



Water Safety USA Encourages People to ‘Become Water Competent’

Many people underestimate the risks of being in, on, and around the water

Colorado Springs, COLORADO, May 8, 2018 - [Water Safety USA](http://www.watersafetyusa.org), a consortium of 14 national governmental and non-governmental organizations, announces the 2018 water safety message: “Become Water Competent.” There are three key elements of water competence: water smarts, water skills, and helping others.

Why is being **water competent** a particularly important concept for children and adults during the swim season? Drowning is a major cause of accidental death and can be a surprisingly fast, silent event. A drowning can occur as easily as a child or adult losing their footing from a stumble in the water, then panicking when unable to easily reach safety. People are often unable to call for help and sometimes can’t even make it a few feet to safety.

Learning and using water smarts can help prevent drowning, which can happen within just a few short moments without proper supervision. Having water skills and the ability to help others is an important part of being water competent because rescues need to happen quickly so that the person can breathe and survive without brain damage. Fortunately, drowning situations can be avoided with good planning and being prepared.

Water smarts include things like knowing your limitations, swimming in safe areas, knowing how to handle common water hazards, and wearing a life jacket while boating.

Water skills you should learn and be able to do include stepping or jumping into water over your head and returning to the surface, controlling breathing while floating or treading water and swimming at least 25 yards to safety, and exiting the water safely, for example.

Helping others involves skills like providing close supervision to anyone in your care, knowing the signs of drowning, knowing how to safely rescue others, and learning CPR.

The risks and water safety skills you will need vary by environment. For example, what it takes to be water competent in the ocean is very different from what it takes to be water competent in a pool. Know the waters and be sure that you are water competent in the locations that you and your family will be visiting this summer.

There are additional aspects to becoming water competent. Learn more at www.watersafetyusa.org/water-competency. For an infographic please see: <https://www.watersafetyusa.org/water-competency.html#infographic>.

“Becoming water competent will help make you and your loved ones safer,” said Catherine Barry of the American Red Cross, a founding member organization of Water Safety USA. “It will also help reduce the number of water accidents nationwide. Water Safety USA suggests that every person takes some time to become water competent this year.”

As the swim season begins later this month, Water Safety USA wants adults and children around the nation to be safer and more aware in, on, and around the water. To learn more about the water competence and how you and your family can be safer this summer during your fun in the sun, please visit watersafetyusa.com. We encourage all swimmers and aquatic professionals to share this messaging any way possible, because it could save a life.

About Water Safety USA

Water Safety USA is a consortium of leading national governmental and nongovernmental organizations with a strong record of providing drowning prevention and water safety programs. Our mission is to empower people with resources, information, and tools to safely enjoy and benefit from our nation's aquatic environments. Learn more about Water Safety USA and how to swim and why, visit <http://www.watersafetyusa.org>