Have participants form pairs. One person will practice a reaching assist with equipment while the other person acts as the victim.

## Throwing Assist

### Activity

- Tell participants that they should use a throwing assist to rescue someone beyond their reach in a pool or open water.
- Explain that to perform a throwing assist, they should throw the victim a buoyant object tied to a line. The victim can then grasp the object and be pulled to safety.
- Show participants the ring buoy and throw bag. Explain that a ring buoy is a common piece of equipment around swimming pools. Throw bags are also commonly used for water rescue.
- Demonstrate a throwing assist using a throw bag. Explain to participants that they will be using throw bags today because they are practicing on land and throw bags are not damaged by repeatedly striking the ground.
- As you demonstrate the skill, say each skill component aloud.

Skill	Skill Component
Throwing Assist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get into a stride position: the leg opposite your throwing arm is forward.</li> <li>2. Step on the end of the line with your forward foot.</li> <li>3. Shout to get the victim's attention. Make eye contact and say that you are going to throw the object now. Tell the victim to grab it.</li> <li>4. Bend your knees and throw the object to the victim. Try to throw the object upwind and/or up current, just over the victim's head, so that the line drops within reach.</li> <li>5. When the victim has grasped the object or the line, slowly pull him or her to safety. Lean away from the water as you pull.</li> <li>6. If the object does not reach the victim, quickly pull the line back in and throw it again. Try to keep the line from tangling, but do not waste time trying to coil it. If using a throw bag, partially fill the bag with some water and throw it again.</li> </ol>

- Tell participants that they will now practice this skill.
- Divide the participants into three groups.
- Line the groups up about 20 feet from the preplaced targets.
- Let the participants try to toss the throw bag at the target. Accuracy is rated by tossing the throw bag over the object so that the rope strikes the target.

## Wading Assist

### Activity

- Tell participants that if the water is safe and shallow enough (not over your chest), you can wade in to reach the victim.
- Tell participants they should not enter the water if there is a current or if the bottom is soft or you do not know the condition of the bottom.
- Explain that, if possible, they should wear a life jacket when attempting a wading assist, and take something to extend their reach.
  - Ask for a volunteer to sit or stand on the mat or blanket you have placed and pretend to be the “victim.”
  - Demonstrate a wading assist. As you demonstrate the skill, say each skill component aloud.

Skill	Skill Component
Wading Assist with Equipment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take a buoyant object to extend out to the victim.</li><li>2. Wade into the water and extend the object to the victim.</li><li>3. When the victim grasps the object, tell him or her to hold onto the object tightly for support and pull him or her to safety.</li><li>4. Keep the object between you and the victim to help prevent the victim from clutching at you in a panic.</li></ol>

### Topic: **Calling for Help**

Time: 5 minutes

### Key Points and Discussion

- For a drowning situation, send someone to call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number while you attempt to rescue by reaching or throwing an object that floats to the person.
- Your goal is to help get the person out of the water.
- Remember: Do not attempt a swimming rescue unless you have proper equipment and are trained to do so.
- Once the person is out of the water, check the person and care for any conditions you find.
- If the person is unconscious, send someone else to call EMS personnel while you start the rescue.
- If the person is conscious, first get the person out of the water and then determine whether EMS personnel are needed.
- If the victim is not in the water, as soon as you determine that there is an emergency, call EMS personnel immediately.
- If you are in doubt about whether the victim needs professional help, do not hesitate—call EMS personnel.
- What are some serious conditions and situations that require you to call EMS personnel?

**Answer:** Responses should include the following:

- Any drowning or nonfatal submersion (near-drowning) situation.
- Injury to the head, neck or back.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Persistent chest or abdominal pain or pressure.
- Unconsciousness.
- Severe bleeding, vomiting blood or passing blood.
- Seizure, severe headache or slurred speech.
- Poisoning.
- Possible broken bones.
- Multiple injuries.



