

# Swimming Pool Safety

By J.M. Neilson

What a beautiful day. Maybe it's Memorial Day, the Fourth of July or just a Saturday with family and friends around the pool. The food on the barbecue smells great, the drinks are cold and the pool is warm. Conversation and laughter fill the air throughout the day, a sign of a successful party. Afternoon becomes twilight and parents begin gathering up their children to go home. But someone is missing. Fear grabs your throat and panic engulfs your entire body. With so many adults nearby, how could this have happened?

The grief caused by a child's death is the most intense grief ever known. Accidental death forces parents to confront an extremely painful situation if the tragedy occurs when one or both parents were at home. Drowning is a leading cause of unintentional death in Southern Nevada for young children and the majority of drowning deaths occur in the family pool. It is called the 'silent death' because usually there is no cry for help and very little sound from splashing. Children can never be considered drown-proof despite swimming skills, previous swimming lessons or experience. Teenagers (15-19 years old) and preschoolers (1-4 years old) are most at risk. Male victims outnumber female victims after the first birthday, with the gap widening with increasing age. A designated adult must always be present and vigilant when children are around any type of water, especially at social gatherings.

To many people, the bond between them and their pet can be as valuable as any of their human relationships. As a dog of any size will panic and be unable to find a way out of a pool, it is important to train your dog to know where the steps in the pool are. If a dog were to fall into a lake or river, its natural tendency would be to swim to the shore. But with a pool, everything looks like the shoreline. He has to be shown how to get out. For many of us our pets are an inherent part of our family. Therefore, it is important to consider the possibility of a pet drowning at home, on a boat or during social gatherings when they can become excited and often ignored or forgotten.

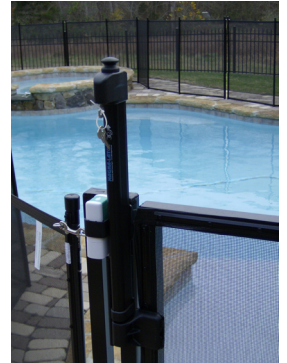


*Many ways exist to help prevent children from drowning.*

- Alarms on doors and windows and gates to alert family when opened.
- Power-operated pool safety covers.
- A non-climbable five-foot fence that separates pool/spa from the home. The opening should be no more than four inches wide so children cannot squeeze through spaces.
- Use self-closing, self latching five-foot fence gates and side gates

leading to the pool/spa with latches above a child's reach (54" high).

Also, keep a poolside telephone that allows access to 911 and install a lifesaving equipment ring. CPR instructions should be mounted near the pool. Remove items that can be used for climbing such as tables, chairs or planters near fences.



Technological advances have provided us with a device called the Safety Turtle. It uses a water sensor that is worn on a child's wrist. The wrist strap is locked into place and can only be removed with a special key. If the child falls into a pool, the device sends a one-way radio signal to a receiver, usually placed inside the home, that triggers a loud alarm. The Safety Turtle is a system of last resort. It protects the child and reminds the parents that the kids need protecting.

The system can be taken to a friend's pool if you visit. The product is portable and runs off a battery which usually lasts about nine hours before a recharge is required. One Base Station supports any number of Turtle wristbands and gate sensor(s) of the same color. The Safety Turtle works with any water fixture: pool, hot tube, river/lake or pond. The Safety Turtle wristband is not suitable for use in salt water.

Even on a boat, the Safety Turtle MOB alarm instantly alerts others. In addition, a wireless lanyard version is available that simultaneously turns off the boat's engine.

With the insertion of a "Baby Turtle" plug into the Base Station, it is set to recognize Turtles of a matching color. By using different colors, neighbors can enjoy the benefits of the Safety Turtle without triggering each other's alarms. A matching Baby Turtle is included with each Turtle wristband.

For the pet, a small color Turtle sensor that attached to the collar and the alarm works with the Base Station the same as it would for a child. The cost of the pet sensor is under \$10 for each one. One Base Station works with any number of pets having the same color of Turtle sensor. Rain or ground moisture will not set off the alarm.

Summer is a time for families, friends and water activities. Make your summer one of lasting happy memories. Keep your children and pets safe. **AH**

