

# NWT HEALTHY COMMUNITIES Toolkit



## Be Water Smart...

**The NWT Water Smart Program is available to every community in the NWT**

NWT Communities have engaged with the Lifesaving Society to build awareness and provide opportunities to develop skills that will keep their communities safe in, on and around the water. The Northwest Territories Water Smart® Program can be adapted to meet the unique needs of each community. In the community the Lifesaving Society and community members will work together to deliver Water Smart education.

The Northwest Territories Water Smart Program provides education on safe boating practices, wearing of lifejackets/PFDs, learning Swim to Survive skills, and establishing safe waterfronts and boat launches.

# NWT Water Smart

MAKING NWT A SAFER PLACE TO LIVE, WORK & PLAY



## Lifejacket Loaner Stations in the NWT

Lifejacket Loaner Stations provide lifejackets for the public to borrow, at no cost, and then return after use. Lifejackets of all sizes are readily available - when and where they are needed most. Lifejacket Loaner Stations are a collaboration between the **Lifesaving Society & Alberta Parks**.

**Lifejacket loaner stations are available at:**

- Fred Henne Beach Territorial Park (Yellowknife)
- Hay River Territorial Park (Hay River)

*Consider a lifejacket loaner station for your community!*



Boating and Fishing Tips from the Lifesaving Society

**WaterSmart® Tips**  
**Top Tips for Swimmers from the Lifesaving Society...**

**Know before you go. Check the weather forecast.**

**Closely supervise young children near water. If you're not "within arms reach", you've gone too far.**

**Always swim with a buddy. And play and swim in areas supervised by a lifeguard.**

**Protect your neck. Go feet first, first time. Never dive into shallow water.**

**Learn to swim and learn lifesaving skills.**

## Top 10 Boating and Fishing Safety Tips

- 1. Lifejackets. Choose it - use it! Always wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD)!** Don't just have it in the boat, pick one and **wear** it.
- 2. Boat sober.** Booze/Drugs and boating don't mix. Alcohol intensifies the effects of fatigue, sun, wind and boat motion to negatively affect balance, judgement and reaction time.
- 3. Get carded.** Get trained in boat safety. You can get ready for the Pleasure Craft Operator Card test by taking a Lifesaving Society **Boat Operator Accredited Training (BOAT)™** course. The course will help you to know the "rules of the road", how to respond in a boating emergency, and how to operate a pleasure craft safely. Everyone who operates a power-driven boat needs proof of competency.
- 4. Know before you go. Check the forecast and create a simple safety checklist.**
- 5. Wear the right gear!** Wear your lifejacket or PFD, of course, as well as good sunglasses, sunscreen and appropriate clothing. Paddles, whistles and flares are the right gear, too.
- 6. Drive your powerboat or PWC responsibly.** Look before you act, stay low, drive at moderate speeds, be aware of changing weather conditions, and drive with extreme caution and proper lights after dark.
- 7. Never stand up in your small powerboat, canoe or other similar watercraft.** Numerous drownings occur when people stand up and move around their boat.
- 8. Get trained - take Lifesaving Society courses.** Be prepared in the event of a crash-whether your boat capsizes or you need to rescue someone else. Become aware of the dangers of cold water.
- 9. Don't overload.** Avoid capsizing by following the load restrictions of your craft. This includes not only the number of passengers, but also the weight of your gear.
- 10. Follow the rules of the road.** Be courteous of others using the waterways and obey all boating rules. Be watchful of swimmers and other boaters, and **always** have a spotter for water-skiers and tube riders.



# Isn't it just swimming lessons?

**Swim to Survive is different than swimming lessons - and not a replacement for them. Swim to Survive teaches just the essentials needed to survive an unexpected fall into deep water - an important first step to being safe around water.**

## How Inuvik made Swim to Survive a Reality for the Youth

Town council approved donating pool hours and personnel to administer the lessons.

The cost of the donated pool hours was estimated at \$17,550. This helped all public school students and preschool students get their basic swimming skills.

The program teaches youth how to deal with the initial shock of being in water and teach kids how to tread water, at the very least along with boat safety.

As part of the initiative, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and Gwichin Tribal Council provided funds to purchase life-jackets for each student who completed the program. The life-jackets were estimated at \$14,000. There was a wonderful completion ceremony presided over the Mayor where every student marched into the gym with their life-jacket on. A proud moment for the Town of Inuvik!

## Challenges

Working with the schools to bring each student for a few swimming classes each week. This program enabled an opportunity for a strong partnership between the schools and the Town of Inuvik to work together to make this a reality for all students.

## Positive Outcome!

The number of calls the fire department receives every year was concerning regarding youth-related incidents involving water safety. The Town is more confident knowing that each student has been given the opportunity to learn and be prepared for water safety. Inuvik's goal was to continue the partnership and has made swimming lessons a part of the phys-ed curriculum. The Town has also offered the program to non-swimming adults as well!

## Swim to Survive

**Inuvik's goal was simple:**

**Teach every student in town the basic swim lessons needed to stay afloat! Swim to Survive is important to the whole community, because of how much time is spent on water during the year.**





# Ice Safety Tips

## 1. Use designated ice surfaces

Many communities have designated ponds for activities such as skating that are maintained by knowledgeable personnel. Designated ice should be regularly tested to ensure that it is thick enough and strong enough for recreational use.

## 2. Measure ice thickness in several locations

Local conditions such as currents and water depths can affect ice thickness. Consult knowledgeable local individuals. Recommendations for ice thickness are based on clear, blue or green ice:

**3" (7cm) or less - STAY OFF!**

**4" (10cm) - ice fishing, walking, cross country skiing**

**5" (12cm) - one snowmobile or ATV**

**8"-12" (20-30cm) - one car or small pickup truck**

**12"-15" (30-38cm) - one medium truck (pickup or van)**

## 3. Avoid traveling on ice at night

At night it is very difficult to see open holes in the ice. This is a frequent cause of snowmobile drownings.

## 4. Never go onto ice alone

A buddy may be able to rescue you, or go for help if you get into difficulty. Before you leave shore, tell someone where you are going and expected time of return.

## 5. Stay off river ice

River currents can quickly change ice thickness over night or between different parts of the river.

## 6. Never go onto ice alone

Wear a lifejacket or PFD over your snowmobile suit or layered winter clothes to increase your survival chances if you do go through the ice.

## 7. Wear a snowmobile flotation suit or a lifejacket

Include ice picks, ice staff, rope, and a small personal safety kit in your pocket, which should include a lighter, waterproof matches, magnesium fire starter, pocket knife, compass, whistle and a cell phone.

## 8. Avoid alcohol

Alcohol impairs your judgment and speeds up the development of hypothermia.

## 9. If you drive on ice, have an escape plan

Open your windows, unlock your doors, ensure seat belts are unfastened and turn on your lights to allow you to quickly escape from your vehicle should it go through the ice.

## 10. Always supervise children playing on or near ice

Children should always be under adult supervision. Children that aren't within arm's reach have ventured too far. Insist that they wear a lifejacket/PFD or thermal protection buoyant suit.



For more information on the Programs and Services offered with the  
**NWT Lifesaving Society** please contact the office at (780) 415-1755 or  
visit their website [www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org)