- Make the call to EMS personnel yourself, or ask someone else at the scene to call.
- If possible, send two people to make the call. Tell the caller(s) to report back to you and tell you what the dispatcher said.
- Be sure the caller(s) stays on the phone after giving all of the information to the dispatcher, in case there are any questions.
- Do not hang up until the dispatcher says that it is okay.
- For additional information on first aid and CPR, go to [redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass) to enroll in a course.

## Topic: **General Health Tips for Aquatic Activities**

Time: 7 minutes

### Sun Safety

#### Key Points

- Everyone enjoys spending time outside on a warm, sunny day, but spending too much time in the sun without taking steps to protect yourself from the sun's damaging rays is a case of too much of a good thing.
- Taking steps to reduce exposure to the sun every day is the best defense against skin cancer and the other negative effects of the sun.
- One of the most important actions you can take to reduce your risk for health problems as a result of sun overexposure is to use sunscreen regularly and properly.
- Choose a sunscreen labeled "broad-spectrum." This means it will provide protection against both UVA and UVB rays.
- Choose a sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30.
- Apply the recommended amount of sunscreen to all exposed skin at least 15 minutes before you go outside, even if it is cloudy out. (It is possible to burn on a cloudy day.)
  - Be sure to remember commonly missed areas, such as the lips, ears and the tops of the feet.
  - Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.
- Do not allow your skin to get sunburned—ever.
- Avoid tanning beds. UV light from tanning beds causes skin cancer and wrinkling, just as UV rays from the sun do.
- Wear protective clothing, such as a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, when possible.
  - Choose sunglasses that offer 99 to 100 percent protection against UV rays.
- Seek shade when appropriate, remembering that the sun's UV rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Carefully examine all of your skin once a month and report any changes. Early detection of skin cancer can save your life. Have any new or changing mole evaluated by a health care provider.
- Use extra caution near water, snow and sand. Water, snow and sand reflect the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase your chance of sunburn.
- Get vitamin D safely through a diet that includes vitamin supplements and foods fortified with vitamin D. Do not seek the sun for your vitamin D.
- Plan your outdoor activities in ways that prevent overexposure to the sun. Check the UV Index before you go outside.

## Topic: **Protection Against Recreational Water Illnesses**

### Key Points

- Healthy swimming behaviors are needed to protect you and your family members from recreational water illness and will help stop germs from getting in the pool in the first place.
- Follow the six “PLEAs” that promote healthy swimming.
- There are three “PLEAs” for all swimmers:
  - Please do not swim when you have diarrhea: this is especially important for children in diapers. You can spread the germs into the water and make other people sick.
  - Please do not swallow the water in which you are swimming.
  - Please wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet or after changing diapers. You can protect others by being aware that germs on your body end up in the water.
- There are three “PLEAs” for parents with young children:
  - Please take your children on bathroom breaks often.
  - Please change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside.
  - Please wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming.

## Topic: **Wrap-Up**

Time: 3 minutes

### Key Points

- Today we learned some important water safety tips and discussed emergency action steps and rescue skills you can use to help your family, yourself and others to help avoid accidents and emergencies.
- You and your family and friends can make your community stronger, safer and ready for any emergency if you follow the information presented to you today.
- Does anyone have any other questions about any of the topics we covered today?
- Remember to go to [redcross.org/takeaclass](http://redcross.org/takeaclass) to enroll in swim lessons; water safety training; and first aid, CPR and AED classes. You can also call swimming pools in your area and be sure to ask for Red Cross training.
- Be sure to download the free Red Cross Swim mobile application, as well as other Red Cross apps that provide lifesaving information on topics such as first aid, tornadoes, hurricanes and more. Download American Red Cross apps directly from the iTunes, Google Play or Amazon Marketplace app stores.

