

Red Cross message is clear: Lifejackets will save lives

What's your excuse for not wearing a lifejacket? Canadian Red Cross has heard them all from "it's too nice out" to "I'm close to shore" and "I'm a good swimmer."

This summer, Red Cross urges you to drop the excuses and make sure that everyone in the family is zipped and clipped into their lifejacket before you step foot in your boat.

According to a recent Red Cross study that examined 10 years of drowning statistics in Canada, nearly 200 Canadians drown every year while boating. Of those who drown, 87 per cent are not wearing, or are not properly wearing, a PFD or lifejacket. The study also shows that the vast majority of boating drowning victims, 93 per cent, were men, 15 years or older.

"Lifejackets really do save lives," says Allison Goertzen, Safety Services Coordinator for Halton. "But you must wear it. Using your lifejacket as a seat cushion, or stowing it away, won't help you if something goes wrong. Close by isn't close enough when it comes to lifejackets."

Assuming that you will be able to put your lifejacket on if you need it is one of the most dangerous mistakes that people make. "What you must understand is drowning can happen very quickly. In those seconds when you really need a lifejacket-when it could really save your life-you won't be able to put it on," said Goertzen.

Red Cross is encouraging all boaters, at

all skill levels, and in all types of watercrafts, to wear their lifejackets in the boat. And it is important that adults remember to model this safe behaviour for their children.

Choosing a lifejacket that you will want to wear has never been easier. "Today's lifejackets are comfortable, easy to wear, even stylish."

For expert information on modern lifejacket options, the Red Cross recommends visiting www.wearalifejacket.com. A project of Red Cross partner the Cook-Rees Memorial Fund for Water Search and Safety, this new web site was launched June 22, in honour of Life Jacket Day.

Mustang Survival, another Red Cross partner and makers of lifejackets, are also making it easy to wear a lifejacket this summer by offering Canadians an opportunity to win free lifejackets. Log on to the Red Cross website www.redcross.ca or www.boatsmartcanada.com and enter for the chance to win one of 10 family packs of lifejackets, or the grand prize of two adult inflatables.

"Putting your lifejacket on should be second nature, just like putting on your seatbelt in a car," said Allison Goertzen. "A lifejacket can save your life, but you have to wear it for it to work"

This summer Canadian Red Cross is celebrating 60 years in water safety and swimming education. For more information about the Red Cross Swimming and Water Safety program, visit www.redcross.ca.



Blitz bike winners

At the fifth annual Risk Watch Summer Safety Blitz Day at Mold-Masters SportsPlex, bike safety training and helmet fitting services were offered, and for the second year a draw was held for three bicycles of different sizes, co-sponsored by Halton Hills Risk Watch Coalition and Canadian Tire Georgetown. Bike winners (from left) Cole Barrager, 4, Paige Runstedler, 7 and Jake Corpe, 10 received their bikes and helmets from Halton Hills Fire Protection and Prevention representatives David Bouskill (left) and David Ford.

Photo by Ted Brown

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