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Enjoy 4th - But Watch Kids Around Water

DFW Area Leads State with 12 Deaths

Lakes are full and rivers are flowing this July 4th as Texans head to the water for fun, to celebrate Independence Day and escape the heat. But don't let your weekend end in tragedy: watch children at all times when they are around water.

Already, 36 children have drowned in Texas this year, including three siblings - ages 9, 10 and 11 - who were pulled last week from an apartment pool in Irving. Apartment pools can provide quick and convenient relief from the heat for their residents, but they typically don't have lifeguards on duty so extra caution should be exercised. Children should always be watched around pool gates and enclosures.

The Dallas-Fort Worth area continues to lead the state with 12 child drowning deaths so far this year, followed by the Houston area with seven.

With the state's recent widespread rainfall, water levels in lakes and rivers are high. Stream and creek beds are now flowing, posing more danger to children - particularly toddlers - who are not properly supervised. In rural areas, stock ponds can also be dangerous.

"Drowning is not what you think – it's quick and silent and happens before you know it," said Judge John Specia, commissioner of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). "I urge all Texans to keep a very close watch on children as they head outdoors for this holiday weekend. And watch a child closely any time around water."

More than 400 children drowned in Texas in the last five years, most of them between Memorial Day and Labor Day. And a child can drown wherever there's water: so far this year, children have drowned in backyard and apartment swimming pools, ponds, bathtubs, a hot tub, a lake, at a marina on Galveston Bay - even in a septic tank.

That's why DFPS is urging all parents, caregivers, and adults "watch kids around water" – not just during weekends but all summer long, and year-round.

"We can all make a difference just by being more aware of what is happening around us," said Judge Specia.

Children under the age of one year most often drown inside the house, while older children most often drown outdoors. Outdoors, children most often drown in pools, especially backyard and apartment pools. Most young children who drown in pools were out of sight less than five minutes and were in the care of one or both parents at the time. Indoors, the bathtub is the most dangerous location.

Basic Water Safety Tips

Inside the house:

- Never leave small children alone near any container of water.
- Keep bathroom doors closed and secure toilet lids with lid locks.
- Never leave a baby alone in a bath for any reason. Get what you need before running water, and take the child with you if you must leave the room.
- Warn babysitters or caregivers about the dangers of water and emphasize the need to constantly supervise young children.
- Make sure small children cannot leave the house through pet doors or unlocked doors to reach pools or hot tubs.

Outside the house:

- Never leave children alone around water whether it is in a pool, wading pool, drainage ditch, creek, pond, or lake.
- Constantly watch children who are swimming or playing in water. They need an adult or certified lifeguard watching and within reach.
- Secure access to swimming pools with fences, self-closing and latching gates, and water surface alarms.
- Completely remove the pool cover when the pool is in use.
- Store and secure water toys away from the water when not in use, so they don't attract a small child.
- Don't assume young children will use good judgment around water.
- Be ready for emergencies. Keep emergency telephone numbers handy and learn CPR.
- Find out if your child's friends or neighbors have pools.

For more statistics and information on water safety for kids, visit WatchKidsAroundWater.org