



King County

May 11, 2023

Dear King County families,

Welcome to summer 2023! With children finishing school and about to be out of daily classes, many will visit local pools, rivers, streams lakes, and Puget Sound for swimming. Water recreation is a popular summertime activity here in King County. To ensure you and your family have fun, King County is sharing ways you can plan and make safety your goal.

While most kids enjoy swimming safely, preventable drownings and other tragic situations sadly happen every year. Preventable drownings in King County have continue to remain elevated with 29 fatalities in 2022, including 16 deaths in open water. In 2021, 29 people also died. In 62% of those open-water drownings, a life jacket may have saved the person's life.

Public Health – Seattle & King County advises:

- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket when swimming if no lifeguards are present, and while boating, tubing, or rafting. Children ages 12 and younger are required by law to wear a life jacket on any vessel under 19 feet.
- Ensure all family members know how to swim before going in the water.
- Watch children closely when they are in or near any type of water; always stay within touching distance of small children.
- Never use alcohol, marijuana, or other impairing drugs during water and boating activities.
- Learn CPR. Visit www.kingcounty.gov/cpr for training information on Hands-Only CPR.

Dangerous river conditions:

River recreation is inherently dangerous. No lifeguards are on duty and conditions are always subject to change. Throughout the summer, King County rivers will have cold, fast flows from this year's late snowmelt. Rocks and gravel shift seasonally along rivers, changing the nature of local swimming holes. In some areas, shallow water will seem warm, but any moving or deep water will be very cold, which could result in cold water incapacitation or hypothermia.

When planning a boating or floating trip:

- Always tell someone your route and when and where you expect to put in and take out.
- Never float a river alone and, if possible, make sure there is at least one craft with oars in your group in case a rescue is needed.
- Bring a dry bag with food, water, and warm clothes.

For more information and where to find life jackets visit the King County Rivers Safety website at www.kingcounty.gov/riversafety or search for the "Washington State Parks Life Jacket Loaner Map." Coupons for 20% off regular price of any life jacket in stock at Big 5 Sporting Goods are available through the Seattle Children's Drowning Prevention Network at seattlechildrens.org/dp.

We hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

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