

Executive Summary

The Office of the Chief Coroner conducted a detailed review of accidental drowning deaths in Ontario for the period beginning May 1st, 2010 and ending September 30th, 2010.

- There were 89 deaths examined in this drowning review.
- Drowning is largely a male-related phenomenon. 76 of 89 (85%) deaths were male.
- The total number of drowning deaths in 2010 was similar to previous years.
- There was a 260% increase in drowning deaths in children less than 5 years of age. 13 of the 89 (15%) deaths in this review were in children less than 5 years of age.
- Those aged 20-64 account for 50 of 89 (56%) of the deaths.
- 71 of 89 (80%) of the deaths occurred in persons aged less than 5 and between 15-64 years of age.
- Drowning occurs largely in:
 - those owning or utilizing private pools 19 of 89 (21%); and
 - those using lakes/ponds 51 of 89 (57%) for their aquatic setting.
- Drowning deaths related to boating are not dependent on air temperature.
- 55 of 66 (83%) of the deaths related to swimming occurred when the air temperature was higher than 21°C.
- 22 of 23 (96%) of those operating power boats and unpowered boats that drowned were not wearing life jackets or personal flotation devices.
- There was no alcohol use associated with drowning in individuals under age 14 and over age 65.
- Alcohol was a contributing factor in 39 of 58 (67%) of the drowning deaths between 15-64 years of age. Overall, 39 of 89 (44%) of drowning deaths were alcohol related.
- In 2010, for those in whom the swimming status was known, 24 of 60 (40%) were non-swimmers.
- 20 of 59 (34%) of the drowning victims for whom their heritage was known were not born in Canada.

Our recommendations include:

- Legislative changes directed toward municipalities regarding pool enclosure bylaws
- Amendments to the *Canada Shipping Act* requiring boat operators and passengers of powered and unpowered boats less than 6 metres in length to continuously wear their life jackets or personal floatation devices
- Legislative changes to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act R.R.O. 1990 Regulation 565 Public Pools* to require admission and tracking standards for recreational non-instructional swimming in public pools
- A recommendation to the Ministry of Education making swimming a part of the curriculum so that children graduating from elementary school can swim
- The creation of water safety and swimming public educational programs by the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport; the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Boards of Health in Ontario through their Public Health Units; and organizations such as Lifesaving Society; the Canadian Red Cross; Safe Communities Canada, Safe Kids Canada; SMARTRISK Canada; and Thinkfirst Canada

Swimming is a Life Skill!