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**RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SWIMMING POOL DROWNING
FOR VIRGINIA CHILDREN**

May is National Water Safety Month

(RICHMOND, Va) – More children in Virginia drown in swimming pools than in any other location. Over the past 11 years, nearly 50 percent of the 172 swimming pool drownings in Virginia occurred in children 14 years of age or younger. Many, if not all, of these deaths could have been prevented.

“While pools provide a great way to cool off and have fun, they can also be deadly. This is especially true for children,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP. “It is essential that parents and pool owners make sure children are supervised at all times by an adult who can swim or a certified life guard and that this person has the proper equipment to respond to a water emergency.”

Parents and pool owners can take steps to promote safe swimming before children even get into the pool by making sure that barriers are in place around pools, spas and hot tubs and that drains are installed properly. A recent Federal law requires drains have covers on them so swimmers cannot get trapped underwater by the drain suction. It is hard to tell just by looking whether a drain is compliant or not, so the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that families talk to the pool manager before taking a swim.

“National estimates show that drowning deaths increase by 89 percent in the summer,” said Dr. Remley. “We want families to have a safe and enjoyable summer. Preparing ahead for summer recreation in swimming pools can save lives.”

To decrease the risk of pool drowning:

- Always supervise children around and in swimming pools
- Be prepared to respond quickly
- Create barriers such as a fence with a self-closing gate
- Drain pools properly

For more information about water safety contact the Virginia Department of Health’s Division of Injury and Violence Prevention at 1-800-732-8333 or www.vahealth.org/civp, Virginia Safe Kids at 804-628-2077 or www.safekids.org, Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.poolsafety.gov, or the American Red Cross www.redcross.org.

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