



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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DNR urges caution, safety on Iowa waters and beaches

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The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is urging everyone on Iowa waterways or at public beaches to use caution and exercise all safety measures to ensure a safe and enjoyable time.

Over a three day period between Saturday and Monday, Iowa DNR conservation officers responded to drownings across the state that resulted in five fatalities.* Initial reports are that many were not wearing life jackets at the time of the drownings.

The DNR is reminding everyone to heed the safety tips below when recreating in Iowa.

**The DNR assisted local agencies with these drownings. Any immediate details, including press releases on the incidents, were handled by local authorities.*

Boating safety tips

Common safety tips while enjoying Iowa's lakes and rivers:

- Wear your life jacket, it floats, you don't! Any children 12 and under must wear a lifejacket at all times on a vessel underway in Iowa.
- Every boat or vessel must have a wearable life jacket for everyone on board; a USCG approved throw-able flotation device is also required on vessels 16' or longer.
- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol, hindering the operator's ability to make necessary decisions.
- The same limit of .08 for operating a vehicle under the influence applies to boating.
- Always have a designated operator that avoids consuming alcohol.
- Make sure there is a charged fire extinguisher on board, as well as a horn/whistle.
- Slow down and watch for other boaters or personal watercraft, have patience.
- Avoid dams and other hazards on waterways.
- Obey all posted warning signs and rules.

- Drain plugs and other water draining devices must be removed and/or remain open during transport to avoid spreading of invasive species.
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Swimming/beach safety tips

With many city pools closed for the summer, people are flocking to the public beaches across the state to keep cool, as well as on the lakes and rivers. DNR Parks staff remind visitors to keep their physical distance from others, not gather in groups of larger than 10 and obey all posted signage and rules. Alcohol is prohibited at some public beaches.

Because the beaches are busier this summer, staff are encouraging visitors to utilize the non-peak times and days. For the busier beaches/parks, the non-peak days usually include Sundays through Thursdays, and Fridays before 5:00 pm. If you plan to go to the beaches on Saturdays, the non-peak hours are usually before noon.

Parks staff may temporarily close parking lots when they become full and limit the number of visitors at that point. The DNR recommends visitors go to another nearby park or beach that is not as heavily populated. Visitors are reminded to only park in designated parking spaces. All violators will be cited by staff.

The DNR Parks staff shares some common safety tips while swimming at the beaches:

- Stay within the roped in area
 - Swim with a buddy
 - Obey posted signs and flags
 - Wear a life jacket or some kind of personal flotation device if needed
 - Use sunscreen and drink plenty of water as needed
 - Iowa's public beaches do not have lifeguards on duty
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Paddling safety tips

After staying at home for months, paddlers are enjoying the splash of the water, scenic views, and wildlife viewing from Iowa's rivers, rapids and streams. Many new paddlers are getting out on the water for the first time this summer.

Stay safe each time you paddle with these simple safety tips.

- Always wear your life jacket. Kids 12 and under must wear a life jacket at all times. The vessel must have enough life jackets for all members on board.
- Let others know where you will be paddling, including what access to what access, and when you are expected to return.
- Avoid sandbar crowds and "rafting" up together. Tubers are reminded not to go in groups larger than 10 and don't tie tubes to one another.
- Always know your river conditions before you go paddling. For the latest river conditions, visit [this link](#).

- Check the Iowa DNR's interactive paddler's map at www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Where-to-Paddle for updates on real-time hazards like downed trees and log jams, strainers and bridge construction. Pay attention to the dam warning signs and know where dams are located before you head out on the water.
- Find individual water trail maps, including access points, visit: www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures.

The DNR wishes everyone a safe and enjoyable time while enjoying Iowa's natural resources.