

Drownings/Submersions in Virginia, 2005-2009

- 464 fatal drownings occurred during the five year period. 430 (83%) were unintentional.
- Drownings are the leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 1-4 and the sixth leading cause for all Virginians.
- 42% of drowning deaths occurred in a natural body of water (river, lake, bay, etc.), 13% in a swimming pool, and 12% in a bathtub.
- 79% of fatal drowning victims were male and 63% were white, non-Hispanics.
- 231 unintentional drowning/submersion hospitalizations occurred during the five year period.

Prevention Tips

Drownings can be prevented. Health care agencies, safety advocates, and parents can all support a reduction in drowning/submersions by following these tips:

- Never leave a child alone near a pool/spa, bath tub, toilet or standing body of water.
- Designate a responsible adult to watch young children while in the bath, swimming or playing in or around the water.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Because of the time it might take for paramedics to arrive, your CPR skills can make a difference in someone's life.
- Do not use air-filled or foam toys, such as "water wings", "noodles", or inner-tubes, in place of life jackets (personal flotation devices). These toys are not designed to keep swimmers safe.
- If you have a swimming pool, install a four-sided, isolation pool fence that totally separates the house and yard from the pool area. The fence should be at least 5 feet high. Use self closing and self latching gates that open outward, and have latches that are out of a child's reach.
- Avoid swimming after dark.
- Know the local weather conditions and forecast before swimming or boating.
- Use US Coast Guard approved life jackets when boating, regardless of distance to be traveled, size of boat, or swimming ability of boaters.
- Heed colored beach warning flags.
- Avoid drinking alcohol before or during swimming, boating, water skiing, or while supervising children.
- Prescription and over-the-counter medicines can cause drowsiness or have other side effects. If you are taking medication, check with your doctor before engaging in water activities.
- Diving into shallow water can cause spinal injuries. Never allow diving in above ground pools, shallow water, or unknown areas.

Virginia Drowning/Submersion Case:

A toddler attends an in-home daycare with an in-ground pool in the backyard. The owner of the daycare goes into another room where other children are playing. The toddler wanders into the backyard where the pool is located. The toddler has easy access to the backyard pool as there are no barriers (such as a fence) to the pool from the house. The toddler goes into the pool and sinks without a sound. The toddler is later found floating face down in the water. The toddler is pulled from the water and CPR is initiated. The toddler died as a result of drowning.

Resources:

- ◆ American Red Cross
www.redcross.org
- ◆ Consumer Product Safety Commission: Neighborhood Safety Network
www.cpsc.gov/nsn/nsn.html
- ◆ Pool Safely
www.poolsafely.gov
- ◆ Safe Kids USA
www.usa.safekids.org
- ◆ Injury and Violence Prevention Program, Virginia Department of Health
www.vahealth.org/injury