

Children Near Water? Be *Alarmed!*

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By Cara Lewis

When Vicki Doland and her family heard the alarm sound on her Safety Turtle® personal wireless pool alarm, she feared the worst--one of her grandchildren had fallen into the pool.

She rushed to the pool, then breathed a sigh of relief. Her grown son was merely testing the device.

The Safety Turtle is a personal wireless aquatic alarm that consists of a turtle-shaped wristwatch-sized device worn on a wristband that attaches to the wearer. A receiver emits an alarm when the wristband is immersed in water.

Doland is a pool owner in Elizabethtown, Pa. and a grandmother of two. She first began using the Safety Turtle two years ago when her oldest grandchild began to walk. She wanted a device that would alert her if her grandchild ventured into the pool, but without emitting false alarms (like sounding off when a mere chipmunk went for a swim).

"I know the rule is to always keep a child in arm's reach, but when you're having a large family gathering, someone always thinks someone else is watching the child," Doland said.

A pool tragedy inspired Bob Lyons, president of Ottawa-based Terrapin Communications, to create the Safety Turtle. A friend's daughter fell into a pool and suffered permanent physical impairments after spending nearly twenty minutes under a solar blanket.

"I had children and realized that even with the best supervision accidents can happen," Lyons said. "Parents needed a way to immediately know when a child was in danger."

So in 1998, he launched the Safety Turtle at the International Pool and Spa Show. Sales have grown to about 20,000 systems a year. In 2004, Lyons developed a pet version of the Safety Turtle, enabling pet owners to protect their animals against drowning.

As a wearable pool alarm, the Safety Turtle stands alone in North America, according to Lyons. He said there are similar devices marketed in France and Australia, but there is a patent on the water sensor used

in the Safety Turtle.

The American market is the largest market for the Safety Turtle, Lyons noted, a fact that he attributes to the large number of pool owners and an overall safety-conscious market.

Lyons said the key to pool safety is to "have layers of protection and to have a back-up."

For more information on where to purchase the Safety Turtle®, please visit www.safetyturtle.com.