

# Northwest Territories **Waterfront Safety Guide**



2014



## NORTHWEST TERRITORIES WATERFRONT SAFETY GUIDE

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

Annually, well over 1,000,000 Canadians participate in the Society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard, and leadership training programs. The Society set the standard for aquatic safety in Canada and certifies Canada's National Lifeguards.

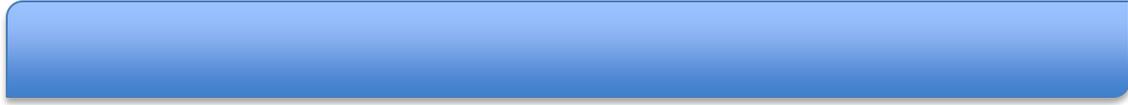
The Society is an independent, charitable organization educating Canadian lifesavers since the first Lifesaving Society Bronze Medallion Award was earned in 1896.

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

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## ***Acknowledgement***



The Lifesaving Society Alberta and Northwest Territories gratefully acknowledges the support of the Government of Northwest Territories.

## Canada's Lifeguarding Experts

- saving lives for over 100 years.

Almost 500 Canadians die every year in water-related incidents. Most of these are preventable and occur in unsupervised setting, which is why more Canadians need the basic swimming and lifesaving skills to save themselves in an aquatic emergency.

The Lifesaving Society has a long and proud history of teaching swimming and lifesaving to Canadians.

We trace our roots to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in London, England where we began as The Swimmers' Life Saving Society. In 1894, Arthur Lewis Cochrane brought the lifesaving skills he learned in his homeland to Canada. And he passed them along to participants at Upper Canada College in Toronto, Ontario. In June 1896, 18 of his participants were the first recipients of our distinguished Bronze Medallion award. Under the patronage of King Edward VII in 1904, we became The Royal Lifesaving Society.

In the 1950s, we were the first Canadian organization to adopt mouth-to-mouth as the methods of choice over manual methods of artificial respiration. We started our first CPR training program in the 1960s. In the 1980s, we initiated a project to design an economical CPR training manikin (ACTAR 911™), and we launched our Water Smart® drowning prevention campaign.

In the 1990s, the Society introduced innovative new programs including Boat Operator Accredited Training, the Junior Lifeguard Club and the Canadian Swim Patrol Program, and we launched our Aquatic Safety Management Service. We expanded our First Aid training programs and completely revamped the Bronze medal and the National Lifeguard training program to suit the needs of the new century.

In 2001, we defined the Canadian Swim to Survive® Standard and subsequently launched our Swim to Survive program to teach Canadians the minimum essential skills they need to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. Our learn-to-swim program – Swim for Life® - Is our latest drowning prevention initiative.

Today, we are known to Canadians simply as the Lifesaving Society, a national volunteer organization and registered charity. And while we've expanded our strengths over the past century to include research and public education, we have not forgotten the ideals that formed the foundation of our organization.

The Lifesaving Society has always been – and will continue to be – Canada's lifeguarding experts.

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# Introduction

Water-based activity is a way of life in the north. Small boats and ice travel are used for recreation, fishing, and daily living. Additionally, members of communities may swim in multiple different bodies of water. Sadly, this familiarity and ease of access also means a high number of drowning's. Over the past 10 years, more people have died from drowning in the NWT than from all traffic collisions, ATV, snowmobile, bicycle and pedestrian incidents combined.

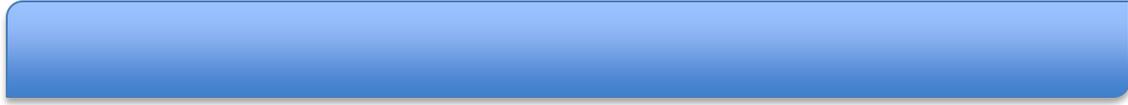
The intent of the Northwest Territories Waterfront Safety Guide is aimed at building awareness and providing education to members of your community. Primarily, the Waterfront Safety Guide will provide information that will assist you in providing a safer waterfront for your community and it's members.

The Northwest Territories Drowning Prevention Action Plan is an initiative under the Government of the Northwest Territories Healthy Choices Framework. The plan includes a commitment to establishing a sustainable Water Smart® Program in each community of the Northwest Territories. The Lifesaving Society has a health and safety mandate for drowning and injury prevention, recreation and active living. Through support from communities like yours, our collective efforts will work toward a sustainable Water Smart® Program to help make the NWT a safer place to live, work and play.

The Lifesaving Society – Canada's lifeguarding experts – is a charitable organization working to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® education, water-incident research, safety management services and lifesaving sport. Annually, more than 1,000,000 Canadians participate in the Society's swimming, lifesaving, lifeguard and leadership training courses.

