

Our May meeting was held on Wednesday, May 6, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our June meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 3, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. For our May meeting, we pulled some vehicles out of the hall so that we could meet in the bay. Our usual meeting room is too small to provide social distancing. In the bay, we could all spread out and we all wore our masks. Our township residents have been following the social distancing and stay at home guidelines. Our department has not been paged out for any calls in our township, as of this writing, since the middle of March. Way to go, Ellsburg! Stay safe, and stay well!

Our department has a beautiful collection of homemade face masks which were donated to us by our own member, Shannon Keough, and Lou Ann Ulstad, who has visited our township in the past. Thank-you, ladies, for the masks! We really appreciate your efforts to help keep our residents healthy. At a time like this, we all need to take care of ourselves and our neighbors. Together, we will get through this pandemic.

Our Zodiac inflatable boat developed some leaks in a few of the flapper valves. Thank-you to Dan Hamilton who came to our rescue! He fixed our boat - for free! Dan is a member of the St. Louis County Rescue Squad. He is part of the north team, which is based out of Virginia. This means that our boat only had to be transported to Virginia, rather than MSP, to be fixed. Like us, the SLCRS is made up of volunteers. They are a dedicated and highly-trained bunch of people. They respond to wilderness search and rescue, boat and water emergencies, vehicle and train crashes, medical emergencies, and issues involving public safety. They frequently train in these areas. Our department has trained with members of the Squad in vehicle extrication, active shooter response, and hemorrhage control. The Squad has many "toys" that help them in their missions. Dan repairs the several Zodiac boats that the Rescue Squad uses. They have used them on Lake Superior for rescues and trained with them in the rapids of the St. Louis River by Jay Cooke State Park. The Rescue Squad has a very interesting and educational Facebook page. Check it out!

It was a chilly day on the fishing opener, but that did not stop people from getting out on the lakes and rivers of our Township in their boats. It is time to remind our residents and visitors about the importance of wearing Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs). Please make a resolution that all members of your boating party have a PFD and WEAR it. There are many new varieties of PFDs available now that are non-constricting and comfortable to wear. You may think that you do not need one because you are sitting in a slowly moving boat. What could happen? Well, your boat could hit a submerged log just as you are reeling in that prize fish. The bump of the boat could be enough to knock you overboard. But you can swim, you say. If you knock your head on the boat on your way out, and then pass out, you will not be able to swim. You will sink under the water before your fishing party can help you. Don't take the chance! Wear a PFD and insist that all children do also. It only takes a second for a tragedy to occur, and this type of tragedy can be prevented.

Now is a good time to check your PFD for rips, tears, and holes. Check that the seams, fabric straps, and hardware are intact. Look for signs of water logging or shrinking of the buoyant materials. Look and sniff for mildew. Squeeze it and look for air leaks. Faded color means that the material is weak. If your PFD fails any of these tests, cut it up and throw it away.

A PFD needs some care to prolong its useful life. Do not put heavy objects on your PFD or use it for a kneeling pad or boat fender. Buoyancy is lost when a PFD is crushed. Allow your PFD to drip dry completely. Do not dry it on a radiator, heater, or other direct heat source. Stow your PFD in a well ventilated area.

So what should you look for when you need to purchase a new PFD? First, find one that is appropriate for your weight. Then, try it on. Your PFD should fit comfortably snug. It should not ride up on your body, but if your stomach is larger than your chest it may be unavoidable. There are many styles available. Find one that is comfortable for you when sitting. If it is not comfortable, you know you won't wear it. Put your PFD on, get in the water, relax, and let your head tilt back. If your chin stays above the water and you can breathe easily, your PFD is a good fit for you.

The most common injury incurred while fishing is impaling yourself, or someone else, with a fishhook. Fishhooks and fish teeth are teeming with bacteria that can cause infection. Make sure that you carry a first aid kit that includes a disinfectant so that you can clean the wound immediately. Minor impalements of a hook on a finger or leg can usually be removed. A fishhook that is imbedded deeper in a muscle, anywhere on the head, or in a sensitive area should be removed by trained medical personnel to avoid serious or permanent damage.

The second most common injury incurred while fishing is drowning. Wear lifejackets. Teach your children how to swim. Show children how to move safely while in a boat. Avoid alcohol if you are the one driving the boat. Have a cushion or something that floats in your boat that can be used to throw to someone who has fallen overboard. The

water is still cold at this time of year, so hypothermia can develop and lead to drowning. Carry a charged cellphone so that you can call 911.

Protect yourself from the sun. Use sunscreen or clothing designed with UV protection. Remember that the skin of young children is much thinner than that of an adult and so will burn faster. Children also become dehydrated sooner than an adult. Be sure to bring drinks and snacks for everyone.

There are about a dozen different types of ticks in Minnesota. The most common are the blacklegged (deer) tick, the wood tick, and the lone star tick. The deer tick is responsible for the most disease in our area. Deer ticks spread Lyme disease which can result in lifelong suffering with joint pain, weakness, flu like symptoms, and the characteristic bull's-eye rash. The wood tick is responsible for Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia. The lone star tick is rarer, but it can also spread tularemia and ehrlichiosis. Tularemia is an infectious disease that can attack your skin, lungs, eyes, and lymph nodes. Ehrlichiosis is a bacterial infection that causes flu-like symptoms. Symptoms of tick infection are fever, chills, stiff neck, headache, tiredness, muscle and joint pain, nausea and rashes. Some infections can lead to confusion, speech difficulties, seizures, and life-long complications. A bite from the lone star tick can even result in developing an allergy to red meat, pork, and venison. Travel on cleared trails, wear long sleeves and pants, tuck your pants into your socks, wear closed-toe shoes or boots, use a tick repellent containing DEET, and wear clothes treated with permethrin. Ticks like to hide in your warm and moist areas, groin, armpits, back of knees, scalp, behind the ears, and back of the neck. Check yourself, your children and pets daily. Use a fine point tweezers or tick removal device such as the Tick Key or TickCard. Grasp the tick as close to your skin as you can and pull it straight out without squeezing or twisting the tick's body. Make sure the head comes out. Monitor the area for infection or rash. It may take a few weeks for symptoms to develop. See a doctor immediately when symptoms are noted. Enjoy your fishing and hiking excursions! If anything goes wrong, call 911. We will be there to help!