



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Swim, Swim, Swim

Each summer, there are thousands of people killed in drowning mishaps. First Region (ROTC) personnel are not exempt from this summer killer. We hear many mishap reports throughout the summer that involve drowning.

The majority of drowning victims know how to swim and in many cases, they were not swimming alone. What happened to cause them to drown?

Although there are many factors, hypothermia is significant. Water draws warmth away from the body 25 times faster than air does. Even in the summer, water temperatures in many lakes and rivers are low and can quickly lead to hypothermia. At first, the extremities (arms and legs) become sluggish. As more blood becomes concentrated in the chest and trunk areas, less blood flows to the brain. Judgment becomes clouded, and is often followed by unconsciousness. Once this stage is reached, victims usually drown or die of cardiac arrest.

Treading water and drown-proofing are not good survival techniques when it comes to cold water survival. The best technique is H.E.L.P. (Heat Escape Lessening Position). In this technique, arms are crossed over the chest, and the legs are crossed with the knees, drawn up to the chest. Two or more people in the water should huddle with their bodies pressed together to conserve heat. Both of these positions require the wearing of a personal flotation device to stay afloat.

One sure way to get yourself in trouble while having some summer fun is by mixing water activities with alcohol. Alcohol is a factor in nearly half of the drownings that occur. Alcohol use results in loss of coordination and lack of good judgment. Alcohol also increases the chances of drowning due to hypothermia because it causes blood vessels near the skin to dilate and increases heat loss. Alcohol dulls the senses, causing individuals to overextend their limits. Operating a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs is against the law.



Consider the following tips for safe swimming:

Swim in approved swimming places, where the depths are indicated, where there are no obstructions or holes or step-offs. Because of the questionable depths, the pollution, and the various obstructions, resist the lure of the secluded pond or old quarry.

Don't be tempted to swim beyond your ability, whether with or without support, such as with water wings or inner tubes. Avoid swimming where there are dangerous currents, undertows, and rip tides.

If you choose the old swimming hole as your place to swim, make it as safe as possible by clearing it of obstructions, marking depths, and putting up warning signs at dangerous places.

If you are a novice or intermediate swimmer, confine your swimming activities to areas in which you can quickly and easily reach safety if anything goes wrong.

Avoid dunking other swimmers, wrestling with them, or pushing them off piers, rafts and various other places.

Remember that alcoholic drinks and water sports do not mix. Avoid consuming intoxicating drinks before going into the water.

Avoid swimming alone. If you get into any difficulty, it is best to have someone near to rescue you or to call for help. Even expert swimmers can be disabled by cramping or can misjudge their strength and endurance.

When you swim with a group, beware of letting the feats of others prompt you to explore beyond your own skill. Stay out of water when you are overheated or over-tired or when you have eaten within an hour previously.

Abide by warning signs and regulations of the pool you are patronizing.

If you are a non-swimmer, stay in shallow water. Don't venture into deep water with water wings or inflated tubes.

Find out about the water - the currents, step-offs, hidden trees and rocks - *before* you start swimming or diving!