

To April Pools Day Planners,

Three important themes have been identified for April Pools Day:

Know the Water  
Know Your Limits  
Wear a Life Jacket

Information sheets on the themes and their key points have been prepared for your use if you need ideas or a place to begin organizing your event.

Also included are activities/games that relate to the three themes. Feel free to use as many or as few of these that you want.

# Know the Water

Cold water can kill. At 52—54 degrees, Washington State's lakes and rivers are cold enough to cause hypothermia, even in the summer.

**Rivers:** Even calm rivers can hide swift currents, rocks, and tree branches. High running rivers in the spring are most dangerous.

**Lakes:** Murky water, hidden objects, unexpected drop offs, water pollution, and milfoil can all be hazardous.

**Ocean:** Riptides, currents, and big waves can pull a strong swimmer out to sea. Marine life can be hazardous to swimmers.

**Canals:** Ditches and irrigation canals are deceiving. After heavy rain they may turn into raging rivers with fast currents carrying debris and harmful objects.

What you can do to be safe:

- Wear a lifejacket
- Avoid swimming or boating in high running water
- Check water conditions with a rafting company, boating store, local park staff or marine patrol before setting out
- Swim in a designated swim area or an area with a lifeguard
- Swim in an area that has good water quality and safe natural conditions
- Check how cold or fast the water is running before you jump in
- Never dive or jump into unfamiliar or shallow water
- Make sure the water is at least 9 ft. deep



Activities/games related to **Know the Water** theme:

1. **Get a group of people to walk/run in a circle to create a current until the water is moving quickly, then change direction**

Purpose: Give swimmers an idea of how powerful the water is, how strong a current feels and how hard it is to swim against it.

2. **Fill a bucket of water with ice and have participants see how long they can hold their hand/arm in it.**

Purpose: Show how quickly cold water can incapacitate a swimmer or boater.

3. **Water Current/Anchor Tug O' War: While in the water, two teams hang on to opposite ends of a heavy rope and try to pull each other across a marker or float. One team is the water's current and the other is the boat's anchor. If the "current" wins, the boat is lost. If the "anchor" wins, the boat is saved.**

Purpose: To emulate the power and unpredictability of water currents.

4. **Checklist game: Set out a table and place equipment (or pictures of equipment) on it that one would need if they were going boating.**

**Suggestions: extra line or throw bag, bailer or bucket, first aid kit, paddles or oars, flashlight, sunscreen and sunglasses, whistle, chart or map, cell phone, extra food, water, anchor, mirror for signaling, life jacket, garbage bags for rain ponchos, blanket.**

**Have participants view the table for a minute or two, then cover the table with a blanket and have them write down as many items as they can. At the end of your APD event, whoever listed the most items is the winner.**

Purpose: To create an awareness of what equipment is recommended for safe boating. To be prepared as possible for changing weather and water conditions when boating.

# Know Your Limits

Drowning often happens when someone swims and gets too tired to make it back to shore. A swimmer's strength is often overpowered by water conditions. In many cases friends are not able to help. Teens, especially, tend to over estimate their ability.

What you can do to be safe:

- Make sure you and your children know how to swim. Call your local pool and sign up for lessons. Upgrade skills each year.
- Learn how to float and tread water for at least ten minutes.
- Make sure you know how to dive and jump safely into the water.
- Teach your children never to swim alone and to swim in areas with lifeguards. Even good swimmers can have an unexpected medical emergency in the water.
- Maintain touch supervision of children around any body of water; swimming pools, lakes, rivers, the ocean, as well as the bathtub, hot tub, toilet, and a bucket of water.
- Don't rely on substitutes such as flotation devices and inflatable toys. Parental or adult supervision is a must.
- Take a personal water craft course.
- Use of drugs and alcohol interfere with good judgment. Do not operate watercraft or swim while under the influence.
- Learn CPR



Activities/games related to **Know Your Limits** theme:

- 1. Place participants into relay teams of four. Have them jump into the water fully clothed and see how difficult it is to swim across the pool. Time them. Then, have the team go again, this time without clothes on. Compare the times.**

Purpose: Show how clothing hampers a swimmer and makes them tired. Emphasize the importance of wearing a life jacket, especially when engaging in water activities such as boating and fishing when a person might be fully clothed, wearing boots and a heavy jacket.

