



Virginia Department of Fire Programs

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MEDIA ALERT

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Children's Hospital, Fire and Local Recreation Departments Unite to Save Lives

Richmond, Stafford and Fredericksburg Fire Departments in conjunction with their local Recreation Departments and the Children's Hospital have joined forces to encourage water safety in and around the James and Rappahannock Rivers this summer.

The partners produced new safety signs, which will be placed at busy locations along the rivers. The 18-by-24-inch signs contain life saving river-safety information, such as cartoonlike drawings that will quickly alert people to the warnings and risks associated with their water activities.

"This is a wonderful partnership," said W.G. Shelton, Jr., Executive Director of the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. "The proactive safety initiative should decrease the number of water rescues that local fire and emergency service departments respond to during the summer season because people will be reminded to take additional precautions when they see the signs."

Water safety is everyone's responsibility. Whether you are swimming at the river or the local pool, water safety practices are a must. To help you stay safe in or around the water this summer, please consider the following tips from the American Red Cross:

General Water Safety

- Learn to swim. The best thing anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is to learn to swim. Always swim with a friend; never swim alone.
- Swim in areas supervised by a lifeguard.
- Read and obey all rules and posted signs.
- Set water safety rules for the whole family based on swimming abilities (for example, inexperienced swimmers should stay in water less than chest deep).

River Safety

- Be aware! The river bottom is uneven and may drop off suddenly. Strong tides, big waves, and currents can turn an event that began as fun into a tragedy.
- Wear shoes – there may be broken glass on the bottom.
- Do not dive into the water. Too many swimmers are seriously injured every year by entering headfirst into water that is too shallow. A feet first entry is much safer than diving.
- Young children should wear life jackets at all times.

Beach Safety

- Protect your skin: Sunlight contains two kinds of UV rays -- UVA increases the risk of skin cancer, skin aging, and other skin diseases.
- Drink plenty of water regularly and often even if you do not feel thirsty. Your body needs water to keep cool.
- Watch for signs of heat stroke: Heat stroke is life threatening.

Home Pool Safety

- Never leave a child unobserved around water. Your eyes must be on the child at all times. Adult supervision is always recommended.
- Install a phone by the pool or keep a cordless phone nearby so that you can call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- Learn Red Cross CPR and insist that babysitters, grandparents, and others who care for your child know CPR.
- Post CPR instructions and 9-1-1 or your local emergency number in the pool area.

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