



For immediate release
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Preventable Drowning Deaths Highest in July and August *Shifts in attitudes are key to preventing serious injuries*

Vancouver, BC – As we head into the July long weekend, Preventable, along with the Canadian Red Cross and BC Hydro are reminding everyone to practice water safety this summer.

According to Vital Statistics, there are on average 55 deaths each year in BC due to drowning and water-transport related incidents and submersions. 90 per cent of drowning deaths while boating are a result of not wearing a lifejacket or personal floatation device; in addition, alcohol is associated with 41 per cent of drownings amongst Canadians ages 15 and over.

With this water safety initiative, Preventable's goal is to shift attitudes and behaviours and create awareness that 95% per cent of all injuries are both preventable and predictable.

"It's shocking to see the number of drownings each year when they can be prevented with just a few safety measures and a change of attitudes," says Dr. Ian Pike, spokesperson for Preventable. "Our 'Have a word with yourself' campaign is one way we're encouraging everyone to take a moment, have a word with themselves and consider their actions to avoid serious injuries."

Thanks to the Vancouver Biennale Open Air Museum, this year, Preventable and its partners are placing eye-catching life jackets on the iconic sculpture "A-maze-ing Laughter" at English Bay in Vancouver. The massive life jackets will then be sent to Kelowna and Victoria for placement on various beaches where Red Cross education teams will be visiting. The primary message for this initiative is "Before you think drowning happens to other people, have a word with yourself."

"By educating individuals who are participating in water-related activities about the importance of wearing life jackets or personal floatation devices, we can ensure that people have a safe and enjoyable time this summer," says Michael Miller, Water Safety Master Instructor Trainer, Canadian Red Cross.

"BC Hydro operates 19 recreational facilities on rivers, lakes and reservoirs across the province. Some of these sites - like Buntzen Lake Reservoir that attracts over 600,000 visitors a year - are among the most popular recreation sites in B.C.," said Mark Poweska, Director of Generation Operations, BC Hydro. "Public and employee safety is a top priority for us. We implore everyone to keep safety top of mind when having fun in the water and are proud to partner with Preventable and the Red Cross to raise water safety awareness."

Drowning statistics:

- Between **2003 and 2007**, there were an average of over **50 deaths and 244 hospitalizations** from drowning across BC. There were 30 deaths from drowning and **107 injury hospitalizations from near-drowning** among BC's children and youth from 2003 to 2007.
- **For each toddler (aged 1-4) who dies from drowning and water-related activities, there are at least 5 near drowning cases which require hospitalization.**
- Evidence suggests that 4-sided pool fencing can prevent 7 out of 10 drownings among children.

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The human and financial toll is of drowning is shocking - in BC alone, the total direct and indirect cost is estimated to be over \$18 million.

To learn more about water safety and preventable injuries, visit www.preventable.ca

About Preventable

Preventable is a province-wide, multi-partner organization raising awareness, transforming attitudes, and ultimately changing behaviours. The goal of the organization and its partners is to significantly reduce the number and severity of preventable injuries in BC.

Preventable is the first organization to undertake a province-wide social marketing strategy focusing on attitudes to prevent injuries. Using integrated advertising, guerrilla marketing activities and social media, Preventable asks people to adjust their behaviours by thinking before they act, remembering to exercise preventative measures at all times whether on the road, at work, home, play or in water.

Preventable's strategy is based on extensive research to develop a comprehensive understanding of how and why preventable injuries occur throughout the Province. Preventable's work is made possible through the financial and in-kind support of a variety of organizations that continue to sign on as partners in fighting the epidemic of preventable injuries in BC. Now in its 4th year of activity, the "have a word with yourself" campaign is an evolution in Preventable's ongoing discussion with British Columbians about the epidemic proportions of preventable injuries. www.preventable.ca

About Canadian Red Cross

Each year, Canadian Red Cross trains more than one million Canadians to be safe in, on, and around water. An additional 300,000 Canadians take Red Cross first aid training and gain the knowledge, confidence and skills to deal with emergency situations to prevent injuries. To learn more about safety and Red Cross training, call 1-888-307-7997, visit www.redcross.ca or stop by your local Red Cross office.

About BC Hydro

Fifty years ago, British Columbians turned to BC Hydro to build the clean electricity system they count on to power B.C.'s economy, create jobs in every region, and keep the lights on. Now, BC Hydro is building again for the next 50 years. B.C. continues to grow and so has the need for more electricity. That's why BC Hydro is building, renewing, and encouraging conservation to meet today's needs and those of future generations. www.bchydro.com

About the Vancouver Biennale Open Air Museum

The Vancouver Biennale is an outdoor exhibition that features contemporary art by some of the world's most renowned and breakthrough artists of our time, freely accessible for people to enjoy where they live, work, play and transit. The objective is to transform the urban landscape into an open air museum, creating cultural experiences that encourage exploration, inspire learning and provoke the imagination of all who experience it. www.vancouverbiennale.com

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