



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®  
SOCIÉTÉ DE SAUVETAGE

*The Lifeguarding Experts*  
*Les experts en surveillance aquatique*

# 2009 Drowning Report

## 2008 Drowning Statistics

***A total of 22 fatal drownings occurred in Saskatchewan in 2008.***

Northern Saskatchewan was the site of 8 of the 22 drowning incidents, 13 drowning incidents took place in Central Saskatchewan and only one drowning occurred in Southern Saskatchewan last year.

In three cases where a drowning incident occurred while boating, a lifejacket or personal floatation device (PFD) was not worn, and in one other case it is not clear whether a lifejacket or PFD was used. As well, in three cases where individuals fell through the ice while snowmobiling, neither a lifejacket nor a PFD was worn by the victims.

***Alcohol was confirmed to have been a contributing factor in 36% of the drowning incidents in 2008.***

Of all the incidents, 36%, or eight drownings, occurred in a natural body of water such as a lake or pond, one incident occurred in a private pool, one in a bathtub, eight in a lagoon, slough or dug-out, and four died in a water reservoir such as cistern, sewage lagoon or septic tank.

***68% of all incidents in 2008 involved males.*** Men between the ages of 35-49 and 50-64 were at the highest risk for drowning. In 2008, eight men – four in each of these two age groups – accounted for 36% of all victims. Males between the ages of 0-4 and those 65 years and older were the second highest risk groups for drowning. In 2008, three victims were in the over 65 age category, while two were in the 0-4 age range. Together, they accounted for 23% of all victims.

At the time of the incident, three of the 22 drowning victims were power boating, one was canoeing, two were swimming, one was bathing, seven were travelling by vehicle, three were snowmobiling and five were engaged in a non-aquatic activity.

***91% of all drownings took place in rural areas.*** The deadliest time of day for drownings was between 3 and 6 p.m. In 2008, eight accidents occurred during this time.

August was the deadliest month for drownings with 32%, or seven, incidents taking place during this month. During the summer months of June, July, and August combined, 15 drowning incidents took place.

It is also notable to report that for the 8<sup>th</sup> straight year, no drowning incidents took place at a public pool where a National Lifeguard Service (NLS) trained lifeguard was on duty.



## Comparisons to 2007 Drowning Report Statistics

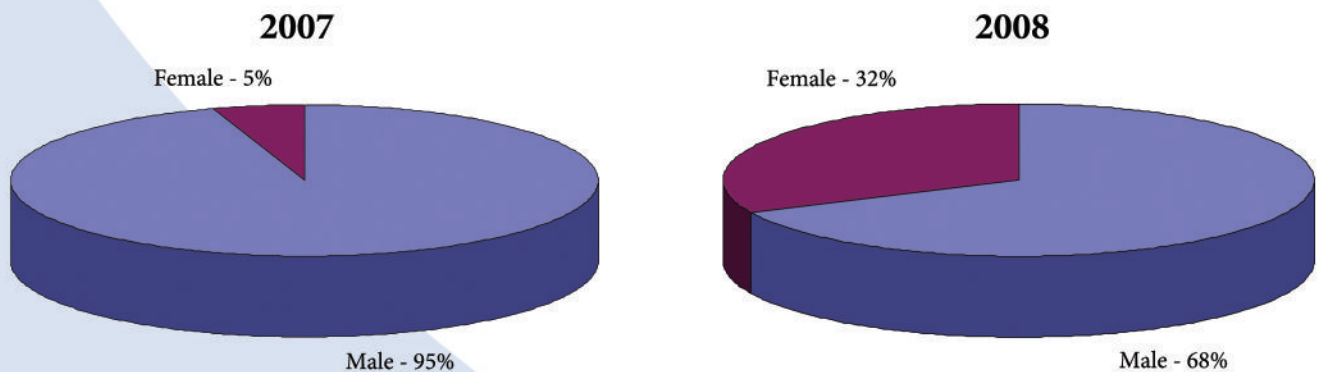
Compared to 2007 statistics, Saskatchewan experienced an increase in drowning incidents in 2008. In 2007, 20 drownings – one female and 19 males – occurred, compared to 22 incidents in 2008 – 15 males and seven females.

In 2008, 36% of all drownings took place at either a lake or a pond, an increase from 30% in 2007. The number of drownings that occurred in a type of water reservoir such as a cistern or lagoon increased to 18% in 2008 from none in 2007. Incidents that occurred in dugouts also significantly increased from 5% in 2007 to 36% in 2008.

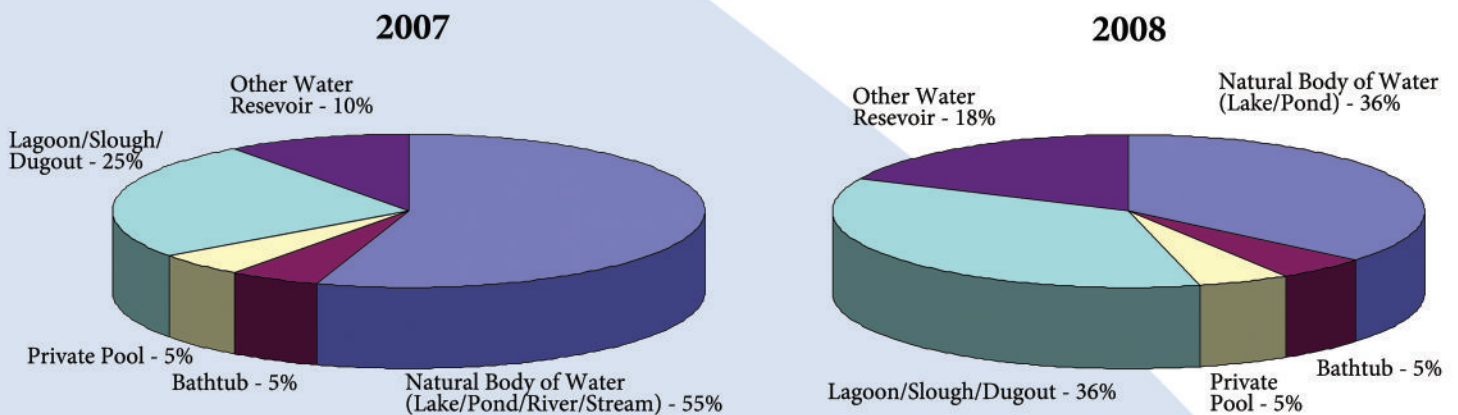
The number of drowning incidents that took place during land or ice transportation increased from 15% in 2007 to 36% in 2008. Incidents that happened while boating decreased to 18% last year, compared to 25% in 2007.