This Northwest Territories Waterfront Safety Guide has been designed to supplement the existing Northwest Territories Water Smart® Program. The Northwest Territories Waterfront Safety Guide is designed for UNSUPERVISED waterfronts. For information on supervised waterfronts please contact the Lifesaving Society ABNWT.

## **How to use this guide**



-This guide has information to help you identify and create a **safer** UNSUPERVISED waterfront for your community

-Make sure to read over the information carefully so you understand everything

-Always make sure to be safe in, on and around water



## Section 1: Identifying Your Waterfront

In the Northwest Territories every community is unique and may have multiple varying bodies of water. Identifying your waterfront and establishing its purpose is the first step in creating a safer waterfront for your community.

### Waterfront Types

A **River** is moving water that flows in a channel, constantly changing due to weather or seasonal temperatures. Rivers can change the landscape, eroding the soil and rocks along the riverbed.



**Lakes** are relatively large bodies of fresh water that can vary in depths. Strong winds can cause currents and small shore waves.



**Oceans** are large bodies of salt water that surround the coastline. Oceans have currents, waves, and tides. Because the tides come in and out the shoreline also changes.

## Location

### Location

is an important factor in deciding where to create your waterfront. Is your waterfront location good for boating or swimming? Is your waterfront easy to access and close to emergency services? Is your waterfront free of hazards?



**Boat launch and boating areas should be separated from swimming areas**

**Docks are great for fishing and boating**



**A waterfront with a safe entry point is good for swimming**

**What waterfronts are in your community?**

## Northwest Territories Waterfront Safety Guide



With four **Seasons** affecting the weather and temperature, the water freezes and thaws every year.

- ✚ In the Spring the old ice thaws, breaks up, and melts away
- ✚ Then in the Summer the water warms up enough to go swimming
- ✚ Fall comes and the water becomes too cold to swim in and the ice starts to form
- ✚ The Winter freezes the water over and the ice becomes thick enough to travel on

A safe waterfront adds value to your community and promotes healthy and active living. Varying **Activities** happen throughout the year in, on, and around water.



- Swimming
- Sun tanning
- Beach volleyball
- Boating
- Fishing



- Snowmobiling
- Ice Fishing
- Skating
- Dogsledding
- ATV 4 wheeling



*-Katlodeeche*

## Hazards

Many things can affect the safety of a waterfront. Identifying and controlling hazards can improve the safety of your waterfront. Conditions can change so it is important to assess for hazards every time you visit the waterfront.

- Cold Water

- Underwater objects

- Varying depths and sudden drop offs

- Currents

- Waves

- Changing tides

- Rapids and Waterfalls

- Wildlife

- Weather

- Ice



- 21C° is considered cold water, which can put you at risk for hypothermia
- Remember to use an appropriate feet first entry when entering water
- Always check the water depth and identify the location of drop offs
- Be aware of currents
- Waves can change with the weather
- Be aware of the shoreline as it changes
- Avoid swimming in rapids and near waterfalls, clearly mark where swimming is not allowed
- Be cautious of wildlife
- Check the weather forecast before you go to the waterfront
- Test the ice thickness before going out on the ice

***What waterfront hazards are in your community?***

## Section 2: Creating a Safer Waterfront

Now that you have identified your waterfront location, its purpose, and hazards, you can start creating your safer waterfront.

### Waterfront Safety Checklist

#### Waterfront Type:

River

Lake

Ocean

#### Ask yourself:

Who will be using the waterfront?

What types of activities will occur at the waterfront?

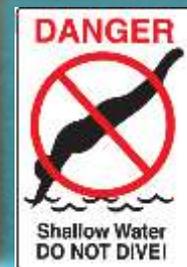
What size do you want the waterfront area to be?

*-Ulukhaktok*

### Signage

Signs should be placed in areas where people can easily see them. Signs should be large and give specific information for the waterfront. Signs should be appropriate and easy to understand.

*-Sachs Harbour*



## SAFE ENTRIES

Waterfronts change over time making it important to check the safety of the water every time before entering the water.



### Prevent injuries by:

- ✓ Walk the waterfront and the shore line checking for any hazards
- ✓ Do a visual check of the water to see if there is glass, metal, or other dangerous debris
- ✓ Carefully wade into the water using your feet to sweep the bottom for any obstacles; rocks, large sticks, holes, weeds, sudden drop offs etc.  
\*Wear shoes or sandals to protect your feet!
- ✓ Learn where the dangers are and stay away from them
- ✓ Check the depth of the water with a pole or stick, and feel for any currents



## Emergency Equipment

Every UNSUPERVISED waterfront should have the following emergency equipment:



**WARNING**  
NO LIFEGUARD  
ON DUTY  
SWIM AT YOUR  
OWN RISK

## Lifejackets Save Lives



By providing lifejackets at your waterfront you can promote their use and safety.

