



News Release

Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District

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END OF SCHOOL YEAR MEANS INCREASED CANAL DROWNING RISKS

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The end of the school year for Treasure Valley students coupled with warmer weather creates the environment for increased risks of canal drowning incidents, officials with the valley's largest irrigation district warned today.

“When school is out and kids and young people are home, our ditch riders typically start to see more and more incidents of kids walking or playing along our entire system of some 500 miles of canals. From a safety standpoint, a canal bank is the last place in the world they should be,” said John Anderson, water superintendent for the Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District.

Statistics over the years show that an average of three young children will drown in Idaho irrigation canals every year. Canal drowning also typically claims the life of young people, teenagers, even adults every year in Idaho, including the Treasure Valley.

“Parents simply don't grasp the fact that it only takes a matter of seconds for a young child to fall into a canal and be swept away. We know of one case where a mother left her young daughter alone in the back yard near a canal for less than two minutes while she went to get a bag of potting soil. When she came back, her daughter was gone. Searchers finally found the girl's body almost two miles away,” Anderson said.

Still, every summer District employees encounter children and young people playing along, tubing or even swimming in NMID canals. This despite an intensive annual campaign of canal safety messages broadcast on radio and television by the District.

“Every time it happens, it just makes you want to find their parents, shake them and ask why in the world they would risk the lives of their kids by letting them go anywhere near a canal,” Anderson said. He figures the only explanation is that parents simply do not realize the deadly danger posed by the cold, deep and swift flowing water in the canals.

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“Many of our employees, myself included, have had to deal with the trauma of recovering the body of a drowning victim in our canals. During the summer we live a work life of constant vigilance to do everything we can to prevent it from happening. But ultimately, it has to be parents who make the difference,” Anderson added.

The Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District is a water storage, conveyance and distribution system founded in 1904. The District supplies irrigation water to some 69,000 acres of farmland and pressurized irrigation to more than 14,800 individual parcels of land in Ada and Canyon counties. More information about the District is also available on its Internet website: www.nmid.org.

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