



Know Before You Go

Preparing to Visit a National Forest

Swimming and Boating

There are inherent risks associated with water recreation and sports. Many of the dangers linked to boating, water skiing, swimming, diving and water activities can be avoided by taking precautions.

Remember, an estimated 60 percent of drownings are witnessed, and have the potential to be prevented.



Safety Checklist

- Learn to swim:** Formal swimming lessons can prevent drowning. Teach children to swim at a young age. Constant and careful supervision around water is still necessary, even when children have completed swimming classes.
- Wear a life jacket:** The U.S. Coast Guard estimates that life jackets could have saved the lives of more than 80 percent of victims who die in boating accidents. All occupants of a boat should wear a life jacket at all times when on or near the water. Air-filled toys and foam toys are not life jackets.
- Never go boating under the influence:** Avoid drinking alcohol and using controlled substances when boating, water skiing and swimming. Do not drink alcohol while supervising children.
- Supervise children:** Designate a responsible adult to watch young children. Caretakers of preschool children should provide touch supervision—be within an arm's reach of the child at all times. Adults should not be involved in any other distracting activity (such as reading, playing cards or talking on the phone) while supervising children.
- Don't swim alone:** Always swim with a buddy. Select a swimming site that has a lifeguard when possible.
- Learn CPR:** In the time it might take for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills could save a life.
- Look before you leap:** Check water depth before diving and only dive into familiar waters. It is never safe to dive from or jump off of rock cliffs, ledges and man-made structures.
- Learn safe boating practices:** Operator error accounts for 70 percent of boating accidents. Take a boating safety course. Wear a helmet when navigating whitewater streams.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r8/recreation/safety-ethics>

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