# **Safety Tips for Those Working Around Water**

#### **WHAT'S AT STAKE?**

People who aren't expecting to end up in water often are not prepared for that possibility and the results can be tragic. Every year in the United States and Canada, an estimated 3,800 people drown, with many of these victims being people who ended up in the water unintentionally.

#### WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Imagine you took an unexpected tumble into water, fully clothed and maybe dragged down by a tool belt or other gear. What if you were alone and there was no one nearby to help? What if you were a weak swimmer or a non-swimmer?

### **Example**

An 18-year-old worker was using a tractor to grade soil on a grassy bank, when the machine and its young operator slid into the water. The worker, a non-swimmer, surfaced once and then slipped below the surface and drowned. A police officer operating a Zodiac boat fell out of it while making a turn. The officer was wearing a bulletproof vest, his duty belt and boots. Unfortunately, he was not wearing a lifejacket. Witnesses saw him surface once before he drowned.

#### **HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF**

When you're required to work close to, on or above water, be sure that these safety measures are in place in case you or a coworker falls into water:

- Water-edge ladders— ladders that lead out of the water—are located at intervals along the edge of the water.
- Lifejackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs) are available to workers who could potentially fall into the water.
- There's a buddy system in place so that a coworker will use a reaching pole, rope or life ring to help save someone who enters the water unexpectedly.

- A reaching pole, rope and/or life ring is available, and you know where to find the equipment.
- A rescue boat is available.
- There are strong swimmers in the work crew who are capable of rescuing people who fall into the water.
- Someone on the crew is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- If you're working alone, you're required to notify others of your whereabouts and check in periodically.
- You have a whistle to blow in an emergency.
- If working above water, you're using fall protection gear.
- You're wearing appropriate slip-resistant footwear.
- You have blankets or a heat source nearby, such as a vehicle with a heater, to warm a person who has fallen into cold water and may be suffering from hypothermia.

#### **FINAL WORD**

The shock of unexpectedly falling into water, particularly freezing cold or fast-moving water, can quickly cause panic to set in. If your work takes you near water, ensure you are wearing the right gear, including a PFD, to keep you afloat and alive until help arrives.

## QUIZ

- 1. How many people are estimated to drown each year in the US and Canada?
  - a. 300
  - b. 3,800
  - c. 14,000
  - d. 100,000
- 2. What should be made available to workers who could end up in the water unintentionally?
- 3. A buddy system can help workers watch out for one another and be prepared to save someone who falls into water.
  - True
  - False
- 4. What should you do if you're going to be working alone near, above or on the water?
- 5. Your work crew should have some strong swimmers who are trained in rescue in case someone falls into the water.
  - o True
  - False

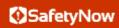
#### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

As someone who has come close to drowning after falling into water fully clothed, you are concerned about that happening to someone in your work crew. Workers are working near fast-moving water without lifejackets and no one on your crew is a strong swimmer. What should you do?

# **BEFORE THE TALK - TIPS AFTER THE TALK- CHECKLIST** 1. Assess your work area and tasks for hazards PROVIDED FOLLOW-UP TO WORKERS THAT DID involving open water. Share your findings at your meeting. **POORLY ON THE QUIZ** NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Ask workers to think of jobs where drowning might occur. Encourage creativity! What about DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ winemakers, pool cleaners, truck drivers or city workers collecting roadside litter? **OBSERVED WORKERS** 3. Find out how participants can further their first TASK(S): \_\_\_\_\_ aid and CPR skills. Are there courses sponsored by the company, or offered through DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ community programs? 4. All of us need to be aware of water safety when REFRESHER TRAINING TOPIC(S): \_\_\_\_\_ we travel, swim, go boating or take a stroll along the seashore or lakeside. Use this safety meeting as an opportunity to remind everyone about off-the-job safety. OTHER (DESCRIBE): 5. Most people who are killed in boating incidents MEETING DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ die of drowning. Three major factors contribute LOCATION: to these deaths: inability to swim, alcohol and the effects of cold water. Water cools the body off much faster than air of the same temperature, which is why falling into cold water can quickly kill you. **NOTES**

#### **ANSWERS:**

- 1. B
- 2. Lifejackets or personal flotation devices (PFDs),
- 3. True,
- 4. Tell others where you'll be working and check in periodically, 5 True



ATTENDANCE		
INSTRUCTOR:	DATE:	
SAFETY TALK:		