

TerranearPMC Safety Share

Week of July 9, 2012 – Pool Safety

July 4th celebrations are over and the Wimbledon tennis tournament has been decided. We are in the middle of the summer season. Picnics, vacations, and going to parks dominate our recreational lives. Of course BBQs and lounging in pools, whether at a house or a community facility seem to be the primary no-brainer thing-to-do. Without a doubt, swimming pools and spas are great places for families to spend time together and have fun. Yet it's important to ensure everyone stays safe when we immerse ourselves in water. Here are a few sobering points we all need to be aware of before we let our children enjoy playing in or around pool areas.

- Drowning is the #1 killer of children under the age of 5
- Only a momentary lack of supervision puts the child at risk
- The majority of drowning occurs in residential swimming pools and spas
- Drowning is 100% preventable

A study conducted by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission to find out how child drowning incidents occur indicates that supervision can and does fail. While drowning in pools is the most obvious disaster, the fact is, for every child who drowns, four suffer disabling brain damage. Drowning is the number one cause of death for children under five in Florida, Arizona, and California with a ranking of number two for over a dozen other states. At least 36 children drowned or nearly drowned in Johannesburg, South Africa, in a 3 month period from October to December 2006.

“Pool Safety” means adopting critical water safety steps to assure that a great afternoon at the pool doesn't turn into a tragic one. Whether at a residential or public pool or spa, everyone can always take additional steps to be safe while having fun.

The following are just a few facts uncovered by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in a comprehensive study of drowning and submersion incidents involving children under 5 years old in Arizona, California, and Florida.

- Seventy-five percent of the submersion victims studied by CPSC were between 1 and 3 years old; 65 percent of this group were boys. Toddlers, in particular, often do something unexpected because their capabilities change daily.
- At the time of the incidents, most victims were being supervised by one or both parents. Forty-six percent of the victims were last seen in the house; 23 percent were last seen in the yard or on the porch or patio; and 31 percent were in or around the pool before the accident. In all, 69

percent of the children were not expected to be at or in the pool, yet they were found in the water.

- Submersion incidents involving children usually happen in familiar surroundings. Sixty-five percent of the incidents happened in a pool owned by the child's family and 33 percent of the incidents happened in a pool owned by friends or relatives.
- Pool submersions involving children happen quickly. A child can drown in the time it takes to answer a phone. Seventy-seven percent of the victims had been missing from sight for 5 minutes or less.
- Survival depends on rescuing the child quickly and restarting the breathing process, even while the child is still in the water. Seconds count in preventing death or brain damage.
- Child drowning is a silent death. There's no splashing to alert anyone that the child is in trouble.

Just because an adult is within the immediate area of a pool does not automatically ensure that children are being properly monitored. The person who is supposed to be looking after children has the responsibility to ensure that the safety of children is their number one focus. This means that adults watching children should maintain constant eye-to-eye supervision with children in and around the swimming pool and spa. If the adult needs to take a phone call or use the restroom, they need to remove children from the swimming pool and spa area.

The adult supervisor should have an item such as a whistle, bracelet, etc. to reinforce which adult is in charge of the safety of the children. Another point to remember is that floaties or other inflatable flotation devices are not life jackets and should never be substituted for adult supervision. There should be no obstacles, such as trees or bushes that could compromise a clear view to observe children in the pool.

Any adult that has the responsibility to watch children needs to know the emergency services telephone number and also a way to contact all the parents of the children being supervised, in the event emergency personnel are needed to be called to the scene. Also, adults that are supervising children should know first aid and CPR methods.

Other controls, such as protective barriers to ensure children cannot access pool/spas without proper supervision include fence enclosures (fences with locking mechanisms and self-latching - this is a must when toddlers are around) that isolate the swimming pool and spa, approved safety covers, alarms (activated when it is known that supervision is not available and therefore assuring that an adult is warned when the barrier to the pool is breached), keeping all doors and windows that lead to the swimming area locked.

And finally; chairs, tables, large toys or other object that would allow a child to climb up to reach a latch or enable a child to climb over the isolation fence need to be removed or kept inside the fenced area.

“The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You do not blame them on your mother, the ecology, or the president. You realize that you control your own destiny.” – Albert Ellis (American psychologist -developed Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy)