

# *Get water wise...* **SUPERVISE!**

## **The month of May is *Childhood Drowning Prevention Month***

***Careful supervision of children near water saves lives!***

**Governor Pat Quinn is proclaiming the month of May as *Childhood Drowning Prevention Month*.** The *Get Water Wise...SUPERVISE!* campaign, a collaborative effort of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA Illinois), the American Red Cross Illinois Capital Area Chapter, the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds the public to help prevent child drowning tragedies by providing adult supervision when children are in or near water. You can order free brochures, coloring books and posters by calling 217-785-1700.

Losing a child to drowning can happen to any family, any time a child is near water. Good families who love their children and care for them well need only to make one tragic mistake to suffer a loss by stepping away to answer the phone or retrieve something from the family car. Water safety is a concern not only when children are near swimming pools; drowning can be a swift and silent occurrence, striking anywhere kids are near water.

Nationally, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death among children ages 1 to 4, and the second leading cause for children 1 to 14. In Illinois, 17 children lost their lives to accidental drowning in 2008, following annual totals of 23 in 2007, 18 in 2006 and 23 in 2005. Children are at risk anywhere water collects or is stored: in ditches, garden ponds, bathtubs, quarries, septic tanks, streams and farm ponds. Five-gallon buckets, such as those commonly used in home improvement projects, pose a special risk for toddlers with undeveloped upper body muscles, who may topple over headfirst into the bucket, unable to free themselves. Children can drown in as little as 2 inches of water, in as little time as 20 seconds. Physical barriers are insufficient and careful supervision of children near any kind of water is necessary to save lives.

The *Get Water Wise...SUPERVISE!* campaign urges the public to help prevent drowning by following these 4 crucial elements to childhood water safety:

1. Maintain constant supervision. Watch children around any water environment (pool, stream, lake, tub, toilet, bucket of water,) no matter what skills your child has acquired and no matter how shallow the water. For younger children, practice "Reach Supervision" by staying within an arm's length reach.
2. Don't rely on substitutes. The use of flotation devices and inflatable toys cannot replace parental supervision. Such devices could suddenly shift position, lose air, or slip out from underneath, leaving the child in a dangerous situation.
3. Enroll children in a water safety course or Learn-to-Swim classes. Your decision to provide your child with an early aquatic experience is a gift that will have infinite rewards. These courses encourage safe practices.
4. Parents should take a CPR course. Knowing these skills can be important around water and expand the capability to provide care for your child. Contact your local Red Cross to enroll in a CPR course.