- 2. Create drowning scenarios on 3"x 5" cards. Place participants in groups of 3-4. Have each group select a card. The others would be part of the scenario. Have them act out a rescue that would support the idea of reach and throw, don't go. Make available reaching and throwing items, such as a throw line, a ring buoy, a pole, a floating jug, a life jacket, etc. Talk through the "rescue" afterwards. Include asking for help from another bystander and calling 911.**

Purpose: Emphasize that people should not put themselves in danger to rescue another person, but should use any equipment available to reach or throw to aid someone in trouble.

- 3. Have a station to teach rescue breathing and CPR.**

Purpose: Show families that rescue breathing and CPR is not difficult to learn and can save lives if started ASAP.

- 4. Show the Red Cross video, 'Whales Tales', and Bill Nye's, 'Adventures in Boating'**

Purpose: These fun and entertaining videos emphasize simple safety rules that make sense and are easy to follow.

# Wear A Life Jacket

Drowning is often silent. It can take less than 5 minutes and usually happens when an adult is nearby. No matter how good a swimmer you are, the water can overpower your skills. Weather and water conditions change quickly. Once you get tired or fall in, it may be too hard to put on a lifejacket. **Drowning is the second leading cause of injury death among children. 75% of boating fatalities that occur could have been prevented if the victim would have been wearing a lifejacket.**

**What is a life jacket or life vest?** It is a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device that helps you and your child float and stay warm in the water.

## **Who should wear a life jacket?**

- Infants and children, 18 lbs.—5 yrs., on beaches, docks, in boats, rafts and inner tubes around deep or swift water.
- Children, 6-11 yrs., on docks, boats, rafts, inner tubes, and river banks.
- Teens and adults, on boats, personal water craft, rafts or inner tubes.

## **How do you use a life jacket?**

- Every spring check the life jacket for fit as well as wear and tear. Throw it away if you find leakage, rot or mildew.
- Have your child practice wearing a life jacket in the water to prevent panic and rolling over.
- As your child grows, make sure you have a life jacket that fits and is appealing.
- Never alter a life jacket. It could lose its effectiveness.
- Wear your own life jacket as an example.
- Never use toys, plastic rings or water wings in place of a life jacket.

**Life jackets only work when they are worn, and they do not take the place of supervision.**



Activities/games related to **Wear a Lifejacket** theme:

1. **Life jacket relay:** divide participants into relay teams of four. Each team has one life jacket. On the go signal, one member from each team puts on a life jacket, properly secured, jumps into the water and swims across the pool and back. They must take off the life jacket, give it to their team mate who puts it on, and swims across and back. The winner is the team who finishes first. (could also be done out of the water—they could pretend they are swimming a designated distance)

Purpose: Have fun while becoming familiar with wearing a life jacket. Learn how to properly put on a life jacket. Learn the easiest and fastest way to swim while wearing a life jacket.

2. **Practicing the H.E.L.P. (heat escape lessening position):** Have a group of participants put on life jackets and sit on the edge of the pool. (if you have a rowboat, put it in the water and they can sit in the rowboat). You announce that the “boat” they are in has capsized and has floated away. One by one, have participants fall into the water from the edge of the pool. Since the “boat” has floated away, the participants need to stay together and keep warm. Have them assume the H.E.L.P. position. The group pulls their knees up and huddles together in the water.

Purpose: To show how important it is to wear a life jacket and stay together to be a survivor in the event you fall out of a boat or are thrown overboard.

3. **Life Jacket Houdini:** Chose a set number of participants and the same number of life jackets. Turn the life jackets inside out and tangle the straps, then throw them into the pool. At the go signal, have the participants jump into the pool. Tell them their boat has capsized and they need to retrieve a life jacket, put it on properly and secure all of the straps. The first participant to “swim to shore” and climb out of the pool with their life jacket correctly on, wins. Use your judgment based on the swimming skills of the participants, as to whether you do this in shallow or deep water.

Purpose: Show how difficult it is to put on a life jacket in the water and that it is best to have a life jacket on before an accident happens.