

For Immediate Release
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Before you think only other swimmers drown, have a word with yourself
five people die a month due to drowning

Vancouver, BC – This summer, the Community against Preventable Injuries (Preventable) along with the Canadian Red Cross and BC Hydro, are asking British Columbians to have a word with themselves before getting in the water. Towels, emblazoned with the words “before you think only other swimmers drown, have a word with yourself”, will be laid on Kitsilano Beach this July.

“The key to reducing serious injuries is behaviours and attitudes. We all lead busy and hectic lives – taking that one moment to have a word with yourself could prevent injury and save your life or your child’s life,” says Dr. Ian Pike, spokesperson for Preventable.

Last year, a record 50 drownings happened in BC as of the first week of August. According to Vital Statistics, there are at least 60 deaths each year in BC due to drowning and water-transport related incidents and submersions. 90% of drowning deaths while boating are a result of not wearing a lifejacket or PFD; in addition, alcohol is associated with 40% of drownings amongst Canadians ages 15 and over.

Watching your children is equally crucial – drowning is the leading cause of injury death for children aged 0-4 years old. “Half of the children who drowned were alone and unsupervised at the time. Parents need to be constantly aware and take protective measures when children are around water – be it the pool, bathtub, lake or the ocean,” adds Derek Mahoney, First Aid & Water Safety Program Representative of the Red Cross.

“With 27 recreational facilities, including 16 on reservoirs or rivers, making up part of the province’s hydro-electric system, BC Hydro is a major provider of water recreational sites in B.C. Public and employee safety is a key priority for us,” said Mark Poweska, director of Generations Operations, BC Hydro. “Our water facilities are among some of the most popular recreation sites in B.C. and we encourage everyone using them to keep safety top of mind. Water is spectacular as both a power source and a place to have fun – but it can also be dangerous and deadly. We’re proud to partner with Preventable and the Red Cross and wish everyone a safe and injury free summer.”

Drowning statistics:

- Between **2003 and 2007, there were an average of over 50 deaths and 244 hospitalizations** from drowning across BC.
- **For each toddler who dies from drowning, there are some 6-10 near-drowning cases which require hospitalization.** Among the survivors of near drowning, 20% sustain permanent brain damage.
- There were 30 deaths from drowning **and 107 injury hospitalizations from near-drowning** among BC’s children and youth from 2003 to 2007.
- Evidence suggests that 4-sided pool fencing can prevent 7 out of 10 drownings among children.

The human and financial toll is of drowning is shocking - in BC alone, the total direct and indirect cost is estimated to be over \$17 million. Between 2000 and 2006, the place where drowning occurred, varied across age groups:

- Drowning in the bathtub (64%) was the most common place for drowning among infants (< 1 year).

THE COMMUNITY AGAINST preventable INJURIES

- Drowning deaths occurred mostly in swimming pools (44%) and bathtubs (33%) for children ages 1-4 years.
- For ages 1-24 years, swimming pools were the most common place for drowning.
- Hospitalizations resulting from near-drowning in water transport-related incidents were more common among ages 25-64 years (41%) and over 65 years (35%). (BCIRPU, 2008).

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.

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

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About Preventable

Preventable (also known as The Community Against Preventable Injuries) 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's strategy is based on two years of 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 3rd 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 and 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. In 2011, BC Hydro is celebrating 50 years of providing power for British Columbians, and inviting them to help prepare for the next 50 years.

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