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# RIDEAU CANAL

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA

## LOCKSTATION SAFETY

*Learn the history, relax with nature,  
experience its charm – SAFELY*



Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada

Canada



## GENERAL

Rideau Canal employees are on site between mid-May and mid-October during operating hours (consult *Hours of Operation and Fees in Ontario*). There is at least one staff member trained in first-aid and CPR, ready to help and/or contact emergency services in case of an emergency. While at a lockstation, talk to the staff about possible hazards of the site and discuss any safety concerns you may have.



Safety equipment at a lockstation includes fire extinguishers, life rings and a first-aid kit. However, the lock building and equipment is secured after operating hours. The life ring is left accessible, but is to be used only in the case of an emergency, not for any kind of recreational use – this ring could save a life.

Communication with emergency services is made available during operating hours only. Although there are public phones in the vicinity of some lockstations, this is not always the case. Visitors should carry a cell



phone and **dial 911** when lockstaff are not available. Cell phone reception can vary from one location to another so check with the staff on site.

In case of emergency, it is imperative that you are able to clearly and specifically identify your location to emergency rescue services. Preparing yourself with this information in advance, in case of an emergency, could save a life.

# 911

Maintenance of a lockstation is an on-going requirement. While on site, be aware of work in progress



(e.g. temporary closure of an area for repairs, or slippery floors in washrooms after being mopped). Immediately notify staff of any safety-related maintenance issues you feel require attention. We appreciate your assistance in keeping our lockstations safe.

- Do not lean over the water; open sluice valves create excessive turbulence in the lock, increasing the risk of drowning if someone were to fall into the lock;
- Be sure of your footing and hold the railing firmly, while crossing to the



## LOCK CHAMBERS AND LOCK OPERATION

We invite you to read our brochure *How A Lock Works*, available at all lockstations. Locking a boat through a lock is a fascinating process. While watching a lockage, please:

- Stay clear of the lock operating devices (gate and sluice crabs);
- Watch your footing along the sides of the lock to be sure not to trip over cable anchors;

other side of the lock, on top of the lock gate; and

- Because fumes may accumulate in the lock chamber, do not smoke.

## CHILDREN AT LOCKSTATIONS

Young children enjoy visiting a lockstation. It is an ideal place to picnic, play and watch boats. Caregivers must be aware however, that although the lockstation has a



park-like atmosphere, it is a functional lockstation and with that comes some definite hazards. In particular, there is the obvious risk of falling into a lock chamber, either from the side of the lock or while crossing a lock gate. A less obvious hazard is the sluice crank – while under pressure, the sluice arm, if released from its hold has the power to fatally injure a small child.

Other considerations include such things as protecting your children from excessive exposure to heat and sun, and how to safely approach a dog on

a leash, if you choose to allow them this freedom.

### **For their safety:**

Children should not be at a lockstation without parental/caregiver supervision **at all times.**

### **Swimming**

While there is no formal definition for the term heat wave, we all know what it feels like – hot, humid and energy sapping. It is only natural that during these times, people search out ways to cool off. Swimming is one good option, but swimming at a lockstation or around a dam is not. **Swimming in the navigation channel is like playing in the traffic on a busy street.** Boat





operators may not see you and you therefore risk the boat running into or over you, causing major injury or drowning. Even at times when there is little or no boat traffic, you must still consider the following:

- Zebra mussels line the walls of the lock chambers, basins and docks. Their shells can easily cut your hands and feet as you attempt to climb from the water;
- Clam shells and other debris on the bottom may be sharp and cause injury to your feet; and
- Stormwater pollution in urban areas, particularly after heavy rains, may cause unsafe levels of E.coli bacteria in the water. Parks Canada does not test canal water for bacteria levels to ensure they are safe for swimming.

**Swimming near a dam is very dangerous.** (See section on Water Control Dams)

It is illegal to dive, jump, scuba-dive, swim or bathe in a navigation channel or within 40 m of a lock gate or a dam in a historic canal.

## WATER CONTROL DAMS

Stay Clear, Stay Safe: Dams are not safe places for recreation or fishing.

A spot that looks calm and safe one moment can become dangerous within a few seconds as water levels and flows change, often without warning. Water above dams is particularly dangerous as excess water is released through the dam; the fast-moving water creates dangerous turbulence and strong undercurrents. The draw of the dam could act as suction, trapping you against the structure below the surface, causing death.





## DOMESTIC ANIMALS

Pets are part of the family and are welcome at the lockstations. However, for the comfort and safety of others and the safety of your pet, we ask you to do the following:

- Keep your pet restrained by a leash no longer than 3 m (or confined in a container or enclosure);
- Dispose of its excrement in a manner that does not annoy or inconvenience other visitors;
- Ensure the behaviour of your pet does not interfere with other visitors' enjoyment of the site; and
- Be sure it does not harass wildlife (e.g. birds, squirrels, groundhogs and chipmunks).

## CAMPING

Lockstations are not designed to accommodate camping. There are no designated campsites or showers and only limited waste management (holding tank) capability. Therefore, camping is restricted to boaters and organized cycling or hiking groups under the authority of a valid permit.

## FIRES

Ground fires are not permitted except in BBQs. Many lockstations provide BBQs for visitors' use, or you can bring and use a personal BBQ.



However, if it is not gas or propane, please check with lock staff on how and where to dispose of the coals.

## ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS

The possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages is governed by the *Liquor Control Act*. Possession and



consumption of open liquor is permitted only in licensed premises, a residence or a private place. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on Parks Canada property, including docks and picnic areas.

## STROLLING & HIKING

Fresh air, exercise, nature and historical viewsapes are some of the reasons why recreational strolling is popular at Rideau Canal lockstations. While enjoying the site, there are a few things to be aware of:

- Watch underfoot for 'sink holes'. These are areas of ground under which the movement of water causes the ground to erode, leaving a hole or trench. This most commonly occurs along the stone wall lining the waterway but could happen almost anywhere near the water;
- Uneven surfaces are not uncommon, particularly various types of stone

surfaces. Proper footwear and sure footing will help prevent the possibility of injury;

- Poison ivy is found in many habitats, from woodlands to fields and can grow unabated in poorly tended areas such as roadsides or paths. Hikers should learn to recognize this plant in its various stages. An encounter can lead to minor discomfort or even to serious medical problems. Consult the web for excellent photos. Books on wildflowers and shrubs can also be helpful. Best of all, hike with someone who can identify the plant and work at recognizing it:



*'Leaves of three, let it be'*

- Sun exposure or dehydration is a risk in hot weather. Be sure to wear sun screen and drink plenty of water.

## FISHING

*Historic Canals Regulations* prohibits fishing within 10 m of a lock or



approach wharf. For safety reasons, this regulation must be strictly adhered to when there is a risk to other visitors, when boats are moored in the area or while they are 'locking through'. At other times, and at the discretion of the lockmaster, fishing may be allowed within the controlled area.



Fishing from a water control structure (dam) or from a bridge over a navigation channel is prohibited. Both federal and provincial laws regulate fishing in Ontario. To help protect and conserve fish and fish habitat, and to avoid possible fines, become familiar with the *Recreational Fishing Regulations* available from the Ministry of Natural Resources. [www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing)

## POTABLE WATER

Potable water is available at all lockstations. The water is tested on a regular schedule in accordance with *Parks Canada Water Quality Guidelines*. Occasionally an adverse water test requires the water to be boiled before use. A sign is posted at the water source, to warn visitors of possible health hazards until the deficiency can be rectified.

**RESPECT** the canal, its plants/animals and other people.

### DO NOT:

- disturb or feed wildlife;
- damage or destroy trees or plants;
- pick or collect natural or historic objects;
- litter

### HAVE A SAFE VISIT !

Other publications:  
*Historic Canals Regulations*