### Leader's Notes:

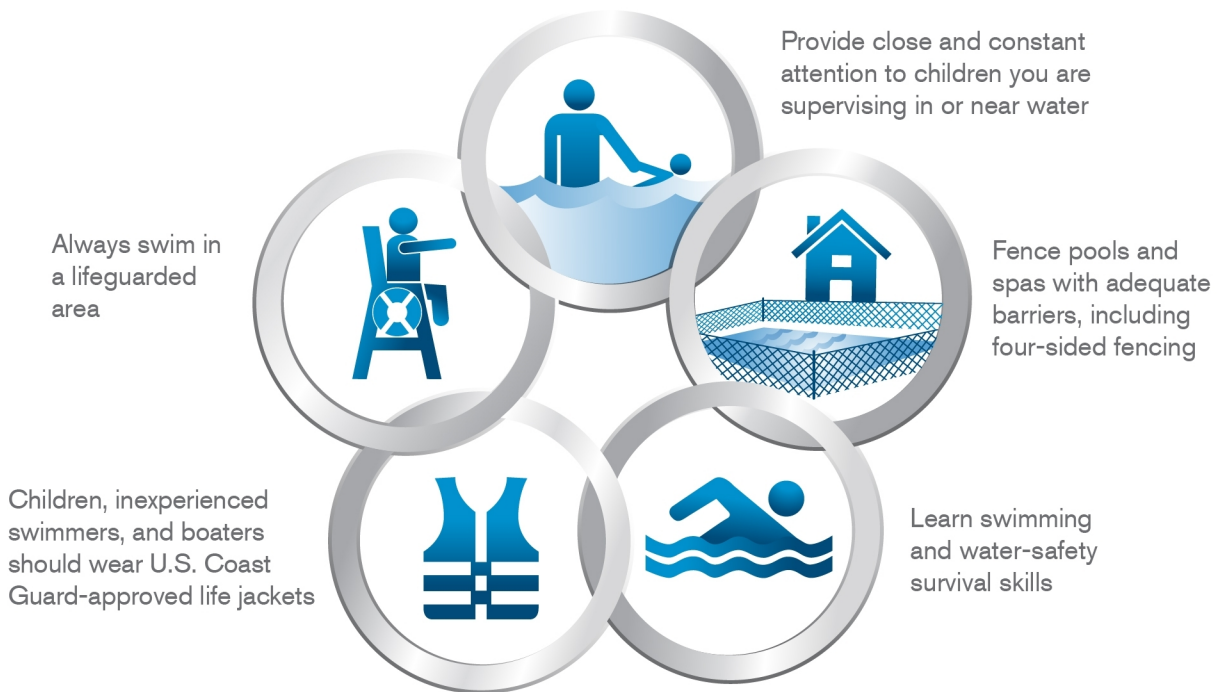
- *Briefly answer any questions and thank participants for their time and participation.*
- *Report your teaching activity and the results of this course to the Red Cross Learning Center.*



# American Red Cross

## Circle of Drowning Prevention

Layers of protection are essential to help prevent drowning.  
Plan ahead for aquatic activities:



American Red Cross



**American  
Red Cross**

## Home Pool Safety Checklist

Take a few minutes to inspect your home pool for safety. Use the following checklist as a guide to help you make your pool and surrounding area safe.

- ☐ The pool is completely enclosed with a fence with vertical bars (so that it is not easy to climb) that has a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- ☐ All doors or gates leading to the pool have secure locks, including patios, outside access gates and garage door entries.
- ☐ All doors leading to the pool have audible alarms.
- ☐ "No diving" areas are clearly marked.
- ☐ Pool chemicals are stored in a secure area and locked for safety.
- ☐ Pool tiles and deck area are free of sharp areas or broken tiles.
- ☐ Pool ladders, slides and diving boards are in good condition and free of loose bolts.
- ☐ Pool covers are completely removed prior to pool use and completely secured when in place.
- ☐ Toys are in good condition and free of broken or sharp edges.
- ☐ Toys are stored and kept away from and out of the pool when it is not in use.
- ☐ Furniture or toys are not left near a fence that would enable a child to climb over the fence.
- ☐ An emergency action plan is present to address potential pool emergencies.
- ☐ First aid and CPR instructions are posted.
- ☐ Emergency telephone number for the EMS system is posted by the telephone. A telephone or a fully charged cordless or mobile phone is kept poolside.
- ☐ Basic lifesaving equipment is located near the pool, and family members know how to use it. A reaching pole, rope and life jackets and a well-stocked first aid kit are available.
- ☐ Water is clean, clear and properly maintained. Water should be chemically treated and tested regularly. Contact a local pool store or health department for information and instruction.
- ☐ All drain covers have anti-entrapment covers.



