

Water and Boating Safety.

The worst case!!

Drowning – A Definition

Drowning has been identified as a major global health problem. In 2002 world experts in clinical medicine, injury epidemiology, education and rescue developed an internationally accepted definition for drowning.

Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/ immersion in liquid.

It is important to note that the definition allows for both cases of fatal and non-fatal drowning which it is believed will lead to more reliable and comprehensive information on this global public health problem.

It is salutary that in New Zealand, for every one fatality there are 8 near fatal drowning incidents.

Death By Drowning

This account explains the physiology involved in the process of drowning.

“Researchers have shown that a human in a drowning situation holds their breathe for 87 seconds. That’s how long the instinct not to

breathe can overcome the thought of running out of air, how long a sort of clear headedness lasts. Eighty-seven is the break point.

Until the break point a drowning person is said to be undergoing “voluntary apnea” – choosing not to breathe. Lack of oxygen to the brain causes a sensation of darkness closing in from all sides. The panic of a drowning person is mixed with the odd incredulity that this is actually happening. Having never drowned before the body and the mind do not know how to die gracefully.

When the first involuntary breath is taken most people are still conscious, which is unfortunate because the only thing more unpleasant than running out of air is breathing water. At this point the person goes from voluntary to involuntary apnea and the drowning begins in earnest.

A spasmodic breath drags water into the mouth and windpipe and then one of two things happens. In about 10 percent of people water touching the vocal cords triggers an immediate contraction in the muscles around the larynx. This is called laryngospasm and it’s so powerful that it overcomes

SAFETY:



Introduction continued:

the breathing reflex and eventually suffocates the person. A person with laryngospasm dies without water in the lungs.

In the other 90 per cent of people water floods the lungs and ends any warning transfer of oxygen to the blood. The clock is running down now; half-conscious and enfeebled by oxygen depletion, the drowning person is in no condition to fight.

They have suffered for a minute or two. Their bodies, having imposed increasingly drastic measures to keep functioning, have finally started to shut down. Only the brain is alive, but its electrical activity gets weaker and weaker until, after 15-20 minutes, it ceases altogether.”²

[1] *Bulletin of World Health Organization, November 2005*

[2] *Copyright 1997 Sebastian Junger. Published by Fourth Estate. Reproduced with permission of Stuart Krichevsky Literary Agency.*

The safety practices we will learn during this training session are aimed at avoiding the above worst case scenario as well as various levels of personal and injury to others.

Learn to swim and survive

The first protection one should consider from drowning is not to get into a situation where you are at risk, and that means do not go boating if you cannot swim and without adequate preparation such as life preservers.

I have met people in my time in the New Zealand Navy that could not swim. They could however float in full gear for the Navies required 20 minutes treading water.

Boating Safety

Ask a boatie about safety and they will most likely tell you they are safe enough already. They equate boating safety with equipment – like life jackets, fire extinguishers, and radios – and forget that safety is really a matter of their own behavior.

Skipper Responsibility

It's very easy to own a boat in New Zealand but with boat ownership comes the responsibility for the safety of all your passengers and your equipment.

The Skipper aboard any boat is in charge. Make that fact quite clear to all concerned before starting on any boating

SAFETY:

Introduction continued:

journey. Always;

* **Ensure** you have aboard the necessary equipment for the trip you intend to make.

* **Make** sure everyone on board knows what safety equipment is carried, where it is stowed and how it works.

* **Have** on board a life jacket or buoyancy aid that meets NZ Standard 5823:2001 or has otherwise been accepted by the Maritime NZ, in the right size and type, for every person on the boat;

* **Wear** life jackets when crossing river bars, during emergencies, in rough water or at times of heightened risk. Children and all non-swimmers should always wear their life jacket when on board unless inside an enclosed area such as a cabin;

* **Operate** your boat, so as not to endanger people or property.

* **Never** overload your boat with either people or equipment.

* **Make** sure everything on board is properly stowed and secured.

* **Ensure** everyone is sitting safely and holding on when in choppy seas or when travelling at speed.

* **Maintain** your boat, its motor, electrics and equipment and check everything before you go out.

* **Get** a marine weather forecast before you head out, listen for regular updates while you are out and remember to check the tides. If in doubt don't go out;

* **Leave** a note with someone responsible, detailing where you are going, how many people you have on board and when you will return.

For more detailed information for the recreational boatie, visit www.boatsafe.org.nz

Or

<http://www.boatsafe.com/>

You and your tutors to cover all the necessary safety aspects of boating will use the following guides. Copies of these can be found in your appendices and/or resource folder.

[Safe Boating - An Essential Guide](#) (948KB)

[2 Minute Form](#) (86KB)

[Skipper Responsibility Sticker](#) (937KB)

[Waka Ama Safety Guidelines](#) (692KB)

SAFETY: