

William J. Streur
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99811-0601
www.hss.state.ak.us



Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Fifth in a series of five.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 8, 2011

Contact: Greg Wilkinson, 907-269-7285, Cell 907-382-7032

gregory.wilkinson@alaska.gov

Sarana Schell, 907-269-8041, Cell 907-398-1480, sarana.schell@alaska.gov

State to promote safety during National Public Health Week, April 4–10

Day five — Safety in the community — preventing child drowning

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA — The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is placing special emphasis on safety during National Public Health Week, April 4–10. This year's theme is *Safety is No Accident*. Unintentional injuries — such as motor vehicle crashes, traumatic brain injury and falls — rank among the 10 leading causes of hospitalizations in Alaska.

A different aspect of injury prevention is highlighted each day throughout the week.

For Friday, April 8, our focus is safety in the community — in particular, preventing drowning.

Alaska has 10 times the national rate of drowning. Drowning is the fourth highest cause of unintentional fatalities in Alaska, and No. 1 for kids ages 5 to 9.

- Most fatalities occur from accidents in open skiffs or canoes.
- Over half of Alaska drownings occur on lakes and rivers.
- Over 90 percent of fatality victims were not wearing a lifejacket (PFD/Personal Flotation Device).
- On average, three children die every day as a result of drowning in the United States.
- Between 2000 and 2009, 52 Alaskans under age 15 drowned.
- The Kids Don't Float PFD (personal flotation device) loaner program started in Homer in 1996 and now has 488 loaner sites statewide.
- At least 19 lives have been saved since the Kids Don't Float program went statewide in 1997.

For more information on the Kids Don't Float program go to:

http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/injury_prevention/kids_dont_float.htm.

For more safety ideas go to our state injury prevention website:

http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/injury_prevention/.

#

DHSS is now on Twitter. Follow health updates at www.twitter.com/Alaska_DHSS.