

STATISTICS ACCORDING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

- ~ 91% of drowning deaths in Colorado are a direct result of water recreation such as skiing, diving, swimming, and playing in or near irrigation ditches, lakes, and rivers.
- ~ Children ages 0-4 years have the highest rate of death and hospitalization due to drowning and account for one-fifth of all drowning deaths in Colorado.
- ~ In Colorado, drowning is in the top five causes of injury and death for children ages 0-19 years old.
- ~ On average, 46 Coloradoans die each year from drowning and 38 Coloradoans are hospitalized from near drowning events.

Alcohol use is a contributing factor in up to 50% of all drownings involving adolescent boys, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.



For more information contact:

Remote Area Deputy Unit
(970) 244-3500
www.mesacosarc.com

Colorado State Parks
Boating Safety & Boating Safety Course Information
(303) 791-1954
<http://parks.state.co.us/Boating/BoatingSafety/>

US Forest Service Boating Safety
(303) 275-5350
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/boone/safety/water/riversafe.shtml>

US Coast Guard Boating Safety
(800) 368-5647
<http://www.uscgboating.org/>

Bureau of Land Management
(970)244-3000
<http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en.html>

Colorado Department of Health and Environment
(303)692-2000 or
(800) 886-7689 (In-state)
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/>

(970) 244-3500



WATER AND RIVER SAFETY GUIDELINES

Western Colorado and Mesa County have wonderful areas for water recreation. The Mesa County Sheriff wants to remind people to make sober and safe choices while they enjoy water activities.



"Waterways in Mesa County can provide outdoor family fun. However, these same outdoor activities can lead to tragedy if people don't take proper precautions," Sheriff Stan Hilkey said. "Simple safety measures can contribute to a pleasurable day on the water each and every time".

Public Safety Awareness: Water & River Safety Guidelines

ALWAYS REMEMBER:



WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET



DON'T SWIM AT BOAT RAMPS



DON'T BOAT UNDER THE INFLUENCE

BEFORE YOU START:

- **Be honest with yourself** when evaluating your skills (and the skills of others in your party). You will have a safer and more enjoyable trip if you choose sections of the river that match your ability.
- **Know your physical ability**, swimming skills and paddling skills. If you are uncertain about how much you can do, start with a short trip.

- **Check on current water levels** before embarking on your trip. The difficulty level of certain sections of river can change dramatically with an increase in water level. Gentle stretches can become dangerous with high water levels. At extremely low levels, you may find yourself paddling through puddles, dragging water craft over rocks, or portaging.

BE SURE TO BRING PROPER EQUIPMENT:

- **LIFE VESTS**
- **SUN PROTECTION**—hats, sunscreen, long sleeves, and pants
- **FIRST AID KIT**
- **PLENTY OF FOOD AND WATER**
- **MAP**—be sure you know where you are so you don't get lost!

ON THE WATER:

- **Wear a US Coast Guard approved life jacket** at all times. Even gentle stretches of water can have wicked under-currents. Even good swimmers need to wear one.
- **Never boat alone.** A preferred minimum is three boats.
- **Know your limits;** do not attempt a section of river beyond your skill level.
- **Scout rapids** and make rescue plans if needed. Be aware that on some sections of the rivers, land access may be difficult and help is far away.
- **Pay attention to weather and water conditions.** Dress for the water temperature. If the water temperature and air temperature combined total 100 degrees or less, wear protective clothing.

- **Learn basic water rescue techniques** and first aid. Learn to recognize the symptoms and treatment for hypothermia.
- **If you capsizes, hold on to your craft** and get immediately to the upstream side. Float on your back, feet together, and pointed downstream. If you go over ledge or drop, tuck into a ball. Release your craft only if it improves your safety. Stay upstream away from the boat.
- **Carry the proper equipment** including dry clothing and a first aid kit. Store all extra gear in a secure watertight container.

IN THE WATER:

- **Don't mix alcohol and swimming.** Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination, affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body's ability to stay warm.
- **Know and be aware of river signs**, both natural and man-made, such as sandbars, rocks, under cuts, horizon lines across the river—like a low head dam, a significant rapid, and “strainers” or “snags” (trees in the river). As water levels fluctuate seasonally and daily the visibility of hazards in the water varies.
- **Stay away from canals and dams**—currents and undertows hide beneath the surface.

Information provided by:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/boone/safety/water/riversafe.shtml>

www.sheriff.mesacounty.us

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