



MSU-ES Dawg Tracks

June, 2014



*Drowning Dangers
Keeping Kids Safe near
Water*



I have been asked to edit a newsletter on “Keeping Kids Safe around Water.” Unfortunately, we have all heard of small children drowning in rivers, lakes and even in private family pools. I believe a “heads up” on safety tips on the various areas involving children around water might be advantageous for obvious reasons.

Actually, this paper can be easily applied to adults, as well as kids, because we adults sometimes lose focus and drop the ball on safety issues around water activities.

- According to www.helpkidsstaysafe.org/pt_tips.wat.html: In 2004 there were 3,308 fatal drowning in the USA, averaging 9 per day.
- The figure above does not reflect the 676 fatalities that died in boat – related accidents.
- Also in 2004, for every child 14 years and younger who died from drowning in 2004, 5 more received emergency department treatment care for non-fatal submersion injuries.
- Over ½ of these children were transferred to another facility for treatment.
- In 2004, for all children from 1-4 years old who died, 26% died from drowning.
- According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), 459 young children drowned in bathtubs, buckets, toilets, spas, hot tubs and other types of water containers.

RISK FACTORS INVOLVED IN DROWNING –

- ✓ **Lack of supervision & barriers** (ex. Pool fencing) – ~Children under the age of 1 yr. usually drown in bathtubs, toilets or buckets.
- ✓ 1 to 4 yr. olds usually drown in **residential swimming pools**. In most cases they had been out of sight in less than 5 minutes from a parent or guardian, and in one or the other cases, one parent was supposed to be watching the infant.
- ✓ **Recreation in natural water settings (lakes, rivers, etc.)** -
 - The % of drownings in natural water setting increases with age.
 - These locations represent the majority of drownings in kids over 15 yrs.
- ✓ **Recreational boating** – In 2005, the US Coast Guard reported 4,969 boating incidents, 3,451, were reported with various injuries, 697 died in boating incidents. Since 2005, most boating fatalities (70%) were caused by drowning. 87% were not wearing life jackets. Other causes were hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning. Open motor boats and personal water craft (70%) were involved in the drownings.
- ✓ **Alcohol Use** – Surveys have shown that between 25 and 50% of water recreation deaths involved alcohol use between adolescents and adults. Alcohol, as everyone knows, alters your judgment, coordination and balance. Approximately 30% of drowning fatalities are attributed to alcohol.
- ✓ **Seizure Disorders** – People with seizure disorders is the most common unintentional cause for water- related death.

My primary purpose for this subject, “Kids being safe around water” was to relay tips for safety around lakes, rivers and streams, but there are other water dangers that affect small children more so than adults. Following are examples and care we should take in protecting our small children and grandchildren from these potential dangers.

The USA Consumer Product Safety Commission states that approximately 115 children drown from other hazards besides swimming pools. These occur for various reasons, but basically they result from inattention from parents, caregivers, or guardians. These sources include bathtubs, toilets, buckets, hot tubs, spas and other type of water containers, all accounting for 459 deaths in a 4-year period from 1996 and 1999. Below we shall review the various hazards and how to mitigate the potential for death from them:

Bathtubs – Of these 459 drowning deaths, approximately 135 were reported to have happened in their homes. It was also mentioned by the CPSC that 29 of these bathtub deaths occurred with the victim using bath seats. The majority of these deaths all occurred with the caregiver (or other types) not present. A person can step out to maybe get a towel, answer the phone or other reason - and the young child is left unattended for a few seconds - and this is all it takes for a fatal accident. The resolution is to never to leave a child unattended.

Buckets – In this same 4-year period, the CPSC reported that there were 59 drownings under the age of 5 yrs. involving buckets. 5-gallon buckets were the chief culprit in these deaths. It only takes a small amount of water, as the victim topples over in the water and because of their size it is hard for them to free themselves.

Toilets – Sometimes toilets are overlooked as a hazard. But, think about a 3 or 4 year old plunging head first into a toilet without the dexterity to remove themselves. Again the answer is to never leave them unattended. The CPSC reported 16 kids under 5 yrs. drowning in toilets.

Spas and Hot tubs –

CPSC reported 55 children under the age of 5 yrs. drowning in hot tubs or spas in the same 4-yr. time frame.

Swimming Pools – Children ages 1-4 yrs. is the age that most drownings occur in pools. In most cases, the kids were seen in the home in less than 5 minutes prior to the time and were in the care of both parents.

Consumers and parents need to be aware of the safety tips and hazards involved with safety around pools. A strong key to protecting young kids is the construction of a barrier wall or a fence protecting them from free access to the water, also installing door and pool alarms. Besides these alarms, close supervision and familiarity with emergency procedures will give one an advantage. Obviously, close supervision and scrutiny of the children is the best approach to avoid any water-related incident.

**POOR SAFETY HABITS = A RESULT
OF POOR PLANNING & INATTENTION
TO DETAILS!**