

FH manager and USCG Auxiliary member advocates water and boating safety

After car accidents, drowning is the second most frequent cause of accidental death for youth 14 years and under, and is the number-one killer of children under the age of four. Every year, hundreds of children drown at home, victims of accidents in swimming pools and bathtubs.

In summer and at the beginning of fishing and boating seasons, public service announcements remind us to exercise caution and wear lifejackets around our state's waterways to prevent drowning.

Year-round, Fluor Hanford's John Umbarger, manager of Fluor Hanford's Community Programs and member of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 85, personally takes this message to Hanford workers and community members as the public affairs representative for both the USCG Aids to Navigation Team (ANT) Kennewick station on Clover Island and USCG Auxiliary Flotilla 85.

Umbarger presents his tips on avoiding drowning in the many safety presentations he gives to Hanford workers, local service and community groups. Umbarger is also a regular teacher for the eight-hour boating safety course taught to local boaters.

Here are some of the measures to avoid drowning that Umbarger presents:

- At home, never ever leave a very young child unsupervised in a pool or tub, not even for a minute to run to another area or to answer the phone.
- Learn to swim and use approved swimming areas protected by lifeguards. Never dive into small backyard above-ground pools. Too many spinal injuries happen, leaving the victim either dead or handicapped for life.
- Always try to swim or boat with a buddy. Remember the old Boy Scout "buddy system"? It works.
- Never mix alcohol with swimming or boating. When an accident occurs, you will need all of your abilities unimpaired by the alcohol to save your life and the lives of your family members or friends.
- Always wear your life jacket when you are boating. Put life jackets on children before getting to the dock. A life jacket is impossible to put on once you are in the water, assuming you can even find it in time. The cold water of Washington lakes and rivers makes this doubly important because hypothermia quickly saps both your strength and ability to hold on to anything floating.
- Have your boat inspected by the USCG Auxiliary for free.
- Take a boating safety class such as the one taught by the USCG Auxiliary.

Are you interested in serving our community and our country? Umbarger recommends you consider joining the Auxiliary, an integral arm of the USCG in its homeland-defense role. The Auxiliary's 35,000 volunteers nationally perform all USCG functions, missions and duties except law enforcement and military operations. The Auxiliary was chartered by Congress in 1939 and calls itself America's Volunteer Lifesavers. The Auxiliary provides almost \$1 billion in service each year to the government and public at a fraction of that cost.

Contact Umbarger at 372-1551 for more information on the USGS Auxiliary, its services, classes and opportunities for community involvement. ■



During a recent employee safety meeting, Bill Ritter and Manny DeLeon of Fluor Hanford participated in an exercise conducted by John Umbarger demonstrating the need to have and wear the appropriately-sized life jacket while boating. Ritter, who is wearing a child's life jacket, may not have survived a real-life boating accident. Umbarger urges everyone to wear an appropriately-sized life jacket at all times while boating.