

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **CPSC Warns: Pools Are Not the Only Drowning Danger at Home for Kids** ***Data Show Other Hazards Cause More than 100 Residential Child Drowning Deaths Annually***

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Young children are irresistibly drawn to water, and tragically, about 350 children under age 5 drown in swimming pools each year. But even if you don't have a pool, your young children may not be safe from drowning. At next month's World Congress on Drowning, the showing that about one-third as many children (an average of about 115 annually) drown from other hazards around the home as do in pools. CPSC has received reports of 459 young children who drowned in bathtubs, buckets, toilets, spas, hot tubs and other containers of water in a 4-year period between 1996 and 1999.

"While many of us are aware of the dangers a backyard pool poses to young children, not everyone knows about other drowning hazards around the home," said CPSC Acting Chairman Thomas Moore. "CPSC is alerting parents and caregivers to drowning hazards that might not be so obvious, to help prevent these devastating losses."

### **BATHTUBS**

Children drowning in bathtubs account for about two-thirds of the 459 reported drowning deaths in the home. The majority of these bathtub deaths occur when the caregiver is not present. In the time it takes to step out of the room to get a towel or answer the phone, a young child can drown. In at least 29 of the 292 bathtub drowning deaths reported to CPSC between 1996 and 1999, the victims were using bath seats.

### **BUCKETS**

Many parents and caregivers may not realize the danger buckets pose. From 1996 through 1999, CPSC received reports of 58 children under age 5 who drowned in 5-gallon buckets. Even a small amount of liquid can be deadly. Of all buckets, the 5-gallon size presents the greatest hazard to young children because of its tall, straight sides. That, combined with the stability of these buckets, makes it nearly impossible for top-heavy infants and toddlers to free themselves when they fall into the bucket headfirst.

### **TOILETS**

Toilets can be overlooked as a drowning hazard in the home. The typical scenario involves a child under 3-years-old falling headfirst into the toilet. CPSC has received reports of 16 children under age 5 who drowned in toilets between 1996 and 1999.

### **SPAS AND HOT TUBS**

Spas and hot tubs, typically located near or sometimes inside the home, pose another hazard to young children. CPSC is aware of 55 children under age 5 who drowned in spas and hot tubs between 1996 and 1999.

### **OTHER PRODUCTS**

Though not as frequently involved in deaths, other products around the home containing water can be drowning hazards. The most common of these are buckets with a capacity different than the 5-gallon size. Additional drowning deaths have also involved landscape ponds, sinks, and fish tanks, among other products.

### **TIPS CPSC offers these tips to help prevent young children from drowning:**

- Never leave a baby alone in a bathtub for even a second. Always keep the baby in arm's reach. Don't leave a baby in the care of another young child. Never leave to answer the phone, answer the door, to get a towel or for any other reason. If you must leave, take the baby with you.
- A baby bath seat is not a substitute for supervision. A bath seat is a bathing aid, not a safety device. Babies have slipped or climbed out of bath seats and drowned.
- Never use a baby bath seat in a non-skid, slip-resistant bathtub because the suction cups will not adhere to the bathtub surface or can detach unexpectedly.
- Never leave a bucket containing even a small amount of liquid unattended. When finished using a bucket, always empty it immediately.
- Store buckets where young children cannot reach them. Buckets, accessible to children, that are left outside to collect rainwater are a hazard.
- Always secure safety covers and barriers to prevent children from gaining access to spas or hot tubs when not in use. Some non-rigid covers, such as solar covers, can allow a small child to slip in the water and the cover would appear to still be in place.
- Keep the toilet lid down to prevent access to the water and consider using a toilet clip to stop young children from opening the lids.
- Consider placing a latch on the bathroom door out of reach of young children.
- Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) -- it can be a lifesaver when seconds count.

### **SWIMMING POOLS**

Consumers with residential pools need to be aware of all the safety tips regarding in-home hazards, and also be aware of how to protect young children from the dangers a pool poses.

The key to preventing a swimming pool tragedy is to have layers of protection. This includes placing barriers around your pool to prevent access, using door and pool alarms, closely supervising your child and being prepared in case of an emergency. CPSC offers these tips to prevent pool drowning:

- Fences and walls should be at least 4 feet high and installed completely around the pool. Fence gates should open outward from the pool and should be self-closing and self-latching. The latch should be out of a small child's reach.
- If your house forms one side of the barrier to the pool, then doors leading from the house to the pool should be protected with alarms that produce a sound when a door is unexpectedly opened.
- A power safety cover -- a motor-powered barrier that can be placed over the water area -- can be used when the pool is not in use.
- Keep rescue equipment by the pool and be sure a phone is poolside with emergency numbers posted.
- For above-ground pools, steps and ladders to the pool should be secured and locked, or removed when the pool is not in use.
- If a child is missing, always look in the pool first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- Pool alarms can be used as an added precaution.