



## **WATER SAFETY**

Did you know?

- California leads the nation in drowning deaths for children five years of age?
- Children under five are 14 times more likely to be killed by a spa or pool than by a vehicle?
- Children under five typically do not splash or cry out for help after falling into water?
- Children can drown in the time it takes to answer the phone or see who's at the door?
- Most children involved in water accidents were last seen in the home or away from the pool or spa?

All adults need to maintain their vigilance when watching children around water features. According to the Orange County Fire Authority, parents need to learn the following action steps in order to keep their children safe:

**STEP 1:** Protection – Use layers of barrier protection between the child and water to warn and impede. Install alarms on doors and windows leading to the water about five feet above ground level so that a child cannot reach them. A non-climbable five-foot fence should be used to separate the pool/spa area from the residence. Openings should be no more than four inches wide so children cannot squeeze through the spaces. Fence gates, side gates and doors leading to the water should be self-closing and self-latching, with latches at least 54 inches high. Utilize pool safety covers, particularly those that are power-operated, which are safest and easiest to use.

**STEP 2:** Supervision – Curiosity and inability to understand danger put young children at risk. Adults must establish and communicate responsibility for child supervision by assigning an adult “water watcher” to oversee the water area, especially during social gatherings. A second adult should be assigned to maintain visual contact with children in the pool area. Never assume someone else is watching your child, and never leave a child alone near a pool, spa, bathtub, toilet, bucket, pond or any standing water in which a child's nose and mouth may be submerged. Don't rely on swimming lessons, life preservers or other equipment to make a child “water safe.” If a child is missing, make sure the pool and spa are the first places searched.

**STEP 3:** Preparation – Make sure adults, babysitters and others know how to swim and have learned CPR and proper rescue techniques. Rescue equipment such as lifesaving ring, shepherd's hook and CPR signs are to be mounted by the pool. Do not rely on float-type toys like arm floats and inflatable rings as lifesavers; they are only toys. Have a phone near the pool area for emergency 911 calls and to avoid leaving children unattended to talk on the phone.

**FAQs:**

**Q:** My child knows how to swim. I don't need to be in the water with him while he's swimming, do I?

**A:** Yes, you do, because there's no such thing as a "water safe" swimmer. It's an unfortunate fact that drowning is the leading cause of death in the country five and under. According to the Orange County Fire Authority, a drowning is 100% preventable and parents should watch the water at all times.

**Q:** Why can't my child use water wings at the pool?

**A:** Water wings pose a drowning risk because a child can easily slip out of them when in the water. In addition, fire authorities say that floatation devices used by young children who cannot swim increase the likelihood of drowning by giving both the parents and the children a false sense of security. Other flotation devices, such as swimsuits with built-in floats, pose the same safety risks.

Per the Orange County Fire Authority recommendation, only Coast Guard-approved life vests are permitted for use at any of the pool facilities. These vests can be purchased at a local sporting goods store.

**Q:** What are the red flags occasionally posted at the entrance to a pool facility?

**A:** A red flag posted at the entrance to the pool means that the facility is closed due to fecal contamination or mechanical difficulties.