

# MAFES Dawg Tracks

June 19, 2015

Safety Tips: Keeping Kids Safe  
Near Water



We edited an issue in the past concerning the above title of keeping kids safe during all types of water activities.

A real life event was sent to me regarding a family in a recreational boating weekend. Their sport fisher was anchored near the beach. The new boat captain saw the nine year old drowning, while father said to his wife I think he thinks you're drowning, suddenly realizing that their daughter was in fact drowning, the captain kept swimming uninterrupted to the child.

He reached the little girl and saved her. How did the captain know from fifty feet away that she was drowning? He had years of experience, so it was easy for him to identify the victim. The father was only 10 feet away from his daughter, but only knew the traits of drowning from seeing events on television.

Drowning is always a deceptively quiet event. The waving, splashing, and yelling dramatic conditioning that is seen on television is rarely seen in real life.

According to Dr. Francesco A. Pia, who developed the "Instinctive Drowning Response" theory, is what people do to avoid actual or perceived suffocation in the water. It does not look like what most people expect. There is very little waving, splashing, yelling or calls for help. To get an idea of just how quiet and undramatic from the surface drowning can be, consider this: It is the number two (2) cause of accidental deaths in children, age 15 and under (just behind vehicle accidents). According to statistics, of approximately 750 children who will drown during the year, about 375 of them will do so within 25 yards of a parent or other adult. In 10% of these the adult will actually watch them do it, having no idea that it is happening. (Source: CDC)

It doesn't mean that a victim that is yelling or splashing for help isn't in trouble, they are experiencing aquatic distress. Unlike true drowning, they can still assist in their own rescue, by grabbing lifelines, throw rings, etc.

## **DROWNING SIGNS WHEN A PERSON IS IN THE WATER-**

- Head low in the water, mouth at water level
- Head tilted back with mouth open
- Eyes glassy and empty, unable to focus
- Eyes closed
- Hair over forehead or eyes
- Not using legs-vertical
- Hyperventilating or gasping
- Trying to swim in a particular direction but not making any headway or trying to roll over on their back
- Appear to be climbing an invisible ladder

So be extra cautious if someone falls overboard or falls from the bank and they appear to look okay-don't be too sure. Sometimes the most common indication that someone is drowning is that they don't look like they're drowning. They may appear to be treading water or looking up. One sure way to know is to ask them, "Are you alright?" If they answer-they are probably alright. If they have a blank stare, you have 30 seconds to get to them. **Parents – children playing in the water make noise. When they get quiet-get to them and find out why!**

## **RISK FACTORS INVOLVED IN DROWNING-**

- **Lack of supervision & barriers-**  
Children under the age of 1 year usually drown in the bathtub.  
Children from 1 to 4 yrs. usually drown in residential swimming pools. In most cases they have been out of sight less than 5 minutes.

**Recreational boating** - In 2005, the U.S. Coast Guard reported 4,969 boating incidents, 3,451 were reported with various injuries and 697 dying in boating accidents. Since 2005, most boating fatalities (70%) were caused by drowning. 87% were not wearing life jackets. Approximately 30% of drowning fatalities are attributed to alcohol.

The primary purpose of this newsletter is to "Keep kids safe around water," but adults many times are more careless and care-free than kids.

**Seizure disorders** - People with seizure disorders is the most common unintentional cause for water-related deaths.

## **TIPS SPECIFICALLY FOR SMALL CHILDREN:**

The USA Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) states that approximately 115 children down from hazards other than swimming pools. They occur for various reasons, but mainly by inattentive parents, guardians, and care givers. These sources are from bathtubs, toilets, buckets, hot tubs, spas, and other types of water containers, all accounting for 459 deaths in a 4-year period spanning from 1996 through 1999. These Hazards are discussed below:

**Bathtubs** – Of the 459 drowning deaths, approximately 135 were reported to have happened in their homes. The CPSC reported that 29 of these bathtub deaths occurred with the victim using bath seats. No one should ever leave a small child unattended, even for a few seconds.

**Buckets** – In this same time period the CPSC reported 59 deaths under the age of 5 years involving buckets. 5-gallon buckets were the chief culprit. In these deaths. It only takes a small amount of water for them to topple over in the bucket and due to their size it is hard for them to free themselves.

**Toilets** – Sometimes toilets are overlooked as a hazard. But just think about a 4 or 5 year old plunging head first into a toilet without the dexterity to remove themselves. **The answer in all of these examples is to never leave a small child unattended!** In their survey, the CPSC, reported 16 kids under the age of 5 drowning in toilets.

**Spas and Hot tubs** – In the same 4-year time period, the CPSC reported 55 kids under the age of 5 years drowning in spas or hot tubs.

**Swimming Pools** – Children in the age bracket of 1 to 4 years is the age that most drownings occur in swimming pools. In most cases, the kids were seen in the home less than 5 minutes prior to the time and were in the care of both parents.

Consumers and parents need to be aware of these safety tips and hazards involved with safety around swimming pools. A strong key to protecting young kids is the constructing of a barrier wall or a fence protecting them from free access to the water, also installing door and a pool alarm. Besides these alarms, close supervision and familiarity with emergency procedures will give one an advantage. Obviously, close scrutiny and supervision of the children is the best approach to avoid any water-related incidents

***POOR SAFETY HABITS – A RESULT  
OF POOR PLANNING &  
INATTENTION TO DETAILS!!***

***WEAR PERSONAL FLOTATION DEVICES-  
THEY FLOAT – YOU DON'T!***