

Would You Know What to Do?



Emergencies can happen anywhere, anytime. In an aquatic emergency, every second counts. Survival depends on quick rescue and immediate care.

Know how to recognize an emergency.

- Many emergencies can happen quickly and silently.
- Know how to tell if a swimmer is in distress or is drowning. A distressed swimmer or drowning victim needs help immediately!
 - A swimmer in distress may still try to swim but makes little or no forward progress. If not helped, a swimmer in distress will soon become a drowning victim.
 - An active drowning victim may be vertical in the water but unable to move forward or tread water. An active drowning victim may try to press down with the arms at the side in an instinctive attempt to keep the head above the water.
 - A passive drowning victim is motionless and floating face down on the bottom or near the surface of the water.
- Do not assume that a swimmer in distress is joking or playing around.

Know how to respond to an aquatic emergency.

- If someone is missing, check the water first.
- Reach or throw, don't go.
- Know how and when to call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.
- Enroll in Red Cross water safety, first aid and CPR courses to learn what to do.

Have the right equipment.

- Have reaching and throwing equipment on hand, such as ring buoys or reaching poles, or even a water jug tied to a rope or a broom.
- Whenever boating or near water, even if you don't expect to go in, always have U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets available. Life jackets should be the proper size for each individual and in good condition.
- Have cell phones or portable phones nearby to help ensure that you can quickly call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency.
- Have a well-stocked first aid kit on hand. Ensure that you know how to use the equipment and that expiration dates have not passed.

For more information or to enroll in Swimming and Water Safety courses, contact your local Red Cross chapter.

