



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2014JAG0165-000878
June 26, 2014

Ministry of Justice
BC Coroners Service

BC Coroners Service releases report on child and youth drowning

BURNABY – The BC Coroners Service is recommending new efforts be devoted to providing more effective water safety education, especially for teenage males aged 15 to 18.

The recommendation is one of three made by a Child Death Review panel into child and youth drowning. The report was made public today.

The panel, which was chaired by Child Death Review Unit director Michael Egilson and included experts from a variety of child-serving and water safety agencies, reviewed the cases of 35 children and youth who drowned in BC in the years 2007 and 2013. The panel reaffirmed the many prevention messages put forth by the Lifesaving Society and Canadian Red Cross around water safety, supervision, boater safety, alcohol use, lifejacket/PFD use and pool safety.

The child death review panel also identified that some of these important messages are not getting through to the young people most at risk. Of the deaths reviewed, almost seven in 10 involved youths aged 15 to 18, and three-quarters of those who died were male. The cases show that males in that age group are particularly prone to underestimate the risk involved in activities, overestimate their own swimming abilities, and use substances, such as alcohol, which may affect their judgment, co-ordination and/or ability to self-rescue.

The panel recommends that the BC/Yukon branch of the Lifesaving Society bring together key stakeholders to develop messaging specifically targeted to young men in this age group. Teenaged males themselves will be asked to participate to try to determine how best to reach this demographic group.

The second recommendation was directed to the Canadian Red Cross to focus on ongoing education for parents, stressing especially the need for close and ongoing supervision of young children when in or around water, and the third backs the BC/Yukon branch of the Lifesaving Society in its efforts to work through the Union of BC Municipalities to encourage municipalities to pass bylaws which require four-sided secure fencing around backyard swimming pools.

The full text of the report can be found at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/death-investigation/child-death-review-unit/reports-publications/child-drowning.pdf>

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FACTSHEET

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List of recommendations

Recommendation #1:

By the end of 2015:

The BC/Yukon Branch of the Lifesaving Society will bring together key stakeholder partners to develop water safety and drowning prevention messaging targeting young men between the ages of 15 and 18 years old. Key stakeholder partners include but are not limited to:

- Canadian Red Cross;
- The First Nations Health Authority; and
- School Districts.

The BC/Yukon Branch of the Lifesaving Society will engage young men between the ages of 15 and 18 years old in developing the prevention messaging and implementation strategy.

Recommendation #2:

By the end of 2015:

The Canadian Red Cross and The Community Against Preventable Injuries will bring together key community stakeholders to develop and implement water safety and drowning prevention messaging for parents/caregivers on:

- supervising young children in, on and near water; and
- keeping teens safe in, on and near water.

Key community stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- BC/Yukon Branch of the Lifesaving Society;
- The First Nations Health Authority; and
- School Districts.

Recommendation #3:

That the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) reviews this report for information and education purposes.

This review is intended to reinforce the efforts of the BC/Yukon Branch of the Lifesaving Society to have municipalities consider establishing a bylaw that requires barrier fencing to limit child access to backyard pools. Specifically, it is suggested this bylaw include the following requirements:

- 4-sided fencing with minimum height of 1.22 m (4 ft);
- Self closing and self latching gate;
- Retrofitting of 4-sided fencing for existing pools; and
- Includes in-ground, above ground and inflatable pools.

This bylaw could be supplemented with water safety and drowning prevention education that would be provided to the homeowner or renter with a backyard pool.

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