



WHERE COMMUNITY AND SPIRIT MEET®

## Kirkwood Fire Department Swimming Pool Safety

The Kirkwood Fire Department would like to remind everyone of the safety issues related to pools. Statistics show that drowning is the second leading cause of injury-related deaths among children 1-14 years of age, and most of those involve residential pools.

Every year, drowning claims more than 6,500 lives in the United States alone. Worldwide estimates place the total at between 140,000 and 150,000 deaths annually. Drowning is the third most common cause of all accidental deaths and the second most common cause of death in victims younger than 44 years old.

Forty percent of all drowning deaths are children under the age of five, while another 15 to 20 percent of victims are between the ages of five and 20 years. Males predominate in all age groups with three times as many male victims as female victims. Near drowning statistics are much more difficult to obtain, but conservative estimates suggest that in the United States an additional 7,000 patients a year seek medical attention related to submersion incidents.

Ironically, nearly 90 percent of all drowning deaths occur within 10 feet of safety and more than two-thirds of the victims cannot swim. The use of intoxicants, especially alcohol, is involved in a large majority of adolescent and adult drownings and intoxication of adult supervisors contributes heavily to pediatric cases

Other factors that have been implicated in drowning injuries include cervical spine or other traumatic injuries, overestimation of swimming capabilities, and hypothermia. Most drowning and near drowning incidents occur in privately owned swimming pools, and most childhood drownings occur in the early or late afternoon around food preparation times when adult supervision wanes.

A responsible supervising adult can be identified in 84 percent of toddler drownings, but only 18 percent of these incidents are actually witnessed.

Children are curious and are drawn to water. They do not understand the danger swimming pools can pose to them. Drowning happens quickly and silently, often without any splashing or screaming.

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***Here are some simple rules to help you have a safe, FUN swimming season:***

- Always swim with a buddy, never alone, even if you are an experienced swimmer.
- Never leave kids alone while they are in or near a pool, even if they can swim.
- Assign specific adults to keep an eye on the pool at all times.
- When you have groups of children, or guests, assign adults in shifts to ensure the children are watched closely.
- Obey “no diving” signs. This means the area is unsafe for headfirst entries. **You should always enter the water feet first if you don’t know the depth.**
- Check for submerged obstacles.
- Slips and trips are common on slippery surfaces, so discourage running in a pool area.

Your pool should be surrounded with a sturdy barrier that is at least five feet high. Make sure entry to the pool area is through a secured access point. If it is a gated access, make sure young kids can’t reach the gate latch. Another safety item that can be purchased, which will alert the homeowner if someone has entered the pool, is a pool alarm. You can also purchase an alarm that can be placed on the door of your home closest to the pool area. It will sound in the event someone enters or leaves through that door.

Keep rescue equipment (e.g., a life preserver, long pole with a hook on the end) near the pool area. Keep a cordless, water-resistant telephone in the pool area and post emergency numbers near the pool.

If a child is missing, always look in the pool area first because seconds count. It is recommended that pool owners learn CPR. The Kirkwood Fire Department offers CPR training. For information, call 314-822-5883.

**Call 911 immediately if someone experiences a drowning or near drowning incident.**

The Kirkwood Fire Department hopes you have a fun and safe summer swimming season.