

WATER SAFETY

Message slow to sink in

Red Cross says wearing life-jacket key to preventing most drowning deaths while boating during summer

By RUBY PRATKA
Special to The Daily Courier

No one expects to drown. Yet, every year, says the Canadian Red Cross, 60 British Columbians drown accidentally.

Four people died in water accidents this past weekend: a toddler who fell into Okanagan Lake, a 16-year-old girl who fell from a boat in Hatzic Lake in Mission, a man who drowned in Harrison Lake when his boat flipped, and a Vancouver Island man who is missing and presumed drowned after his boat was found running but abandoned in Alberni Inlet. In at least three of the cases, police have said the victim did not wear a life-jacket.

Statistics prepared by the organization Community Against Preventable Injuries say 90 per cent of drownings while boating are the result of not wearing a life-jacket.

"Even a good swimmer can drown while not wearing a life-jacket," said Red Cross water safety program representative Derek Mahoney. "Not wearing a life-jacket



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The Canadian Red Cross is leaving towels like the one above on Okanagan beaches this week to try to prevent drownings.

and assuming you're going to put it on when something goes wrong is like waiting to put your seatbelt on until just before your car crashes."

Mahoney said he is trying to take advantage of summer to spread the word because most drownings happen in the warmer months.

"We want to get that message out now," he said.

Red Cross employees are leaving towels

on area beaches this week with the message, "You're probably not expecting to drown today."

"We leave them unattended because it's like someone went in the water for a swim and didn't come back," Mahoney said.

"You think, here's a blank towel and it's been here at least half an hour. I wonder what happened? And it kind of gets you in the gut."

Mahoney said about 95 per cent of all

drownings are preventable, and most have three solutions: "Wear a life-jacket, supervise your children and don't consume alcohol while boating."

"We're not trying to take the fun out of the outdoors," he said. "You just need to have a designated boat driver."

Boating while intoxicated is a Criminal Code offence and punishable by a minimum fine of \$600. Nevertheless, according to Community Against Preventable Injuries, alcohol is implicated in 40 per cent of all drownings of people 15 and older.

Child drownings, Mahoney said, usually occur when the child is unsupervised.

"Supervision of children is key around water, whether it's a bathtub, lake or backyard pool," he said.

He also recommended parents install four-sided fencing around pools and take advantage of swim programs at local pools.

"Living in the Okanagan, with this amount of lakes and outdoor activities, we hear about these tragedies far too often," said Mahoney. "The message to prevent these things is so simple — wear a life-jacket, supervise your children and don't consume alcohol — but we have to keep spreading the same message year after year."



GARY NYLANDER/The Daily Courier

City of Kelowna work crews install a new sidewalk along Pandosy Street in front of Excel Spa on Wednesday.

CITY SERVICES

Wait for sidewalk over

By RUBY PRATKA
Special to The Daily Courier

The city is installing a sidewalk in front of Jeaninne Cleary's spa at Pandosy and Raymer, ending years of frustration for her and for the building's landlord, Ray McTavish.

"We've had a building there for 10 years and we've had no sidewalk. Everybody around here has wanted a sidewalk for a long time," McTavish said.

"I have no idea how the city does stuff. I only know we've been going back and forth with them for 10 years."

McTavish said he believed a story in The Daily Courier last month helped hasten the sidewalk's construction.

"The city called me right after the story ran," he said.

Cleary said Wednesday that workers were in front of her spa, installing the sidewalk. She said the lack of a sidewalk in front of her business had made life difficult for her clients.

"We had a person fall forward and have to go to the hospital, we had bikes going by and people had to look when they went out the front door, and we had people running across the street and if you fell, you went

right into traffic," she said.

Cleary said her spa had been in the area for 26 years, moving to its current location from the other side of Pandosy 10 years ago.

"After 10 years, you'd think it would be done," Cleary said. "Ten years later, we are the only ones on Pandosy who didn't have a sidewalk."

"If we get a request in, we get a certain amount of money" to install sidewalks, said Jerry Behl, transportation and mobility manager with the City of Kelowna.

"Pandosy is a longer-term issue which we've been trying to fix."

