

# Play hard this summer but play it safe

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Summer is a season of rituals for many Montanans.

As the holiday weekend approaches, they're loading up the camper, packing the swimsuits, trailering the ATVs, restocking the tackle box — generally doing whatever it takes to squeeze in as much fun as possible.

In their exuberance, though, too many forget about safety.

The consequences can be devastating, as we've seen in just the past week or so.

- A Fairfield couple is participating in a charity motorcycle ride when the weather turns ugly. Their bike strikes a guardrail. The husband, riding without a helmet, dies.
- A 19-year-old Carroll College student, swimming in the Landers Fork with friends, is swept over a waterfall. She dies.
- A pickup truck rolls near Stanford. Both men are ejected and die.
- Two Great Falls men are boating at night in Holter Lake when their speeding craft strikes a rock. Neither wears a lifejacket. One dies.
- A 13-year-old Helena Boy Scout falls into the fast-moving Yellowstone River. The search continues for his body.
- A 15-year-old White Sulphur Springs boy dies when the vehicle he's driving rolls. He's not wearing a seat belt.

We can't begin to imagine the grief and heartache these tragedies bring.

Families who should be enjoying the bounty of a Montana summer instead are shedding tears and planning funerals.

Many, we suspect, are left with painful "what ifs."

What if he had worn a seat belt? What if he had worn a helmet? What if he had worn a lifejacket? What if he or she hadn't taken chances in dangerous stretches of water?

Don't let such "what ifs" torment your family.

Play hard, but play it safe.

When you're in a vehicle, buckle up. In a boat or near water, wear a lifejacket. On motorcycles, ATVs, bicycles, scooters or skateboards, wear a helmet.

Watch out for freak weather and wild animals. Be cautious with fireworks. Keep an eye on the kids. Don't confuse unnecessary risk with fun.

We won't even bother to list all the activities that should be enjoyed *without* alcohol.

Savor Montana's glorious summer. And get through it alive.