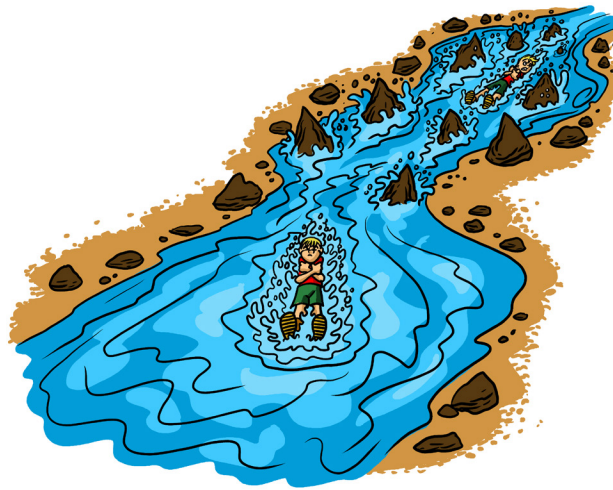
**American  
Red Cross**

# Currents and Dams

## Types of Currents and How to Escape Them

### **River Rapid**

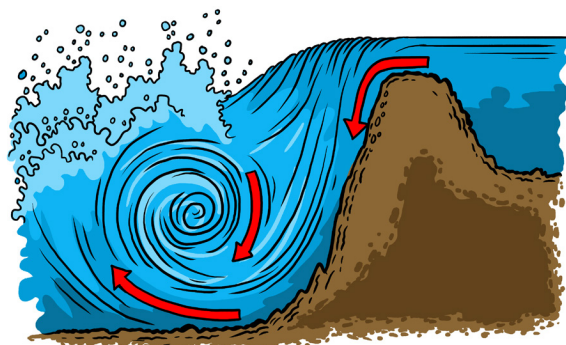
What it is: White water, fast-moving water; unpredictable.



How to escape: Roll over onto your back and go downstream feet first to avoid hitting your head. Back paddle with the arms and try to steer away from the main current. Once out of the main current, swim or wade directly toward shore. Because of the current, this will result in a slightly downstream path.

### **Hydraulic Current**

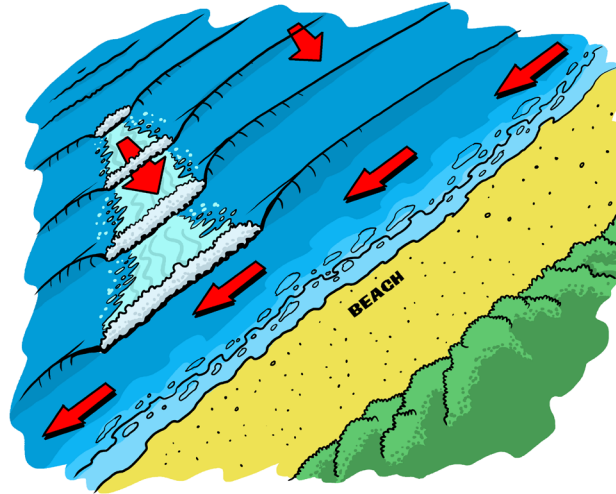
What it is: A strong force created by water flowing downward over an object and then reversing its flow. The reverse flow can trap and hold a person under water.



How to escape: Swim to the bottom and get into the downstream current. Then reach the surface.

## Longshore Current

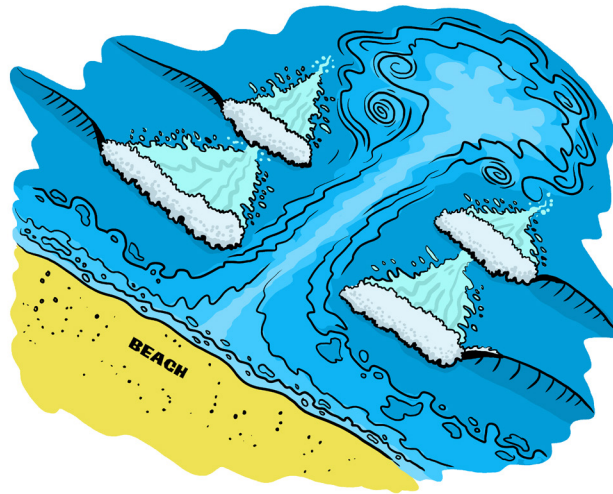
What it is: A longshore current moves along the shore, carrying a swimmer farther down the beach.



How to escape: Try to swim toward shore while moving along with the current. You will eventually get to shore, although you may be some distance from where you entered the water.

## Rip Current

What it is: A rip current moves straight out to sea beyond the breaking waves. Rip currents can carry a swimmer into deep water.



How to escape: Swim along the shore until you are out of the current. Once you are free, turn and swim toward the shore.

## Dams

- No dam is ever safe. Never swim or boat near a dam.
- A dam is a barrier built across a river, stream or creek to control the flow of water.
- Some dams can create powerful hydraulic currents. Boats and canoes have been caught in such hydraulic currents.
- When floodgates open, the water level can rise quickly below the dam and can create a dangerous wall of water.
- The current created when the dam is opened can pull anyone or anything (including boats) above the dam into danger.
- Always check out rivers and lakes before swimming or boating so you won't find yourself too close to a dam.
- Obey warning signs and warning signals immediately.



## Rules for Safe Diving

### Diving Safety

Head, neck or spinal injuries can happen if safe diving principles are not followed. The following guidelines are recommended for safe diving:

- Learn how to dive safely from a qualified instructor.
- In a headfirst dive, extend the arms with your elbows locked alongside the head.
- Hold your hands together with the palms facing toward the water. The hands must enter the water first. This keeps the water from hitting the top of the head too hard and helps protect from injury.
- A diver's body should be tensed and straight from the hands to the pointed toes.
- Follow safety rules at all times—never make exceptions.
- Do not wear earplugs; pressure changes make them dangerous.
- Obey “No Diving” signs. They are there for safety.
- Dive only in designated diving areas.
- Be sure of water depth and that there are no objects in the water.
- When entering water for the first time, ease in or walk in; do not jump or dive.
- Never dive into an above-ground pool, the shallow end of any in-ground pool or at a beach.
- Never dive into cloudy or murky water.
- In lakes, rivers or other bodies of water, always check first for objects under the surface, such as logs, stumps or rocks.
- Check the shape of the pool bottom to be sure the diving area is large enough and deep enough for the intended dive.
- The presence of a diving board does not necessarily mean it is safe to dive. Pools at homes, motels and hotels might not have a safe diving area.
- Dive only off the end of a diving board. If you dive off the side of a diving board, you could hit the side of the pool or enter water that is not deep enough.
- Do not bounce more than once on the end of a diving board. You could miss the edge or slip off the diving board.
- Do not run on a diving board or attempt to dive a long way through the air. The water might not be deep enough at the point of entry.



- Swim away from the diving board after entering the water. Move out of the way of the next diver quickly.
- Never use drugs or alcohol when diving.
- Do not wear swimming goggles when diving.
- Stay away from pool drains! If a pool drain is not secured properly, suction can pull hair, clothing, jewelry or a body part into the drain or trap a person.



## Life Jackets

### Offshore Life Jacket (Type I)

Designed for boating or sailing on the open ocean, rough seas or on remote waters where a rescue could take a while. Offshore life jackets turn most unconscious people in the water from a face-down position to a vertical (upright) or slightly tipped-back position.

#### Advantages

- Has the most buoyancy (floats the best)
- Comes in bright colors
- Has reflective material to help rescuers find a person in the water



#### Disadvantage

- Bulky

### Near-Shore Buoyant Vest (Type II)

Designed for general, recreational boating activities. Good for calm, inland waters where there is a good chance for a fast rescue. Near-shore buoyant vests may help turn an unconscious person in the water from a face-down position to a vertical (upright) or slightly tipped-back position.

#### Advantages

- Approved for multiple sizes for children and adults
- Not as bulky as an offshore life jacket



#### Disadvantages

- Not recommended for rough water
- Has less buoyancy than an offshore life jacket

### Flotation Aid (Type III)

Used for general, recreational boating in calm inland waters or for the specialized activity that is marked on the device, such as water skiing. Flotation aids are designed to keep a person in a vertical position.

#### Advantages

- Considered more comfortable than offshore life jackets or near-shore buoyant vests
- Available in many styles
- Approved for multiples sizes for children and adults

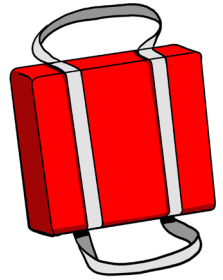


## Disadvantages

- Person may have to tilt head back to keep face out of water
- May not keep an unconscious person's face out of the water
- Not as buoyant as offshore life jackets or near-shore buoyant vests
- Not recommended for rough water
- Must be water-tested by inexperienced swimmers before being used for boating activities

## Throwable Device (Type IV)

Flotation devices (such as a buoyant cushion or ring buoy) that are not worn but can be thrown to a person in the water in an emergency. A buoyant cushion may also be used as a seat cushion. These devices do not take the place of wearing a life jacket.



## Advantages

- May be thrown from boat or land
- Provides backup to wearable life jackets
- Some styles may be used as seat cushions

## Disadvantages

- Not for unconscious persons
- Does not take the place of a life jacket
- Not suitable for inexperienced swimmers or children
- Not safe for rough water

## Special Use Life Jacket (Type V)

A special-use device is approved only for a specific activity, such as kayaking, water skiing, commercial whitewater rafting or other commercial activities. Some special-use devices provide protection from hypothermia while others are intended for freedom of movement. Special-use devices include boardsailing vests, deck suits, commercial whitewater vests and work vests.

## Advantage

- Designed for specific activities, therefore may be more comfortable for the activity

## Disadvantage

- Less safe than other life jackets if used for activities other than those marked on the label

**Note:** The U.S. Coast Guard is currently working to revise the classification and labeling of life jackets and flotation devices.

## How to Choose a Life Jacket

When choosing a life jacket:

- Make sure it is the right type for the activity.
- Make sure it is approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Make sure it fits properly. Check the label on the life jacket for weight limits.
- Make sure it is in good condition. Check buckles and straps for proper function.
- Throw out any life jacket with torn fabric or straps that have pulled loose.
- Practice putting it on in water and swimming with it on. When you practice, have a person with you who can help if you have difficulty.

## How to Use Your Life Jacket

- Try on your life jacket to see if it fits snugly. Then test it in shallow water to see how it handles. A life jacket is designed not to ride up on the body in the water.
- To check your life jacket's buoyancy, relax your body and tilt your head back. Make sure your life jacket keeps your chin above water and you can breathe easily.
- If your mouth is not well above the water, you may need a life jacket with more buoyancy.

## How to Care for a Life Jacket

To be sure that your life jacket will be in good shape when you need it, you must take care of it.

