



## Drowning & Injury Prevention

The Lifesaving Society is Canada's lifeguarding expert. The society works to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education initiatives, water-incident research, aquatic safety management services and lifesaving sport.

Annually, well over 700,000 Canadians participate in the society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguarding and leadership training programs. The society sets the standard for aquatic safety in Canada and certifies Canada's National Lifeguards.

The society is an independent, charitable organization education Canadian lifesavers since the first Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion Award was earned in 1896.

The society represents Canada internationally as an active member of the Royal Life Saving Society and the International Life Saving Federation, and is the governing body for lifesaving sport – a sport recognized by the International Olympic Committee and the Commonwealth Games Federation.

Many groups and individuals have a role as society partners in preventing these tragic and preventable deaths and injuries. Our drowning and injury prevention partners include:

**The Public.** Every day Canadians make safe choices around water and ice, the society encourages you to learn more on how to protect yourself and others by accessing our expertise, educations and training programs.

**The Media.** Help us reach the public (Alberta & Northwest Territories) with messages and awareness about making Water Smart choices and encouraging them to learn valuable skills.

**Lifesaving Society Affiliate Members and Leadership Volunteers.** Staff at your local aquatic facility are your Water Smart leaders. NLS trained lifeguards, and Swim & Lifesaving Instructors deliver Lifesaving Society programs and services year round in your community.

**Injury Prevention Partners.** Collaboration with other injury prevention organizations will strengthen and further our collective cause. The society publicly endorses and supports the vision and mission of the Alberta Injury Control Strategy (AICS) to make Alberta the safest place to live.

**Governments.** Injury prevention is a public responsibility that requires the support of governments at all levels from municipal to federal.

The Alberta and Northwest Territories Perspective - 2010 Drowning & Injury Prevention Profile is brought to you with assistance from Aquam Aquatic Specialist Inc. [www.aquam.com](http://www.aquam.com)



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# 2010 Drowning & Injury Prevention Profile

*An Alberta and Northwest Territories Perspective*



Making Alberta and the Northwest Territories a safer place to live, work and play.



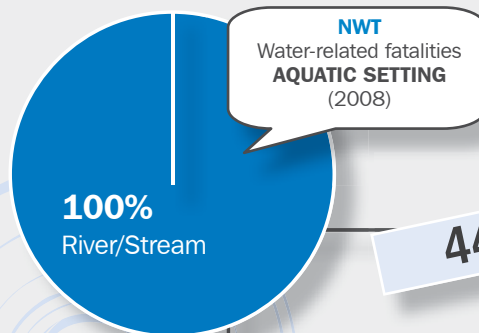
Working in partnerships to achieve the Alberta Injury Control Strategy.

# An Alberta and Northwest Territories Perspective - 2010 Drowning & Injury Prevention Profile

This profile provides compelling reasons for individuals, organizations and governments, to make specific choices and take decisive actions to make our communities a safer place to live, work, and play. It is compiled from the most recent data (2008) to provide a picture of drowning fatalities in Alberta and the Northwest Territories. It is clear that preventative action and making safe decisions are the keys to reducing the number of injuries and fatal drownings in our communities because drowning is often silent and sudden.



Continuous reinforcement of these messages will bring about personal responsibility.



The Lifesaving Society provides individuals and communities with facts and strategies that make Alberta and the Northwest Territories safer places. To learn more on what can be done, visit us online at [www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org).

**44** Fatal drownings in AB.  
**7% increase** from 2007

**6** Fatal drownings in NWT.  
**50% increase** from 2007

## What:

- Fatal drownings involving recreational activities: 52% in AB and 67% in NWT.
- Alcohol or drugs were a factor in 34% of AB and 33% of the NWT fatal drownings. There were no alcohol-related boating drowning deaths in NWT or AB in 2008; however, more people were swimming or diving while intoxicated, which contributed to cause of death.

Ten of the 12 reported deaths (83%) were people aged 5 or older. Many were on medication or had pre-existing medical conditions such as epilepsy.

- Drownings in Alberta dugouts also increased by 11% from 2007, accounting for 18% of 2008 drowning deaths.
- 100% of NWT drowning deaths occurred in rivers or streams in 2008.

