

## Water Safety

Here comes the sun! After months of cloudy, cool weather we are so ready for the sun here in the Pacific Northwest. There is nothing like a warm sunny summer day to get us outdoors and enjoying the beauty of the area in which we live. As the thermometer rises we often find ourselves enjoying one of the many water recreation areas available to us.

Whether it be a stream, river, or larger body of water such as a lake or even the Sound it is important to practice good water safety. Most of us know the basics; buddy-up and never swim alone. Obey posted warnings. Swim in designated or safe areas only. Know your limits; when you are tired take a break, and don't mix swimming or boating with alcohol. Children should not be left unattended.

Our northwest rivers run particularly cold and deep and even the strongest swimmer can quickly find themselves in trouble if precautions aren't taken. Young swimmers and all boaters should wear a life jacket at all times. Cold waters can paralyze a swimmer with muscle cramps and even a strong swimmer may need the assistance of a flotation device.

Boaters should be aware that the State of Washington requires a Mandatory Boater Education Card for operators of boats having motors of 15 horsepower or greater. The card requirement is being phased in from 2008 to 2014. In 2010 all operators 30 years and younger are required to have the card. In subsequent years, the age requirement progresses. You can find more information on how to obtain your Boater Education Card, and requirements specific to your craft, online at [www.parks.wa.gov/boating/boatered/](http://www.parks.wa.gov/boating/boatered/).

Here comes the sun, and it's alright... with so many types of water recreation available to us it is a good idea to think ahead and make sure that all your summer excursions are fun and safe.