



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

# SWIM SAFELY IN OPEN WATERS

(LAKES, RIVERS, ETC.)

Swimming in open water is different and more difficult than in a swimming pool. You can tire more quickly and get into trouble due to waves, current, lack of experience, exhaustion, or your abilities have decreased.

## DROWNING IS SILENT

The four signs of drowning are head back, mouth open, not yelling, and arms slapping the water surface.



## DROWNING IS QUICK

It can take 20 seconds for a child to drown and 60 seconds for an adult to drown.



DROWNING IS THE

**3<sup>RD</sup> Leading Cause**

Of Unintentional Injury Death For  
Adults Ages 18 – 44,

**5<sup>TH</sup> Leading Cause**

For Adults Ages 45 – 64, And

**8<sup>TH</sup> Leading Cause**

For Adults Ages 65+<sup>1</sup>

## EVEN GOOD SWIMMERS DROWN

**47%** of USACE public recreation fatalities are associated with swimming in areas not designated for swimming, including swimming in association with boats.<sup>2</sup>

## GAMES CAN BE DEADLY

Shallow water blackout can occur and kill while holding your breath too long while swimming.

Challenging someone to swim across a cove or to an object such as a buoy can cause them to exceed their swimming ability and drown.



## SWIMMING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL/DRUGS

You can suffer an inner ear condition (Caloric Labyrinthitis) if you swim, jump, or fall underwater while under the influence of alcohol/drugs that causes you to become disoriented and not know which way is up.



## LIFE SAVING TIPS



**Wear A Properly Fitted Life Jacket  
When Swimming, Floating, Playing,  
Or Wading In Open Water**



**Learn To Swim  
And Float Well**



**Ask Others To Wear  
Their Life Jackets**



**Swim With A Buddy,  
Never Swim Alone**



**When Your Boat, Beach Ball,  
Or Some Other Object Floats Away  
Please Let It Go Or Wear  
A Life Jacket To Retrieve It**



<sup>1</sup> – Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

<sup>2</sup> – Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), National Operations Center for Water Safety