



Canals are not for play -- stay away!

When Kennewick Irrigation District (KID) was first established back in 1917, its primary function was to provide irrigation water to local farms and orchards. Flash forward 100 years and the Tri-Cities has seen exponential residential growth. Canals are now a common feature in many neighborhoods, providing a valuable source of irrigation for yards, parks and schools in addition to agriculture. As the influx of new residents to the area continues to grow, many may not realize that canals can also be incredibly dangerous. It is crucial to understand the risks associated with canals and how to stay safe when near them.



Caption | A washer and dryer is removed from the canal system

THE RISKS

- **The Current** | The surface of the water may look calm, but the speed of the current can vary depending on the location, sometimes reaching up to 3 miles per hour, or 4.5 feet per second. As a public safety example in 2012, a child's shoe was dropped into the canal to provide a visual of how fast the water travels. In two minutes, the shoe traveled 540 feet and within 5 minutes, it was about a quarter mile away from where it was dropped!
 - **The Debris** | Not only can mother nature send all sorts of tumbleweeds and trampolines via the wind into the canals, but we find that people unfortunately dump a variety of objects into them as well. From tires and appliances to grills and scrap metal, these dangerous objects could be lurking under the water that you may not be able to see.
 - **The Chemicals** | During the hot summer months, algae forms along the surface of the water, causing an abundance of clogged filters and pipes. To combat this, KID treats its canal water with chemicals. These chemicals, along with the Yakima River being raw, untreated water, could be harmful to you or your pets if swallowed.
-



Caption | A KID maintenance crew removes a trampoline from the canal

HOW TO STAY SAFE

- ▶ **Float** | Should you fall into a canal, try to keep your head above water by floating. Slowly work your way over to the side while calling for help. Do not try and fight the current or stand up as you may not see the dangers below the water.
- ▶ **Call 911** | Should someone you're with fall into the canal, it is crucial to avoid jumping into the water to try to rescue them, as this can put both the victim and the rescuer in danger. Instead, call 911 and stay alongside them on the road. As previously mentioned, if you stay in one spot, the person you're with will have traveled quite a long distance before help can arrive.
- ▶ **Safety Measures** | If possible, throw them a flotation device or rope to help them stay afloat. The canal system has several ropes and weed screens that could be used to climb out safely.

OTTO THE OTTER

Otto Otter is the Bureau of Reclamation's canal safety mascot. Kennewick Irrigation District offers canal safety presentations aimed at educating elementary aged children on the dangers of canals. If you would like this message brought to your school or after-school program, contact **Matthew Berglund, Public Relations Coordinator**, at **509.586.6012 ext. 128** or visit **kid.org/contact**. Coloring books are also available with school presentations and accessible online at **usbr.gov/pn/about/otto/graphics/coloringbook.pdf**.

Please remember that canals are specifically designed to move water to homes, farms and businesses for irrigation and although they look like an inviting place to swim or play, the water can be quite hazardous.

The best way to be safe from canals is to **stay away**. It's not only dangerous for children; it's hazardous for everyone, including your pets. **Stay out.**

Together, we can help prevent a tragedy.