In 2008, the highest number of drowning incidents occurred in August and 50% of the total fatalities happened during the summer months of June, July and August. In 2007, the month of April saw the highest incident rates, but the summer months remained the deadliest period for drownings at 45%.

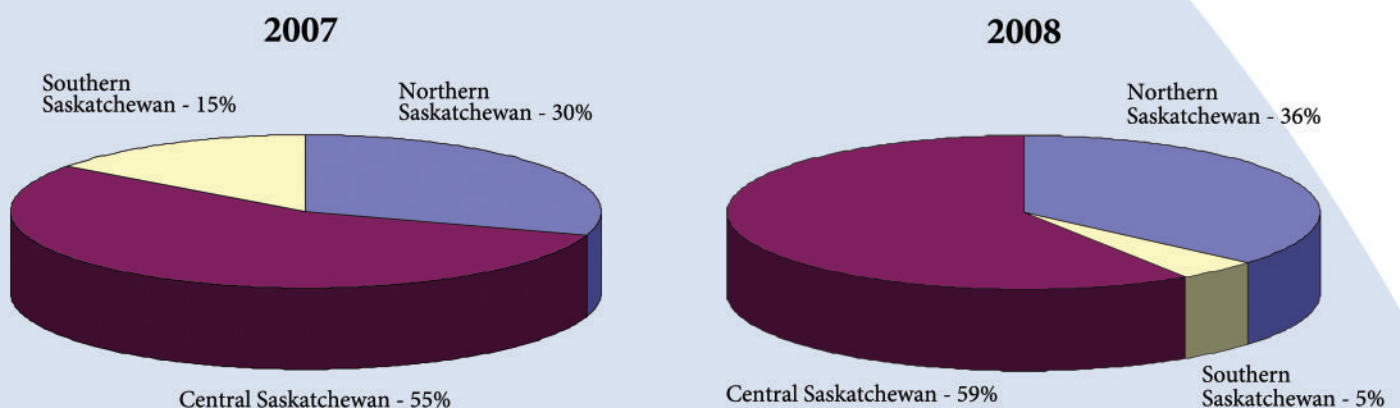
### Comparison of Drowning Statistics Between 2007 and 2008 by Gender



### Comparison of Drowning Statistics Between 2007 and 2008 by Body of Water



### Comparison of Drowning Statistics Between 2007 and 2008 by Region





## *Water Safety Tips*

- ✓ If you are not within arms reach, you've gone too far! Never leave a child alone in, on or near water and always supervise them closely.
- ✓ Choose it! Use it! Always wear a lifejacket or Personal Floatation Device when boating or when in, on or around water.
- ✓ Play and swim in supervised areas. The majority of all water-related deaths occur in situations without lifeguard supervision.
- ✓ Always swim with a buddy! Many drownings occur within a very small distance from others. Watch out for each other!
- ✓ Be water smart. Learn to swim. Learning to swim, float and tread water are essential skills that you must know to help you survive in the water.
- ✓ Learn lifesaving and first aid skills. Learning to swim is not enough. Learn rescue skills to help yourself and others.
- ✓ Feet first – first time. Protect yourself and know where it is safe to dive. A spinal injury from a water-related incident could result in either paralysis or death.
- ✓ Don't go overboard. Alcohol and boating don't mix. Impaired boating is just as serious as impaired driving. Make every trip a round trip. Drive your powerboat or personal watercraft responsibly.
- ✓ Sit down and don't rock the boat. Drive at moderate speeds, be aware of changing weather conditions, and tell someone your travel plans.
- ✓ Don't bank on river banks. Rain and melting snow make the river water rise and flow quickly, creating a potentially fatal situation.

## *Definition of Drowning*

A new definition of drowning was adopted by the 2002 World Congress on Drowning and subsequently by the World Health Organization. Specifically: Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid. Outcomes of drowning may be: death, morbidity, or no morbidity. In other words, a person may die from drowning; be injured in a drowning episode; or escape from drowning through rescue or other means.

## *Lifesaving Society Saskatchewan Branch*

2224 Smith Street  
Regina, SK S4P 2P4  
Phone: (306) 780-9255  
Fax: (306) 780-9498  
lifesaving@sasktel.net  
www.lifesavingsociety.sk.ca

The Lifesaving Society is a national volunteer-based charitable organization that works to prevent drownings and water-related incidents through training programs, public education, research and consultation. The Lifesaving Society acknowledges assistance in preparing the Saskatchewan Drowning Report from Chief Coroner Kent Stewart, Deputy Chief Coroner Shelley Anne Gibson and Kathy Kalyinka, Administrative Support, as well as Research Team Members Shelby Rushton, Shawn Weimer and Jacy Bartnik.

