

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



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DEPARTMENT OF FIRE, RESCUE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

POOL, BEACH, BOATING AND WATER SAFETY

FROM: Jason Allen Winslow, MD
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Last year in Suffolk County there were many patients who experienced near-drowning that were treated by Emergency Medical Services and brought to Suffolk County hospital Emergency Departments. There were 16 deaths attributed to drowning by the Medical Examiner's Office. Many patients who experience near-drowning are young children who have submersion in private backyard pools. Other cases involve public pools, beaches and boating incidents.

Any person who was observed to be submerged underwater should be evaluated by EMS by calling 911. Any person who may have been submerged underwater and who has symptoms of choking, difficulty speaking or respiratory distress should be evaluated and treated by EMS and transported to the local hospital for further evaluation. When you call 911 please listen to the Emergency Medical Dispatcher's instructions as they are trained and experienced in giving life-saving instructions over the telephone.

Private pool safety – Never swim alone. Teach children how to swim. Designate a competent adult to serve as the “water watcher” to supervise all swimmers. Never leave a child unattended in a yard with a pool or near the water's edge. Avoid diving in pools unless the pool is designated for diving. Avoid alcohol use and swimming. Please observe compliance with local ordinances regarding fencing, gates and pool and door alarms.

Public pool safety – Only swim in public pools during hours of operation when there is a lifeguard on duty. Listen to the guidance of the lifeguards and know and obey the pool rules. Know the depth of the pool.

Beach safety – Only swim at public beaches during hours of operation when there is a lifeguard on duty. Swim only in designated areas which mark safe swimming areas. Avoid swimming at unpatrolled beaches. Never swim alone. Never swim after dark. Never swim during thunderstorms or severe weather conditions. Be aware of rip currents. If you are not a strong swimmer, consider taking swimming lessons. Avoid alcohol use and swimming. Supervise children at all times while at the beach.

Boating safety – Obey all local ordinances regarding boat operations. Be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to other boats, navigation markers and potential hazards. Do

not use alcohol and/or drugs while operating a boat. Keep personal flotation devices and life jackets readily accessible for all persons. Ensure that all children under 12 wear a life jacket at all times. Be aware of the weather conditions and do not operate a boat in severe weather conditions. Take a boating safety course as this is a NYS requirement. In the event of an on-board emergency, call 911 and listen to the instructions of the Emergency Medical Dispatcher, the Harbormaster, Law enforcement marine personnel, and US Coast Guard personnel who are specially trained in handling on-board emergency situations.

Let's have a safe and enjoyable summer this year in Suffolk County.