- Do not make changes to your life jacket. If yours does not fit, get one that does. An altered life jacket may not work properly.
- Periodically check to see if your life jacket is in good repair and if it provides adequate support. Check it often for rips, tears and holes. Also check to see that seams, fabric straps and hardware are okay. Give your life jacket belts, ties and straps a quick, hard pull to make sure they are secure. You should find no signs of water logging, mildew odor or shrinkage of the buoyant materials.
- Make sure that the snaps, belts, ties, straps and zippers are working properly.
- Do not use your life jacket as a kneeling pad or to sit on. Life jackets lose buoyancy when crushed.
- Hang your wet life jacket to dry in open air or in a well-ventilated area. Do not dry your life jacket in front of a radiator or other heat source.
- Do not leave your life jacket on board for long periods when the boat is not in use.
- Clean your life jacket only as the label instructs.



**American  
Red Cross**

## Create a Float Plan

Use the following information to help you develop a float plan specific to your equipment. Be sure to post the float plan near a telephone and provide a copy to a responsible person before your next outing.

Always provide a responsible person with details about where you will be and how long you will be gone. This is important because if you are delayed as a result of an emergency, become lost or encounter other problems, you want help to be able to reach you. If the emergency involves a serious injury or illness, it is crucial that help get there soon.

A float plan should include the following information:

- ☐ Boat name and number
- ☐ Boat color, size, make and capacity
- ☐ Number of engines, horsepower and type of fuel used, if any
- ☐ Number of persons on board and their names, addresses and telephone numbers
- ☐ Type of radio equipment on board
- ☐ Departure date, time and location
- ☐ Estimated arrival date, time and location
- ☐ Destination
- ☐ Date and time you want the Coast Guard notified if you fail to reach your predetermined destination



**American  
Red Cross**

## Chain of Drowning Survival

A person who is drowning has the greatest chance of survival  
if these steps are followed:



Recognize the signs  
of someone in trouble  
and shout for help



Rescue and remove  
the person from the  
water (without putting  
yourself in danger)



Call emergency  
medical services  
(EMS)



Begin rescue  
breathing and CPR



Use an AED if available  
and transfer care to  
advanced life support



**American Red Cross**



**American  
Red Cross**

# Emergency Contact Information Sheet

Complete this information and photocopy this form. Post one sheet by each telephone in your home and one in the pool area.

## **Emergency Telephone Number(s)**

Police:

Fire:

Emergency Medical Services:

National Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222

Health Department telephone number:

## **Family Information**

Family name:

Street address:

Home telephone number:

Parents' mobile telephone numbers:

Names of nearest cross streets:

Doctor's name:

Doctor's telephone number:

Neighbor's name:

Neighbor's telephone number:

Hospital name:

Medical insurance information:

Child's name and age:

Child's name and age:

Child's name and age:

Any special medical conditions, including allergies for each child or adult:





## Swimmer in Distress

	<b>Distressed Swimmer</b>	<b>Drowning Victim—Active</b>	<b>Drowning Victim—Passive</b>
Head position	Above water	Tilted back with face looking up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Face-up or face-down in the water</li><li>• Submerged</li></ul>
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trying to support self by holding or clinging to a lane line or safety line</li><li>• Concerned facial expression</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Struggling to keep or get the head above the surface of the water</li><li>• Struggling to reach the surface, if underwater</li><li>• Panicked or wide-eyed facial expression</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limp or convulsion-like movements</li><li>• Floating or submerged</li><li>• Eyes may be closed</li><li>• If submerged, may look like a shadow</li></ul>
Breathing	Breathing	Struggling to breathe	Not breathing
Arm and leg action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Floating, sculling or treading water</li><li>• May wave for help</li></ul>	Arms at sides or in front alternately moving up and pressing down	None
Body position	Horizontal, vertical or diagonal, depending on means of support	Vertical, leaning slightly back	Horizontal or vertical
Locomotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little or no forward progress</li><li>• Increasingly less able to support self</li></ul>	None	None
Sounds	Able to call for help but may not do so	Cannot call for help	None
Location in water	At the surface	At the surface, underwater or sinking	Floating at the surface, sinking or submerged on the bottom