

Orange County Fire Authority

Drowning Prevention



Did you hear it? Children drown without a sound. Drowning continues to be the leading cause of accidental death among children age five and under. The majority of drowning and near drowning incidents occur in residential swimming pools and in open water sites. So far this year, there have been 3 drownings and 11 near drownings county-wide.

Drowning usually occurs quickly and silently. Childhood drownings and near-drownings can happen in a matter of seconds and you think you will hear a child splash or hear their cry for help. Drowning is 100% preventable. To combat this needless tragedy, the following action steps should be taken:

Action Step #1: Protection. Use layers of barrier protection between children and water to warn and impede. Install alarms on doors and windows. Ensure you have a non-climbable, five-foot fence around the entire pool/spa area. Install self-closing and self-latching fence gates. Be sure to use pool safety covers and ensure they are completely closed when the pool is not in use. Never leave toys in or around the pool/spa.

Action Step #2: Supervision. Adults must establish and communicate responsibility for child supervision. Assign an adult “water watcher” to supervise the pool/spa area, especially during social gatherings. Assign a second adult to maintain constant visual contact with children in the pool/spa area. Don’t assume someone else is watching a child. **Never** leave a child alone near a pool or spa, bathtub, toilet, water-filled bucket, pond, or any standing water in which a child’s nose and mouth may be submersed. Don’t rely on swimming lessons, life preservers, or any other equipment to make a child “water safe”. Communicate pool safety measures with all family members and babysitters.

Action Step #3: Preparation. Learn how to swim. Learn proper rescue techniques. Learn CPR. Mount rescue equipment by the pool. This should include a lifesaving ring, shepherd’s hook, and CPR sign. Many floatation-type toys, like arm floats and inflatable rings, are thought to be lifesavers and can in fact be dangerous. They are only toys and should only be used as such. Coast Guard approved life vests should always be worn in the water. Post the 9-1-1 emergency phone number on all phones. Have a phone near the pool area.

The OCFA has partnered with the American Red Cross to deliver community CPR classes. To register, contact 714-481-5355. To schedule a free drowning prevention class, contact the OCFA Community Relations and Education Section @ 714-573-6200.

Additional information can be found on the following web-sites:

www.ocfa.org

www.safekids.org

www.choc.com

www.childsafetyzone.com - pool safety tips in English and in Spanish

www.preventdrowning.com – Drowning Coalition of Phoenix Arizona

www.cpsc.gov – search for pool barrier brochure

Together we can make a difference!