



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Water Safety Saves Lives

Drowning usually occurs quickly and silently. Childhood drowning and near-drowning occurrences happen in seconds, often because a child is left unattended or there is a brief lapse in supervision.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about ten people die every day from unintentional drowning in the United States. Of these, two are children 14 and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries.

The majority of drowning and near-drowning occur in residential swimming pools and in open water sites. However, children can drown in as little as one inch of water and are therefore at risk of drowning in wading pools, bathtubs, buckets, toilets, spas and hot tubs. Devices (such as bathtub seats or water wings) cannot be relied upon to keep them afloat and alive.

As we have seen, pools filled with water are a potential death trap for a young child. San Bernardino County Fire suggests these simple water safety tips to keep your children safe:

- ✓ Install four-sided isolation fencing at least 5 feet high, equipped with self-closing and self-latching gates, around home swimming pools. Never prop open the gate to a pool barrier.
- ✓ Pool alarms and pool covers can offer an extra layer of protection. However, do not rely on them to keep your kids safe; they should be used in conjunction with fencing and constant supervision.
- ✓ Do not let children dive into water unless the child has learned proper diving techniques, an adult is present and the depth of the water is greater than 9 feet.
- ✓ Teach your child to never run, push or jump on others around water.
- ✓ Children should learn to swim. Enroll them in swimming lessons taught by qualified instructors when they are ready, usually after age 4. If you don't know how to swim, enroll with your kids!
- ✓ Do not consider young children to be drown-proof because they have had swimming lessons. Children must be watched closely while swimming.
- ✓ Know which of your child's friends and neighbors have pools. Make sure your child will be supervised by an adult while visiting.
- ✓ Keep rescue equipment, a telephone and emergency numbers by the pool.
- ✓ Instruct babysitters about potential pool hazards to young children and about the use of protective devices, such as door alarms and latches. Emphasize the need for constant supervision. Animal doors can also be an exit for a small child.
- ✓ Never leave a child unsupervised near a pool. During social gatherings at or near a pool, appoint a "designated watcher" to protect young children from pool accidents. Adults may take turns being the "watcher." When adults become preoccupied, children are at risk.

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- ✓ If a child is missing, **check the pool first**. Seconds count in preventing death or disability. Go to the edge of the pool and scan the entire pool, bottom and surface, as well as the pool area.
- ✓ Do not allow a young child in the pool without an adult.
- ✓ Do not use flotation devices as a substitute for supervision.
- ✓ Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Babysitters and other caretakers, such as grandparents and older siblings, should also know CPR.
- ✓ Children with marginal mobility should **not** be left unattended in a tub or other body of water regardless of age or presumed ability.
- ✓ Remove toys from in and around the pool when it is not in use. Toys can attract young children to the pool.
- ✓ Empty all buckets, containers and wading pools immediately after use. Store them upside-down and out of children's reach.

The difference a second makes is literally the difference between life and death. San Bernardino County Fire encourages parents to take necessary precautions before it's too late. For more safety tips, visit our website at www.sbcfire.org. The National Safe Kids website (www.safekids.org) offers numerous facts and safety tips.

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