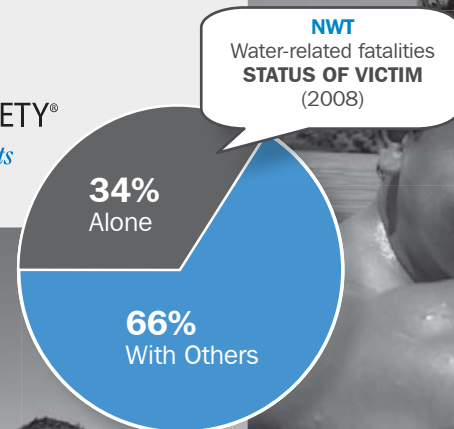
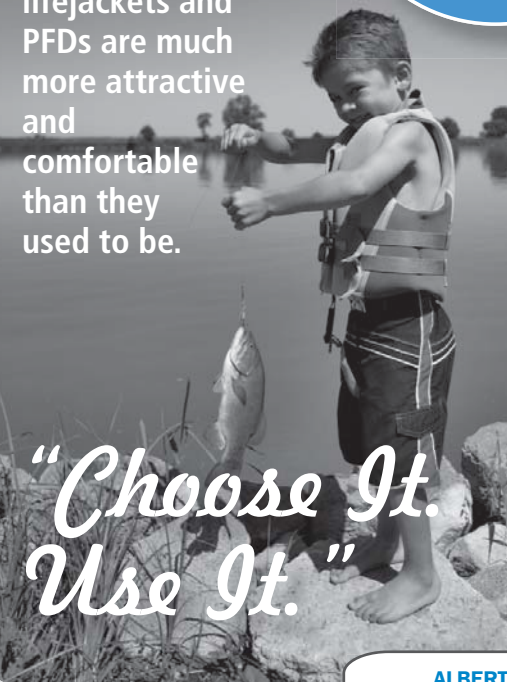
## Where/Why:

- 42% of Albertans and 100% of Northerners who drowned while boating were NOT wearing a lifejacket. In four NWT boating drowning cases, PFDs were present but not worn in all cases.
- Alberta bathtub drowning incidents increased by 10% from 2007, accounting for 27% of drowning deaths in 2008.

## Who:

- Males continue to account for the majority of casualties in drowning incidents: 75% in AB and 67% in NWT.
- Who is at the greatest risk? Individuals between the ages of 35-49 accounted for 31% of the total AB fatal drownings and 50 per cent in the NWT.

With new colours and styles, lifejackets and PFDs are much more attractive and comfortable than they used to be.



## Water Smart® Messages

**1. Within Arms' Reach** - If you're not within arms' reach of your child around the water, you've gone too far.

By age group, children 2-4 years of age have the second highest drowning risk. Most children were alone and playing near water when they fell in and drowned. This message applies to all water environments – bathtubs, backyard pools, lakes, rivers, streams.

**2. Wear a Lifejacket or a PFD** - Be caught wearing your lifejacket/PFD. It won't work if you don't wear it.

Many drowning victims were not wearing a PFD in situations where one was called for. Many people do not wear a PFD or lifejacket – they feel they can swim well enough; they think PFDs are uncomfortable to wear, and they're "not cool."

Would you try to do up your seatbelt as your car was crashing? You can't put on your lifejacket as you are falling out of the boat.

**3. Swim with a Buddy** - Never swim alone. Always swim with a buddy.

Few drownings occur under lifeguard supervision – play and swim at pools and waterfronts supervised by NLS certified lifeguards. Being alone is a contributing risk factor in many drownings, especially for young children, non- or weak swimmers, and those with seizure disorders. The victim is alone in almost all bathtub drownings and in the vast majority of backyard pool drownings.