**A lifejacket should be:**

- **Snug, but still allow for the arms and waist to bend**
- **Easy to put on and take off**
- **Comfortable and warm**
- **Not ride up past your nose and ears if it is pulled up at the shoulders**

**For more information on emergency equipment and lifejacket safety please visit: [www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org)**

## Designated Swimming Area

- Boating and swimming areas should be separated  
\*If both activities occur in the same area separate points of entry are recommended
- Any permanent hazards (eg. non-moveable rocks, sudden changes in depths such as drop offs) should be clearly marked
- If possible limit access to the designated swimming area to one point of entry
- The swimming area should be surrounded on all watersides with a continuous float line of rope and buoys
- The depth of the swimming area should be checked regularly. Currents, storms, and ice can shift the bottom and move rocks

-Yellowknife

### Don't Forget!

- Swim with a buddy, NEVER swim alone
- Supervise small children at all times and always *Stay within arms reach*
- Wear a lifejacket
- Stay within the designated swimming area and do not exceed your swimming ability
- Check for hazards every time you visit the waterfront
- Swim only in daylight

-Katlodeeche

## Section 3: Risk Management

This is general information to provide education on principals of waterfront risk management.

### 1. How is the condition of the area of the waterfront?

- a. How is the condition of the water?
  - i. Temperature
  - ii. Sudden underwater drop offs
  - iii. Underwater hazards
- b. How is the condition of the beach?
  - i. Sandy or rocky
  - ii. Hazards and cleanliness
  - iii. Easy access and safe entry points

### 2. How can you manage the activities at the waterfront?

What kind of signs can be posted to provide the community with guidance as to safe and unsafe activities?

Regular checks of the waterfront can provide an opportunity to observe activities and remind community members what is safe and unsafe.

### 3. How water safety aware is your community?

It is unreasonable to expect that community conduct can be controlled. With the support of public education, waterfront safety can be achieved within your community.

Informational rack cards, community awareness events, and water safety programs are ways to promote waterfront safety.

The Lifesaving Society's Northwest Territories Water Smart® Program is an excellent resource for water safety programming and public education materials.



## 7 layers of protection

Levels of Protection	Primary Signage	Secondary Signage	Public Education	Rescue Equipment	Emergency Communication	Basic Staff Training
1	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
2	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
3	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
4	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
5	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
6	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
7	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

### Level 1: No protection

No levels of protection are present at the waterfront.

### Level 2 & 3: Signage

Primary signage contains general warnings and should be located in an area that allows the best opportunity to capture the attention of community members before they enter the waterfront area.

Secondary Signage contains more specific information pertaining to an area of the waterfront. Secondary signage should be located near the area of concern, and should include symbols and graphics to overcome language and comprehension barriers. Secondary signage may be used to reinforce primary signage.

### Level 4: Public Education

Distributing educational materials throughout your community can assist in preparing them for safe use of the waterfront.

- ❖ Informational rack cards in community centers and buildings
- ❖ Informational rack cards at the waterfront
- ❖ Local radio public service announcements

*-Wekweeti*

**For more information on public education materials  
please visit: [www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org)**

### Level 5: Public Rescue Equipment

The decision to locate rescue equipment, for use by the community in case of an emergency, is open to discussion. The potential for theft and vandalism is an issue. One option is to place rescue equipment out only during the day and place it somewhere safe at night.

### Level 6: Emergency Communication & Incident Response Considerations

In the case of an injury or emergency, emergency services may need to be contacted. Things to consider for your waterfront:

- Have an emergency phone located at the waterfront
- Post the contact numbers for all emergency services
- Post directions to the nearest emergency services

### Level 7: Staff Training

Additional training could include educating Staff (Recreation Coordinator, Summer Student, etc.) on water safety and waterfront safe practices. There are various levels of training that staff can access based on their role and comfort with the water and the level of risk involved. Standardized training in water rescue could provide personnel trained to use rescue equipment appropriate to their level of training. Programs and training can be customized for each waterfront.



**What level of protection is your waterfront fall under?**

For more information on waterfront safety training and programs please visit: [www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org)

## Section 4: Utilizing Your Waterfront

All communities can benefit from having a safer waterfront. By using this guide you can assess your waterfront and create a safer waterfront in your community. The key to keeping your waterfront safe is through public education that promotes behavior change. The Lifesaving Society NWT Water Smart® program has been used all over the territory and is an excellent resource for water safety education.

