



News Release

Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District

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NMID LAUNCHES ANNUAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT IRRIGATION CANAL DEATHS

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With area canals now running full, the Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District has launched an intensive water safety outreach campaign in an effort to prevent drownings in the District's 80 canals and drains that snake across Ada and Canyon County.



Kraig Spille from KIVI TV Productions shoots video of a weed trap as part of a NMID canal safety commercial. (NMID Photo)

A pair of television commercials pointing out the dangers posed by canals, ditches and drains began airing on local TV stations Monday (May 23) and will run until the latter part of August, according to Daren Coon, NMID Secretary Treasurer.

The District will also broadcast a pair of Spanish-language radio commercials throughout the summer on the area's leading Spanish language station.

The TV campaign uses two 30-second commercial spots featuring Jessi Huizinga, a Meridian mother of three, who warns viewers that children can die in irrigation canals but to not let their children be one of them.

One commercial has Huizinga pointing out a canal weed rack and explaining that the device in the canal, used to collect trash, is where most drowning victims are found.

In the second commercial, Huizinga demonstrates how in just five minutes a child in a canal would be swept a full quarter mile away from where they fell in.

"It's a vital message because Idaho has the second highest rate of unintentional drowning in the nation for kids up to 5 years of age," Coon explained.

"Most people just don't really grasp how dangerous irrigation canals are for children and adults. Research shows the majority of Idaho's child drownings are the direct result of a lapse in adult supervision of less than five minutes. Our goal is to help parents better comprehend just how deadly that five-minute lack of supervision can be," he added.

Irrigation canals pose a particularly sinister threat because they have vertical banks and are flowing at 3-5 feet per second. Also, canal water is coming from the bottom of reservoirs at frigid temperatures in the 40-50 degree range that can quickly result in hypothermia.

The potential for canal drowning goes up sharply when school ends and the weather heats up, NMID officials said. The District's ditchriders are constantly checking their areas, alert for people who may be near or even playing in the canals. Despite the fact that canals are private property and trespassing is not allowed, the combination of hot weather and cool flowing water can be a powerful but potentially deadly attraction.

"The hot weather of summer time is generally when we encounter the most number of young people in and around our canals and drains," Coon said. He added it is not unusual for the District's ditchriders to find people tubing or swimming in the District's canals, especially the larger Ridenbaugh Canal.

The Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District is a water storage, conveyance and distribution system founded in 1904. The District also supplies irrigation water to some 69,000 acres of farmland, residential and commercial land in Ada and Canyon counties. More information about the District, including information on pressurized urban irrigation systems, is available on its website: www.nmid.org.

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