

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

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**GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER PROCLAIMS  
JUNE "DROWNING PREVENTION MONTH"  
URGES ALL CALIFORNIANS TO TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT DROWNING  
AND NEAR-DROWNING IN SUMMER MONTHS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, June 21, 2010

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SACRAMENTO – With the arrival of the summer swimming season, Governor Schwarzenegger proclaimed June "[Drowning Prevention Month](#)," and urged all Californians to follow safety tips to prevent drowning and near-drowning incidents that can result in lifelong disability.

"Warm weather months bring fun for children and adults alike, and many of us enjoy time at the pool, river or beach," Governor Schwarzenegger said. "Knowing how to prevent drowning is a step toward keeping all children safe and helping them live to their full potential."

The Governor's reminder was issued as part of a program to raise awareness of risks that can lead to childhood drowning accidents. The effort is coordinated by the California Department of Developmental Services, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Drowning Prevention Foundation and many community agencies statewide.

"It can be devastating when near-drowning incidents result in lifelong disability, especially since so many of these accidents are preventable," said Terri Delgadillo, Director of the Department of Developmental Services. "That's why we are taking extra steps to remind Californians about the critical importance of taking steps to prevent water accidents."

In California, the Department of Developmental Services helps coordinate services for 692 survivors of near-drowning accidents, most of them with severe disabilities caused by being deprived of oxygen while underwater.

In 2008 alone, there were 79 drowning deaths in California among children under age 18, 51 of which were children under 5 years old. Overall, drowning accidents claimed the lives of 364 Californians in 2008.

The Drowning Prevention Foundation recommends "layers of prevention," to prevent an accident around water, including:

- Keep constant eyes on young children playing in or near any body of water, public pool, spa, or bath tub. A child can drown in the time it takes to answer a text message.

**"Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices"**

- Never leave a child alone near water while you answer the telephone or doorbell, attend to another child or for household chores, even for a few seconds.
- Designate an adult to watch children at play at large gatherings. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends staying close enough to reach out and touch the child while being supervised in water.
- Fence your pool on all four sides with a barrier that is at least five feet high. Move lawn chairs, tables and other potential climbing aids away from the fence to help keep out children. Any gate or door leading to the pool area should be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward, with the latch placed on the poolside and out of reach.
- Install panic alarms on all house doors and windows leading to the pool area, automatic sliding door closers and an automatic safety cover over the pool.
- Drain off water that accumulates on top of a pool cover. A child can drown in as little as two inches of water. Completely remove the cover before allowing children in the pool.
- Check swimming pools for new anti-entrapment grates on drain suction outlets required by new laws to prevent the physical entrapment of the bathers.
- Keep reaching and throwing aids, such as poles and life preservers, on both sides of the pool.
- All children should wear life vests (personal flotation devices approved by the U.S. Coast Guard; information available at <http://www.dbw.ca.gov/>) when they are near water, especially near rivers and streams, and when boating.
- Swimming lessons do not ensure safety. A child who falls into water unexpectedly may panic and forget his or her swimming skills. Adults who serve as caretakers for children who swim should know how to swim themselves, and also be certified to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in an emergency. Immediate CPR could prevent death or brain damage.

DDS's Website [www.dds.ca.gov/drowning](http://www.dds.ca.gov/drowning) has a free, downloadable poster with the reminder "Drowning is Silent." Remind families, friends, and neighbors to be aware of the "layers of prevention" to prevent a devastating accident.

For more information, <http://www.drowningpreventionfoundation.us>.

*For copies of the Governor's Proclamation and Drowning Prevention Tips, please go to [www.dds.ca.gov/drowning](http://www.dds.ca.gov/drowning).*

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