



TOWN OF CANTON VOLUNTEER Fire & EMS Department

Valuing Life...at a Moment's Notice



In Response....

From the Desk of Fire & EMS Chief Rich Hutchings

Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department

Water Safety: Hope for the Best. Plan for the Worst. Then Enjoy the View.

True Stories: A few summers back, while training for their certification in Swift Water Rescue, a group of Canton's volunteer firefighters and EMTs encountered a Waterbury woman, passed out and unresponsive in an inner tube, well beyond the final pick-up point for Satan's Kingdom. She floated right into the middle of a training evolution with the Department's boat, Marine I that involved rigging a high line across the river.

Two days later, volunteer firefighters and EMTs performed a rescue that required them to rappel down a hill to the river with a stokes basket to save a Jewett City man who was not wearing a life preserver and was unable to swim to safety.

Later that summer, volunteer firefighters and EMTs responded to a call from a group of friends who had been partying by the river. One of them had used a rope swing in an attempt to fly out into the river. He landed in the rocky shallows on the edge of the river and sustained multiple injuries to his head and back.

In Response to the inherent dangers that come with the inviting beauty of Canton's recreational waterways, here are some suggestions, from those who know best, on how to plan for the worst so you can hope for the best and still enjoy the view:

Know your Surroundings: The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports that the majority of people aged 15 years and over who drowned did so in lakes, rivers or the ocean - not pools. How fast is the current? How deep is the water? These factors can change quickly, especially after a storm. So, it's important to be aware of weather conditions and the forecast before going out to the water.

Know your Tools & Equipment: The U.S. Coast Guard reported that 9 out of 10 people who drowned in boating accidents in 2008, were not wearing life jackets. Furthermore, the Red Cross warns that neither water wings nor noodles nor floaties nor inner tubes can replace a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device/life jacket. So, always wear a PFD and just in case of an emergency, be prepared. Learn first aid and CPR for infants, children and adults. Pack a cell phone to call 911 and something to throw or reach out with, such as life safety rope, with your picnic.

Know Yourself: The CDC warns that up to 50% of adult and adolescent deaths on the water involve alcohol. Combined with exposure to the sun and heat, alcohol has proven to be a lethal factor affecting coordination and balance; judgment and clear thinking. Finally, don't swim alone. Don't swim at night. Don't eat candy or chew gum while swimming; you can choke.

Water rescues are among the most time sensitive, difficult and risky of all emergencies handled by Canton's volunteer fire and EMS volunteers. If someone is missing in the water or injured, call 911 immediately. Seconds count. We will be there, but we could use your help in the meantime.

Until then..... be safe.

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