



## MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Swimming Safety is a Must This National Drowning Prevention Week Revisit Safety Basics

**July 20, 2011 (Toronto, ON)** – July 16 – 23<sup>rd</sup> is National Drowning Prevention Week and St. John Ambulance would like to encourage people to review their swimming safety basics. Last year 237 Canadians, the majority of which were Ontarians, died from drowning – a 9% increase over 2009. According to the World Health Organization drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury/death worldwide.

Before you and your family hit the water for some refreshing fun, make sure to go over some basic water safety tips.

**Get Some Class.** Encourage everyone in the family to take swimming lessons; they will learn to become stronger swimmers and recognize when they need a break.

**First and Foremost.** Learn first aid. Knowing what to do in an emergency is incredibly empowering and can help you make the difference in the survival outcome of a friend or loved one.

**Supervise for Safety.** Under no circumstances should children be left unsupervised while they are around a pool or body of water, this includes bathtubs; buckets and kiddie pools.

**Arms Length.** If you are farther than arms length from your toddler then you've gone too far. Children exhaust easily and can slip beneath the water in a heart beat.

**Floating Fun.** Young children and weak swimmers should wear a lifejacket – remember a life jacket does NOT replace supervision.

**Adults Only.** Adults should be the only ones acting as supervisors. Do not leave it in the hands of older children or siblings.

**No Diving.** Most home pools are not deep enough for diving and in open bodies of water it is difficult to see what lies beneath the surface.

#### **Special Considerations for Open Water:**

**Look for Lifeguards.** Swim only where there is a lifeguard on duty. He or she is your life line in the water and your link to medical assistance on the land – know where he or she is and how to get a hold of him/her. If there is no lifeguard on duty you are swimming at your own risk.

**Obey the Sign.** If a sign says no swimming - don't swim in that area. There is probably a very good reason that sign is there.

**Buoy oh Buoy.** Pay attention to buoys and other markers in the water. These usually signal danger either from deep water, strong currents or vehicle traffic (canoes, kayaks, seadoos). Do not pass these markers.

**Beware of hypothermia.** Just because it's a beautiful hot day doesn't mean the water is warm at all. Hypothermia can happen at 15°C and it happens much faster when you are immersed in water. Watch for shivering, slurred speech, or bluish hue to the skin as signs it's time to get warmed up.



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**No Dam Way:** Stay away from canals, dams, waste weirs and any type of water control structure! They create strong currents and powerful undertows that can easily pull you under. In Ontario it is illegal to be within 40 meters (jumping, swimming, fishing, scuba diving, bathing, etc) of a dam, violators will be fined.

For more information on CPR, AED or first aid training, visit [www.sja.ca/on](http://www.sja.ca/on) or contact your local St. John Ambulance Branch Office.

For over 125 years St. John Ambulance has been teaching first aid in Ontario. Today we train over 155,000 Ontarians annually in first aid and other health care related courses and remains dedicated to saving lives at work, home and play. With over 4,000 volunteers contributing over half a million hours of community service a year, St. John Ambulance is an integral part of the community offering such unique and innovative programs as; medical first response, disaster response, car seat clinics, health and safety related youth programs and therapy dog services. As a charitable, humanitarian organization, proceeds from St. John Ambulance's first aid training and first aid product sales directly support these vital community services programs. For more information on St. John Ambulance training courses and volunteer opportunities or to contact your local branch.

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