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SAFE FISHING PRACTICES

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older.



Photograph Courtesy Tulare County 4-H Program

Information available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates approximately 71,500 people were treated in hospitals for fishing injuries during 2007. Most of the injuries (about 70%) were puncture wounds resulting from fishhooks becoming imbedded in the skin and particularly in fingers. In addition, fishing injuries may also occur by slipping or tripping along banks or falling into water. Many injuries may be caused by error or inattention and could have been prevented by handling fishhooks and fishing tackle with greater care and maintaining a heightened awareness of potential fishing hazards.

Safe Fishing Precautions

- It is a recommended safety practice to wear personal protective equipment when fishing, such as shoes, sunglasses or other eye protection, sunscreen, insect repellent, and a hat.
- Carry and consume an adequate amount of potable drinking water when fishing.
- When fishing from water craft, such as motorboats, canoes, or row boats, wear a personal flotation device (PFD) or life preserver.
- When fishing from the shore, be aware that wet ground and surfaces adjacent to bodies of water are slippery and you should step carefully to prevent falls.
- When fishing from a steep bank, maintain a safe distance back from the bank edge.
- When fishing from a dock or pier, be conscious of slippery, wet surfaces and keep behind guard rails.
- When surf fishing, pay attention to local tide cycles and changes in wave height and intensity due to wind or other weather conditions.
- When fishing while wading, determine bottom conditions and the presence of drop offs or holes by slowly and carefully shuffling your feet or probing with a stick or branch in front of you.
- Do not wade into water deeper than your hips to fish.
- Fishing persons that are young, non-swimmers, and poor swimmers should always wear a PFD or life preserver.
- Before venturing onto ice to ice fish, determine whether there is an adequate thickness of ice (at least four inches) to support you. Also learn the locations of outfalls, tributaries, springs, or areas of fast moving water that may cause abnormally thin ice.
- Be aware that many waterways in California receive and carry runoff from snow packs. As a result, there is a hypothermia hazard if you enter or unintentionally fall into these waters.
- Avoid being caught in the open near a water body during thunderstorms. If a thunderstorm approaches, head inland or away from the body of water and seek shelter.
- Take care when baiting hooks or handling other types of sharp-edged fishing tackle. Look behind you and to your sides before casting a lure or hook.
- Follow all state or local fishing regulations, including take limits, restrictions on equipment, and license requirements. 4-H members 16 years and older must have a fishing license with appropriate tags for the species or area being fished.
- Only consume fish caught in California according to advisories posted by the state Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA). See the OEHHA web site at http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/so_cal/index.html.
- If you are injured while fishing, notify your project leader, parent, or guardian. Seek medical attention if the injury is serious.