**Water Smart®**

**The Water Smart® Program is comprised of 3 modules:**

- 1. Water Smart Experience**
  - a. Lifejacket/PFD Safety**
  - b. Boat Safety**
  - c. Ice Safety**
- 2. Swim to Survive**
- 3. Waterfront and Boat Launch Safety**

**Keep watch.**  
Be Water Smart®

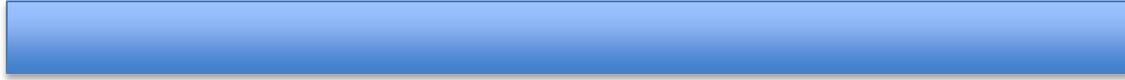
**Choose It. Use It.**  
Be Water Smart®

LIFESAVING SOCIETY  
The Lifesaving Experts

www.lifesaving.org

**For more information on Water Smart® please visit:**  
[www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org)

## Resources



If you have any questions or would like to order equipment, informational rack cards, or Water Smart toolkit, please contact the Lifesaving Society at 780-415-1755 or [experts@lifesaving.org](mailto:experts@lifesaving.org). This Waterfront Safety Guide will be available for download at [www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org).

## HOW TO REACH US

**For more information about Lifesaving Society programs and services, contact the branch in your area.**

### **Alberta & Northwest Territories Branch**

13123 - 156 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5V 1V2  
Telephone: (780) 415-1755  
Fax: (780) 427-9334  
E-mail: [experts@lifesaving.org](mailto:experts@lifesaving.org)  
Website: [www.lifesaving.org](http://www.lifesaving.org)

### **British Columbia & Yukon Branch**

112 - 3989 Henning Drive  
Burnaby, British Columbia V5C 6N5  
Telephone: (604) 299-5450  
Fax: (604) 299-5795  
E-mail: [info@lifesaving.bc.ca](mailto:info@lifesaving.bc.ca)  
Website: [www.lifesaving.bc.ca](http://www.lifesaving.bc.ca)

### **Manitoba Branch**

504 - 138 Portage Avenue East  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0A1  
Telephone: (204) 956-2124  
Fax: (204) 944-8546  
E-mail: [aquatics@lifesaving.mb.ca](mailto:aquatics@lifesaving.mb.ca)  
Website: [www.lifesaving.mb.ca](http://www.lifesaving.mb.ca)

### **National Office**

287 McArthur Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario K1L 6P3  
Telephone: (613) 746-5694  
Fax: (613) 746-9929  
E-mail: [experts@lifesaving.ca](mailto:experts@lifesaving.ca)  
Website: [www.lifesaving.ca](http://www.lifesaving.ca)

### **New Brunswick Branch**

55 Whiting Road, Unit 34  
Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5Y5  
Telephone: (506) 455-LSNB (5762)  
Fax: (506)450-SWIM (7946)  
E-mail: [lifesave@nb.aibn.com](mailto:lifesave@nb.aibn.com)  
Website: [www.lifesavingnb.ca](http://www.lifesavingnb.ca)

### **Newfoundland & Labrador Branch**

P.O. Box 8065, Station "A"  
St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 3M9  
Telephone: (709) 576-1953  
Fax: (709) 738-1475  
E-mail: [lifeguard@nl.rogers.com](mailto:lifeguard@nl.rogers.com)  
Website: [www.lifesavingnl.ca](http://www.lifesavingnl.ca)

### **Nova Scotia Branch**

5516 Spring Garden Road  
Box 3010 South  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3G6  
Telephone: (902) 425-5450  
Fax: (902) 425-5606  
E-mail: [experts@lifesavingsociety.ns.ca](mailto:experts@lifesavingsociety.ns.ca)  
Website: [www.lifesavingsociety.ns.ca](http://www.lifesavingsociety.ns.ca)

### **Ontario Branch**

400 Consumers Road  
Toronto, Ontario M2J 1P8  
Telephone: (416) 490-8844  
Fax: (416) 490-8766  
E-mail: [experts@lifeguarding.com](mailto:experts@lifeguarding.com)  
Website: [www.lifesavingsociety.com](http://www.lifesavingsociety.com)

### **Prince Edward Island Branch**

P.O.Box 2411  
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 4A0  
Telephone: (902) 368-7757  
Fax: (902) 368-7757  
E-mail: [pei.lifesaving@islandtelecom.com](mailto:pei.lifesaving@islandtelecom.com)  
Website: [www.lifesavingpei.ca](http://www.lifesavingpei.ca)

### **Quebec Branch**

4545 Pierre de Coubertin Avenue P.O. Box  
1000, Station "M" Montreal, Quebec H1V  
3R2  
Telephone: (514) 252-3100 or 1-800-265-3093  
Fax: (514) 254-6232  
E-mail: [alerte@sauvetage.qc.ca](mailto:alerte@sauvetage.qc.ca)  
Website: [www.sauvetage.qc.ca](http://www.sauvetage.qc.ca)

### **Saskatchewan Branch**

2224 Smith Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 2P4  
Telephone: (306) 780-9255  
Fax: (306) 780-9498  
E-mail: [lifesaving@sasktel.net](mailto:lifesaving@sasktel.net)  
Website: [www.lifesavingsociety.sk.ca](http://www.lifesavingsociety.sk.ca)

