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It is a ritual of our valley that has repeated itself for nearly a hundred years. First a small amount of water is released into the Ridenbaugh Canal and then gradually over the next hours and days more water is diverted from the Boise River to the Ridenbaugh Canal until finally all canals are running brimming full from bank to bank. Like the seasons, irrigation once again comes to our valley.

Soon tens of thousands of acres of farmland in Canyon and Ada counties will be brought from their winter hibernation by the farmer. Slowly at first and then with increasing speed, fueled by the liquid gold of water, the lands will once again blossom with the bountiful crops that have transformed our valley into an agricultural marvel.

With time comes change and in addition to the marvel of agriculture comes the ability to provide valuable irrigation water to more than 160 subdivisions with pressurized urban irrigation systems serving more than 6,000 residential and commercial parcels of land. Thus with the arrival of the irrigation water the thousands of lawns, gardens and other green areas begin their transformation from winter brown to beautiful lush spring green.

From the traditional water turn in until the irrigation season ends the hundreds miles of canals in the Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District will flow full of water moving around the valley to serve more than 64,000 acres of farmland and residential areas.

It never ceases to make a person stand in awe of the power irrigation has to transform a land from semi-arid desert to bountiful garden. Regrettably, there is another ritual we also are forced to begin at the same time. It is the constant concern for the safety of people who may not understand the dangers posed by a canal. That is especially so for our area young people.

Canals are deeper and water flows swifter than you might think. Canal banks are nearly vertical and almost impossible to get out of should you fall in the water. Here is a sad and chilling fact that bears repeating in the hopes its impact will sink in: More Idaho Children Drown In Canals Than Any Other Body Of Water.

From water turn in until the system goes dry, Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District ditchriders will be on constant vigil for people who put themselves or their children in harms way by playing along our canals. It never ceases to amaze us how loving, caring parents can risk the lives of their children by letting them play along a canal.

Our canals also now pass through many residential subdivision areas. So it's also always important that we remind our neighbors that canals are private property. They are not a public right of way, even if they appear to you to be so. You are actually breaking the law - trespassing - if you or your children are playing on the canal banks. But most of all you are taking a chance with the life of your loved one.

If you have any questions about irrigation canal safety or other related issues, please feel free to call us at 466-7861 or visit our Internet web site: [www.nmid.org](http://www.nmid.org).

As we move into this annual renewal of the agricultural marvel of our valley, there's a cardinal safety rule your friends at Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District would like you to

remember.

The Only Safe Canal Is The One You Stay Away From.