**4. Check the Ice** - Check the ice before you go on it. Measure clean hard ice in several places.

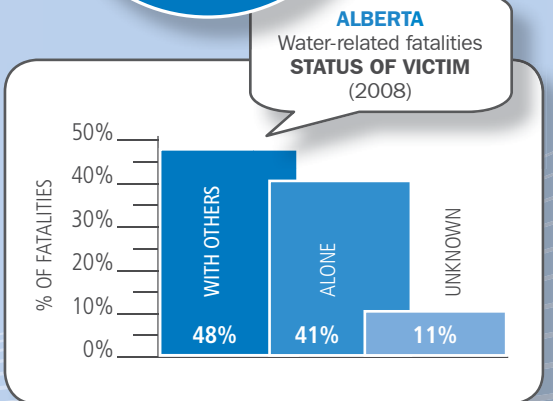
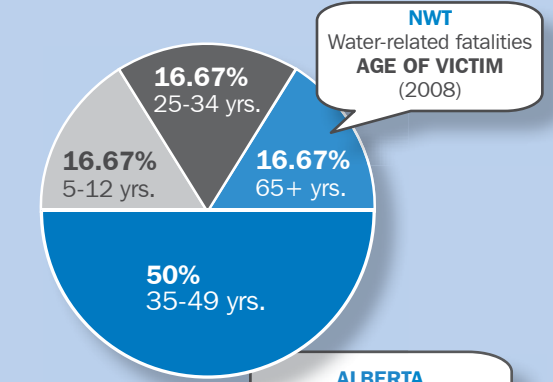
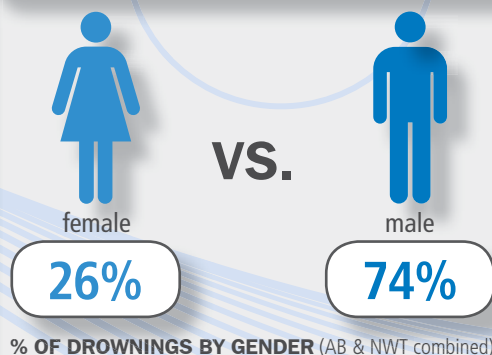
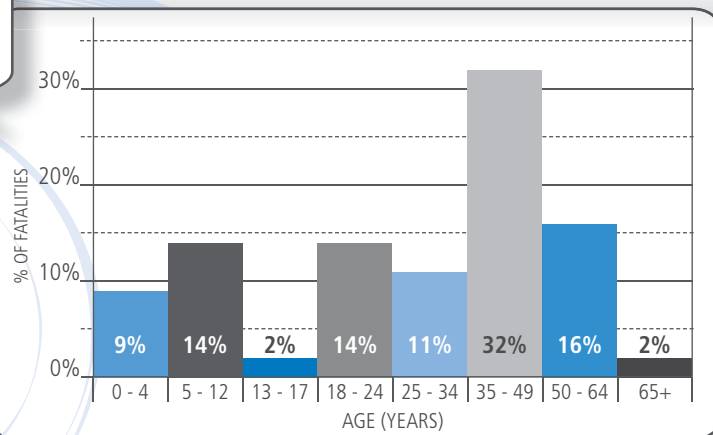
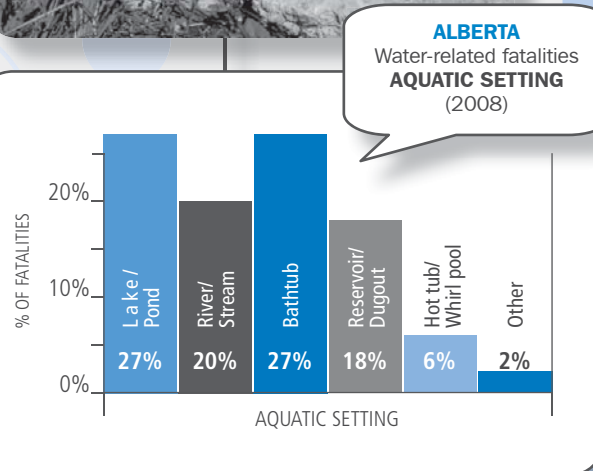
Most ice-related drownings occur on lakes due to varying temperature conditions, currents and snow thus requiring ice to be measured in several places.

**5. Swim to Survive** - The Canadian Swim to Survive Standard (S2S) is the minimum national standard of swimming skill for all children and an important first step to being safe in and around the water.

The S2S Standard defines the essential minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water:

- Roll into deep water
- Tread water for 1 minute
- Swim 50 m (in any manner)

Over the past year, more than 7,000 children in AB received the vital Swim to Survive training.



The Lifesaving Society 2010 Drowning & Injury Prevention Profile is based on the most current research data available, 2008.

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Please direct inquiries to the Lifesaving Society at 780-415-1755.

