

For Immediate Release
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British Columbia Coroners Service
Ministry of Public Safety
and Solicitor General

B.C. LAKES AND RIVERS POSE ADDITIONAL RISKS FOR TOURISTS

VANCOUVER – The BC Coroners Service is encouraging anyone hosting tourists this summer to ensure their guests are well educated on the natural dangers associated with B.C. lakes and rivers.

This past July, there were 12 drowning accidents reported to the Coroners Service from across the province. Three of these accidents involved travellers from outside B.C. who were not familiar with the hazards.

“We want anyone who might be taking tourists to waterside sites this summer to understand the natural hazards and to always be extremely cautious when spending recreational time near unfamiliar waters,” said assistant deputy chief coroner Jeff Dolan. “That includes those hosting friends or family from abroad, tour groups and tour operators, and organizations that are sponsoring groups for English as a second language training or other cross-cultural programs.”

Host organizations may not be aware of how completely unfamiliar visitors may be with the water safety issues that many British Columbians consider common knowledge. Among the risks that may need to be explained:

- The coldness of the water temperature in many B.C. lakes and rivers
- The swiftness of the current, and the proximity of dangerous waterfalls in rivers
- The slipperiness of rocks along the shoreline
- Steep drop offs in lakes and rivers only a few metres from shore that can pose a serious hazard to those who are not strong swimmers

National, provincial or regional parks may be well-signed, but these signs are not always helpful to those who do not have a good command of the English language. Risks are even higher for those who do not swim well or at all.

The Coroners Service is issuing this public safety bulletin as part of its mandate to prevent deaths in British Columbia. With approximately 80 drowning deaths per year in B.C., the Coroners Service continues to research issues of public concern and offer recommendations that will reduce drowning deaths in British Columbia.

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Visit the BCCS website at www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/coroners for online information.