Lake Tapps Safety Information

Lake Tapps is deceptively cold. Lake Tapps is fed with glacial water from Mount Rainier, so hyperthermia can set in. So while at the surface the water temperature may be 60 to 70 degrees, a couple feet under it can be 50 degrees.

**HYPERTHERMIA CHART**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature (°F)</th>
<th>Exhauation or Unconsciousness</th>
<th>Expected Survival Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54 to 60</td>
<td>1 - 2 Hours</td>
<td>1 - 4 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 to 70</td>
<td>2 - 7 Hours</td>
<td>2 - 40 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 to 80</td>
<td>3 - 12 Hours</td>
<td>3 Hours - Indefinitely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVER 80</td>
<td>Indefinitely</td>
<td>Indefinitely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of an Immersion Suit or other buoyant thermal protective device will greatly enhance survival times.

The cold Lake Tapps water can quickly sap your strength and energy. Even accomplished swimmers who think they can swim a couple hundred yards frequently can't. Even though the water is warm, glacial-fed water in nearby lakes and rivers such as Lake Tapps, can be very, very cold. Just a few minutes in cold water makes it very difficult to remain out or to keep afloat. A thermal layer on the surface of the water can be deceiving. Under that initial layer can be temperatures of 50 degrees or colder. That kind of cold water, even on the hottest summer day, can significantly lower the body's core temperature. If that happens, the body becomes incapable of functioning properly, affecting the ability to swim. The decreased body temperature leads to a loss of dexterity and consciousness. In extreme instances, it is fatal. Cold water removes heat from the body 25 times faster than cold air. As the body’s temperature drops, blood is shunted away from the arms and legs to protect the core and vital organs, making swimming or even treading water difficult. Within minutes, a person can become disoriented and lose consciousness.

Another problem in past drowning fatalities has been carbon monoxide poisoning from boats. Swimmers near boats can get disoriented from a lack of oxygen and slip under water. People can be hard to find underwater because of the fine silt from the glacier water. Parts of the lake are not deep and tree stumps are close to the surface. Should someone fall out of a boat, the shock of the cold water could cause a reflexive “gasp” allowing water to enter the lungs. Drowning can be almost instantaneous.

One thing that helps safety at Allan Yorke Park is the shed where people can borrow life jackets. But there have been problems with that system. People steal them, which is sad. According to East Pierce Fire and Rescue, in the past 10 years they have never had to recover anyone wearing a life jacket. East Pierce Fire and Rescue warns swimmers to be cautious in the glacier-fed waters of Lake Tapps, even on warm days, and to always wear a life jacket in or near water. East Pierce offers loaner life jackets at their headquarters station, 18421 Veterans Memorial Drive East, here in Bonney Lake. There is no cost to borrow the jackets for the day. Not wearing a life jacket on a boat is a third offense.Kids don’t want to look like little kids wearing an awkward life jacket. When you are at the lake with your friends no one wants to wear a life jacket. For what a life jacket could mean to your life, it really isn’t an issue.

SAFETY TIPS

- **Don’t drink alcohol.** This weekend there actually will be a zero tolerance alcohol emphasis on Lake Tapps and Church Lake by the Bonney Lake police's Marine Service Unit. Operation Dry Water is an annual campaign designed to detect and enforce boating while under the influence laws.

- **Have a first-aid kit**, with real-life, useful tools in it. Not just bandages but a cloth that could stop bleeding, and things like a sling.

- **East Pierce Fire and Rescue** offers these tips for keeping safe around water this summer:
  - Constantly watch children in or near the water. Keep young children within arm’s reach.
  - Assign adults to watch children at social events.
  - Never drink or allow the use of alcohol or other drugs during water and boating activities or while supervising children.
  - Make sure children learn to swim. Upgrade their swimming skills each year.
  - Be aware that cold water can kill, even on hot summer days. If a swimmer becomes cold or tired, stay close to shore and rest.
  - Wear a life vest when swimming in Lake Tapps or nearby rivers and lakes. It’s easy to misjudge the water and swimming skills. Trouble can happen quickly.
  - Never swim alone; always use the buddy system.
  - Everyone should always wear a life vest when on a boat, inner tube or raft. Children also need life vests on docks and when they are near the water.
  - Make sure the life vest is U.S. Coast Guard approved and fits properly. The life jacket should fit snugly and not allow the child’s chin or ears to slip through the neck opening. Inflatable toys or “water wings” don’t take the place of a life vest.
  - Do not let kids drive personal watercraft (such as jet skis).
  - Bring a cell phone or know where to find the nearest phone.
  - Install a carbon monoxide detector aboard your motorboat.
  - Learn child and adult CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). East Pierce Fire and Rescue offers regular CPR and first aid classes several times a month. Go to www.eastpiercefire.org for dates and times.

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