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Watch Kids Around Water this Summer

Rising water adds danger to Memorial Day Weekend

Memorial Day weekend signals the kickoff of the summer season, when kids and families traditionally flock to water for fun and to escape the heat. Don't let this weekend end in tragedy. Watch kids around water at all times.

Already, 16 children have drowned in Texas this year, including a three-year-old boy who drowned in Lake Granbury after wandering away from home. The Dallas-Fort Worth area has the most child drowning deaths so far this year with six, followed by the Houston area with five.

With the state's recent widespread rainfall and more in the forecast, water levels in lakes and rivers have risen quickly. Once dry 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 Memorial Day Weekend. The last thing we want is another child to drown."

Seventy-three children drowned in Texas last year, most of them between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Over the last five years, an average of 79 drowned each year. So far this year, children have drowned in backyard swimming pools, ponds, bathtubs, a hot tub, a lake, at a marina - even in a septic tank.

That's why DFPS is urging all parents, caregivers, and adults in general to "watch kids around water" – not just during Memorial Day Weekend but all summer long.

“We can all make a difference just by being 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 and 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 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