

47 seriously injured each hour — will you be next?

BE AWARE: These preventable incidents claim the lives of more B.C. kids than any other cause

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Within the next hour, 47 B.C. residents will have suffered an injury serious enough to require medical attention.

By the end of the day, that number will have skyrocketed to roughly 1,000.

Of these, about three will have died, 90 will have been hospitalized and 27 left partially or fully disabled.

The numbers, provided by the

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— **Dr. Ian Pike**, Community Against Preventable Injuries spokesman

B.C. Injury Research and Prevention Unit, are indiscriminate of age, sex and race: It can happen to anyone at any time at any place — be it at work, while out with friends or in your very own backyard.

The cause? You name it: Car crash, sports injury, poisoning, drowning, a major fall, and/or work-related incident.

But according to the Community Against Preventable Injuries, these

injuries, and the events leading up to them, are, 95 per cent of the time, predictable and completely preventable.

Yet, by the end of the year, 400,000 British Columbians will have suffered from one of these injuries and 1,200 will have been killed as a result of one.

According to research, it is these kinds of injuries that claim the lives of more children than any other causes combined and are the leading cause of death for people between the ages of one and 44.

“Most of us have no idea of the magnitude of the problem caused by preventable injuries,” said Dr. Ian Pike, a spokesman for the CAPI.

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Which is why the Community Against Preventable Injuries, a non-profit organization, is launching a multimedia awareness campaign, beginning this month, in an effort to reduce the quantity and frequency of these avoidable incidents.

Representing a variety of organizations — like the BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation, the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit, WorkSafeBC, Telus and Pacific Blue Cross — the CAPI’s campaign, more than anything, will seek to change the prevailing attitudes and behaviours surrounding these types of injuries in an effort to reduce their frequency by five per cent over three years.

As part of this campaign, *Province* readers will, beginning today, find a weekly story within the paper’s



The not-for-profit Community Against Preventable Injuries is launching a multimedia awareness campaign — including this bus-shelter ad — to warn people about injury hazards. — HANDOUT

pages relating to one of these preventable injuries.

Many of the stories will feature a personal account of one person’s direct experience with such an injury and how it has affected their

lives and, more importantly, changed their attitudes and behaviours.

“Through these stories we want to make British Columbians aware that injuries are preventable and

remind them of the risks we take every day,” said Dr. Pike.

“The trouble is too many of us think that serious injuries only happen to other people, but they can and do happen to us.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO PREVENTABLE.CA AND THEPROVINCE.COM

Firefighter's heroic efforts in vain

LAKE TRAGEDY: My children 'couldn't understand how a grownup could drown'

The last thing Rob Lemon, a Lower Mainland firefighter, thought he'd be doing on his camping trip to Lightning Lake was trying to save the life of a drowning victim.

But that's exactly what the 33-year-old father of two young children found himself doing last summer at Manning Resort Park when disaster struck out of the blue.

It was almost two in the afternoon and Lemon had just finished swimming across the lake with some of the older kids who were camping with his group.

The sun was shining, the sky was blue and the lake was full of swimmers and boaters enjoying the fine weather.

But the peaceful scene was soon shattered by the screams of a foreign-exchange student who was treading water about 90 metres from shore.

It was the same exchange student who, minutes earlier, had approached Lemon and asked if he had seen their friend, a weak swimmer, who'd gone out into the lake.

"With the panic in his voice, I was pretty sure I knew what he was yelling about," said Lemon. "I know exactly what that scream is."

Reacting immediately, Lemon swam out to the location and dove to the chilly bottom, some three to six metres below, where he found the lifeless man floating near the lake bottom.

Hauling him to shore, the firefighter then proceeded, with the help of some bystanders, to perform CPR on the 29-year-old victim, who was also an exchange student at Simon Fraser University.

By the time emergency crews arrived more than an hour later, Lemon had managed to establish a pulse and regular breathing pattern.

Despite his heroic efforts, the swimmer died the following day.

The biggest tragedy was that it could have been prevented.

"People don't understand it can happen to anyone," said Lemon. "When it comes to water, people just think it is like their tub at home."

On average, there are 40 drowning-related deaths annually in B.C., with more than half of these drownings occurring in the summer months.

A quarter of all victims register a blood-alcohol level over the legal limit. On top of this, each year there are many recorded "near-drowning injuries" such as brain damage, retinal dislocation, fractures and



Lower Mainland firefighter Rob Lemon (with daughters Caylah, 6, and Hailey, 10), made a gallant effort to save a man from drowning last summer, only to learn that, despite CPR, he'd died next day. RIC ERNST — THE PROVINCE

spinal-cord injuries associated with water play.

According to stats provided by the Canadian Red Cross, there are an estimated 60 spinal-cord injury hospitalizations due to diving accidents per year in the province.

Between 2001 and 2002, there were 53 serious injuries in B.C. related solely to diving or jumping into

the water.

At the end of the day, however, it is simple preparation and awareness that can prevent these incidents from happening.

Regarding what happened last summer, Lemon said the use of a buddy system or, more importantly, a life jacket could have resulted in a different conclusion to the day's

events — especially given the victim wasn't a strong swimmer.

Further, being aware of one's surroundings — like the fact there hadn't been a lifeguard on duty that day — and then adjusting to the given circumstances, could have provided a different result.

"A person, no matter what their age, needs to be aware of their lim-

itations," said Lemon. "As unfortunate and preventable as this experience was, my kids discovered that a person's ability to swim has nothing to do with their age."

"They couldn't understand how a grownup could drown. In their eyes, swimming lessons are for kids. [But] safety is for everyone, young and old."

Grim statistics

- Males between 15 and 54 years old are most at risk for drowning. Five of every six drowning victims are men.

- Twenty-nine per cent of all drownings are a result of recreational-boating incidents.

- Lakes are the most frequent location for drowning incidents for all age groups in Canada followed by rivers, the ocean, home swimming pools and bathtubs.

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— Firefighter Rob Lemon

Risk reducers

- Enrol in swimming lessons.
- Be cautious about swimming in currents and know what to do if you get into trouble.

- Don't consume alcohol before swimming or boating activities.

- Carry emergency equipment — including first aid kit and phone — when engaging in water activities.

- When boating, or when not confident in the water, wear a life-jacket.

- Learn first aid and CPR.

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