

CHENANGO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

FROM: Chenango County Health Department
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WATER SAFETY FOR RIVERS, LAKES AND BEACHES

There is a new growing concern over water safety. Water rescues in Chenango County have *increased 5 times more this year*, compared to this same time last year. Swimming or boating in natural water environments can be a great way to cool down and get some physical activity with your family but it can be more challenging and dangerous than you might expect. Streams, rivers and ponds are being used more frequently because some beaches and pools are closed right now due to Coronavirus. It is important to enjoy your day outdoors but it is also important to plan ahead, be prepared, and think about safety before attempting to go swimming or take your canoe or kayak out on the water.

Even an experienced water enthusiast can be surprised by changing water conditions and hazards they may face while out on the water. Swimming in natural bodies of water requires more knowledge and additional skills than using a swimming pool. Rivers are especially dangerous for a variety of reasons such as hidden debris, chemicals, sharp objects, tree stumps, branches, fallen trees, and unknown depth and speed of the water. Drownings are often a result of getting a leg or ankle caught in an underwater rock ledge, between boulders, or snagged in tree limbs. If you are going to swim or go boating choose a stream, lake, or pond and use safety precautions.

Know Your Limits

- ✓ People tire faster and get into trouble more quickly when swimming in a body of water compared to a swimming pool. It is important to learn to swim. If you cannot swim, take extra precautions when on the water.
- ✓ A person can go under water in a murky lake, making them very hard to find, or be swept away in currents. Avoid swimming where two rivers come together or where there is strong current.
- ✓ When boating, don't overload the boat. Plan ahead for if you tip over.
- ✓ Stay sober when on or in the water. Alcohol and other drugs increase the effects of weather, temperature, and wave action.

Wear a Life Jacket

- ✓ Be prepared at all times by wearing a life jacket – you'll never know when you'll be tossed into the water.
- ✓ Have children wear a life jacket that fits well and watch them closely around water – they can go under water quickly and quietly.

Be Prepared

- ✓ Check water and stream conditions in advance. Be familiar with the area that you are using before you swim or take a boat out. Even in shallow water, rocks can be very slippery and current can be strong.
- ✓ Never go alone. Always take someone with you if you are out on the water.
- ✓ Take life jackets, a rescue device, a cell phone, and someone who knows CPR when you are out on the water.
- ✓ Parents must tell their children about the dangers of open water at rivers, lakes, and beaches. Know where your child is, who they are with, and when they are expected home.

For more information about Water Safety please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/swimmers/drowning-injury-sun-protection.html>

<https://health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/swimming/>

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/water-safety.html>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/know-before-you-go>

Persons with questions or requiring additional information may contact the
Chenango County Health Department at **(607) 337-1660**.

Promoting and protecting health, safety, and the quality of life in Chenango County