

State of New Mexico  
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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## News Release

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# Swim Safely in New Mexico's Lakes, Rivers and Streams

SANTA FE, NM – Enjoying the water at your favorite state park on a hot day is a great way to beat the heat! However, swimming in natural bodies of water like lakes, rivers, and streams is different than swimming in a pool. More skills and energy are required for natural water environments because of cold water and air temperatures, currents, waves and other conditions—and these conditions can change as quickly as the weather.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, every day, about ten people die from unintentional drowning. Of these, two are children aged 14 or younger. Drowning ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury death in the United States. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency room care for nonfatal submersion injuries.

“Unfortunately, we’ve had several drowning incidents this year,” said Toby Velasquez, Chief of Law Enforcement and Boating Safety for the New Mexico State Parks Division. “It doesn't have to be this way; most water-related accidents can be avoided by being prepared and knowing a few basic tips.”

### Tips to help YOU stay safe in and around natural water settings:

- ✓ **Supervise When in or Around Water.** Designate a responsible adult to watch young children while swimming or playing in or around water. Supervisors of preschool children should provide “touch supervision;” be close enough to reach the child at all times. Because drowning occurs quickly and quietly, adults should not be involved in any other distracting activity while supervising children.
- ✓ **Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets.** This is important regardless of the distance to be traveled, the size of the boat, or the swimming ability of boaters; life jackets can reduce risk for swimmers too.
- ✓ **Air-Filled or Foam Toys are not safety devices.** Don't use air-filled or foam toys, such as "water wings," "noodles," or inner-tubes, instead of life jackets. These toys are not life jackets and are not designed to keep swimmers safe.
- ✓ **Use the Buddy System.** Always swim with a buddy and select swimming sites that have lifeguards, when possible.
- ✓ **Learn to Swim.** Formal swimming lessons can protect young children from drowning. However, even when children have had formal swimming lessons, constant, careful supervision when children are in the water is still important.
- ✓ **Avoid Alcohol.** Avoid drinking alcohol before or during swimming, boating, or water/jet skiing. Do not drink alcohol while supervising children.
- ✓ **Know the local weather conditions and forecast before swimming or boating.** Strong winds and thunderstorms with lightning strikes are dangerous.
- ✓ **Seizure Disorder Safety.** If you or a family member has a seizure disorder, provide one-on-one supervision around water, including swimming, and wear life jackets when boating.
- ✓ **Learn Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).** In the time it takes for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills could save someone's life.

State parks are great places to find new interests, socialize, and create new memories. Always make safety your first priority. Being prepared on the water could save your life and the lives of your loved ones. State law requires that you wear a lifejacket when on a canoe, kayak, or raft and that all children 12 years old and younger wear a lifejacket while on the deck of a moving vessel. The State Parks Division offers FREE boating safety classes around the state and on-line throughout the year.

Celebrate New Mexico's Centennial at YOUR state parks; for more information, call 888-NMPARKS or visit [www.nmparks.com](http://www.nmparks.com).

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*Short Trips, Long Memories: Your Best Recreation Value Close to Home*

*The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.*

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