VALLEY IN BRIEF

Sculpture approved for Kelowna park

A shade-providing sculpture resembling a leaf lying on sticks will soon grace Knowles Park at the corner of Bernard Avenue and Ethel Street in Kelowna.

City council on Monday approved \$5,000 from the public art allocation to fund the sculpture's installation. The sculpture, referred to as the Knowles Park Pergola, will be designed by Lake Country resident Ed Gooden and installed next month.

"We want to make Knowles Park more of a community gathering place," said Mayor Sharon Shepherd.

2 people face charges after police raid grow-op

Police nabbed two alleged pot growers in a rural part of West Kelowna.

West Kelowna RCMP had a search warrant when they raided the rancher house in the 2000 block of Scharf Road on Monday. They found 543 marijuana plants in two rooms — one set aside for clones and the other for mature plants.

Officers arrested one suspect outside. He claimed he lived in a mobile home next door, but police found evidence that tied him to the grow house. The other suspect was arrested inside the house.

Both are charged with cultivation. They were released on promises to appear in court.

Police seek tips in Vernon robbery

A 41-year-old man says he was robbed by three men in Vernon's Justice Park, but he can't identify the suspects.

"The 41-year-old victim told police he was in the park when he was approached by three unidentified males," said RCMP spokesman Gord Molendyk. "They asked him for some change. When he did not comply, they grabbed him and went through his pockets and stole his wallet with cash and credit cards."

"There was a female present as well. However, she stood off to the side and just observed."

"The victim was not able to provide any description of the suspects."

The robbery was reported about 12:30 a.m. Monday.

Anyone with information about the robbery is asked to call police at 250-545-7171 or Crime Stoppers at 250-549-TIPS.

Drought threat eases thanks to cool, wet June

Cool weather and rainfall in June throughout the southern half of the province have eased water-supply concerns that developed in many communities last spring, according to Environment Minister Barry Penner.

The water-supply challenges were the result of a low winter snowpack and unusually warm winter temperatures.

As a result, the drought level for the Southern Interior has now been downgraded to normal.

The latest water-supply bulletin says rivers and streams in the Southern Interior are generally flowing at normal rates for this time of year.

June rainfall was near normal in most areas of B.C. Penticton, Cranbrook and Terrace experienced above-normal June precipitation. Very little of the seasonal snowpack in B.C. remains to melt.

— Daily Courier Staff

Rodeo death shakes sport

By ANDREW BATES
Special to The Daily Courier

The rodeo community has been stunned by the death of Makwala Derickson-Hall last weekend.

"It's a tragedy. It's something that the rodeo community is very shook up over," said Jeff Wills, president of the B.C. Rodeo Association. "We've never had an accident of this magnitude in B.C. before. It's going to have some far-reaching effects."

Derickson-Hall, a recent graduate of Mount Boucherie Secondary School, was killed July 9 at the Canoe Mountain Rodeo in Valemount, B.C. He received massive trauma when the bull he was riding stomped on his chest after he was thrown off its back.

"We're still kind of in a state of shock, eh?" said Bob Griffin, president of the Canoe Mountain Rodeo Association. "We're not a really big organization . . . we've been running for five years now."

Canoe Mountain Rodeo is a smaller event that has had trouble attracting sponsorship in Valemount, whose population is under 2,000 people. According to Griffin, this is one of a few problems that have dogged the event.

"I've got about 50 calls on this, and I'm getting real tired of it," he said. "The mail shut down up here (and) people left town, but I'm stubborn, and I just kept carrying on my rodeo."

In the aftermath of the accident, Griffin said he questions whether it's proper to

allow teenagers to compete in professional bull riding events, given the danger involved.

"Bull riding is the most dangerous sport in the world, and they all know it," he said. "My personal opinion is, I'm 61 years old, I've got sons and . . . I don't think an 18-year-old should be in World Professional Bullriding. You should have to work up to it."

According to Mike Hausmann of the National High School Rodeo Association, there is a built-in risk in sport, but this sort of incident is rare.

"Injuries, to a limited degree, are a part of the sport," he said, "but in terms of something like this, it's extreme and very, very rare."

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